

WHAT IS A CAPTAIN – PROBLEM SOLVING ISSUES

Winning Spirit Swimming

Many swimmers aspire to serve as team captain or leader. The following items are provided to assist young people in molding themselves into competent leaders teammates will respect and follow. A **“captain” is a principal performer with commanding, responsible, authority, and influence, generally selected by his/her peers to lead their organization.** Perhaps the best candidate and the one selected may **not be the fastest** swimmer on the team,

Two basic principles in becoming a captain are;

1. **They lead by doing or get help by first pitching in and/or asking, not directing.**
2. **Earn the respect of teammates by demonstrating good behavior. They represent the team well in all phases of being a visible “leader”.**

IN THE WATER

What can the “captain” do to lead peers, which in itself is a difficult thing.

1. **Try hard** on swimming sets, relating practices to personal or team goals. “John let’s really work this set and break 50 seconds”.
2. **Encourage skill improvement because the slowest swimmer** may be the weakest link on the team; however, if motivated that swimmer will push others. “Sally how about trying the new breaststroke coach has been working on to help our medley be just one second faster.”
3. **Challenge teammates to do their best**, encouraging them when plateaus occur. “Joe I’ll challenge you to work a set and keep track of who wins the most swims.” Make certain it’s a fair competition and if outclassed pair them up with someone else.
4. **Be a giver. Arrive early to lead in getting equipment** in place for practice or helping the coaches get ready. Get splits or at least know what others are doing in strategy and splits. Hey gang, let’s get these lanes in (or out) and it’ll go much faster. Let’s time the team and see how fast we can get it done.”
5. **Be accurate and honest in figuring** and reporting pulses, practice times, stroke counts. “My average was 57.8”. “Joan do you need some help figuring your average?”
6. **Lead by doing** on team protocol on finishing, turning, starting, circle swimming, and never cutting corners to finish fast or look good. “Hey gang, how about letting people finish on the wall.”
7. **Suggest fun activities like special contests**, games, gimmicks to loosen things up. Tell an approved joke or story. “Coach, how about a get out swim for animal ball?”

OUT OF THE WATER

1. **Quiet confidence without being pushy.** “I’m doing the best I can, you can too”. Let’s get ready for Friday’s dual meet”
2. Encourage sensible training habits; leading by doing. **Encouraging other to get proper sleep, diet as opposed to smoking, doing drugs, drinking alcohol or**

- staying up or out late.** Lack of proper rest and abusive activity has a cumulatively negative effect on personal and consequently TEAM performance. If your friends discourage following training guidelines, they are not your friends, look for others and gradually change to people that cooperate and encourage.
3. **Complimenting performances by finding the good things being done and build on those areas and traits.** “John that was a great thing you did for the freshmen or newcomers.”
 4. **Encourage study habits, especially when someone has a problem.** “Tony how did you do on that math test? Keep working hard so you’re with us at the state meet in February.”
 5. **Follow-up criticism with a positive comment** especially when a swimmer has plateaued. “Tom that time was a little off, but know you’ll break through when you rest. We’ve seen it before”. “We need for you to be ready for it.”
 6. **Motivate at meets in a personally comfortable and acceptable manner always realizing you are the swimmer, not the coach.** Lead with chants and cheers, pats on the back. “Let’s have a “Go Jane Go” 3 times.
 7. **Discourage scape goating and/or hazing.** Everyone must contribute for TEAM success. Don’t have teammates building themselves up by tearing other down. “Let’s all yell for Tom so he improves and knows we’re behind him.”
 8. **Talk a winning strategy in meets and races.** Talk a winning attitude. Jenny you can get that standard. Just go for it.”
 9. **If team problems exist, explain them in confidence with the coach to help solve them and move on with a close team atmosphere.** “Coach, could we talk about a team problem.”
 10. **Discourage negative comments by trying to reverse non-contributing or distracting undercurrents.** “Encourage efforts when the coach gives practice goal times. Come on let’s go for it.”

WHAT CAN THE COACH DO?

1. Be supportive with captains, especially in front of peers.
2. Meet weekly with the captain(s) so problems don’t develop and coach captains on being captains. They are a great liaison with the team.

CAPTAIN’S MEETING - Conduct a weekly 5, 10 to 20 minute meeting with the captains to get a feel for the state of the team. Use the time to coach captains on leadership. Give them simple, non-confrontational advise on handling potential problems along with constructive criticism and reinforcement for the great things they did recently. Here are some things to consider.

Lead by doing

How can we have a win : win situation.

Up coming meets and who needs to do what for team success.

Training goals for the next training period.

Team goals-early season and as the season progresses.

Academic integrity and people that need help.

Newcomers and how the team can help them.

Fund raising projects and ideas they have on making it successful.

Behavior – problems with drugs, alcohol, steroids, Alcohol,
Cooperation between coaches and team, boys and girls, parents and team.
Team morale and how to improve it.
Behind the scenes for the coaches. Any tips.
Skill work focus.
Training focus the next week.
Motivational things they'd suggest; in the pool or out.

And so many more...

GROUP DISCUSSION – PROBLEM SOLVING TEAM ISSUES – Small groups of 5 to 8 are given a POTENTIAL problem to solve. Have the groups select a leader to lead discussion and give a report to the squad or entire team, depending upon appropriateness. Move from group to group helping focus discussion and keep them on-task.

PROBLEMS:

Inappropriate comments or language – in the pool and outside the pool

Stealing in locker room

Cheating on times

Turning at mid-pool

Always coming late

Skipping swims on a set

Bad mouthing teammates or the coach

Missing practice when on a relay

Complaining about a training set

Regularly running to the toilet

Always have excuses

Stuck up swimmer

Putting down teammates to make yourself feel better

Not cheering with teammates or for teammates

Afraid of trying because one might fail

Last one in first one out

IF YOU THROW IN ONE THAT'S OBVIOUS TO EVERYONE don't use names or exact situations.