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The Four Strokes

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## New Parent Handbook

Fall 2022

While this is by no means the all-inclusive guide to swimming, it will most definitely help you to understand some of the basics that your fellow seasoned parents sitting next to you in the stands may already know. We have tried to compile as much information as possible within the guide to help answer any of your questions that may come up randomly during the day. However, you will undoubtedly have a question that can't be answered with this. Usually, it will happen at a time when the person you need to ask isn't around, at least that's the way it always happens for me. Please do not wait to ask a question. Even the smallest topic may be very important to your better understanding of what swimming is about. While many seasoned parents can be a good source of information about swimming, most of the technical questions should be posed to a coach to answer. Either way, please feel free to ask when a question pops up that you are not sure of. Hopefully, whomever you ask will have an accurate answer for you. If in your first few seasons as a new parent, there is information you feel isn't in here that should be, please let us know and we'll be sure to add it for future families to improve their understanding of our little "world".

### THE FOUR STROKES

The four competitive swimming strokes are freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke and butterfly. The combination of all four strokes is called individual medley. In freestyle events, the competitor may swim any stroke. The stroke most commonly used is sometimes called the crawl, which is characterized by the

alternate stroking of the arms over the surface of the water surface and an alternating (up-and-down) flutter kick. Backstroke consists of an alternating motion of the arms with a flutter kick while on the back. On turns, swimmers may rotate to the stomach and perform a flip turn and some part of the swimmer must touch the wall. The swimmer must finish on the back. The breaststroke requires simultaneous movements of the arms on the same horizontal plane. The hands are pressed out from in front of the breast in a heart shaped pattern and recovered under or on the surface of the water. The kick is a simultaneous somewhat circular motion similar to the action of a frog. On turns and at the finish, the swimmer must touch the wall with both hands simultaneously at, above or below the water surface. Some consider the butterfly to be the most beautiful of the strokes. It features a simultaneous recovery of the arms over the water combined with an undulating dolphin kick. In the kick, the swimmer must keep both legs together and may not flutter, scissors or use the breaststroke kick. Both hands must touch the wall simultaneously on the turns and the finish. The individual medley, commonly referred to as the I.M., features all four strokes. In the IM, the swimmer begins with the butterfly, then changes after one-fourth of the race to backstroke, then breaststroke and finally freestyle.

## **COMPETITION 101 RULES**

The technical rules of swimming are designed to provide fair and equitable conditions of competition and to promote uniformity in the sport. Each swimming stroke has specific rules designed to ensure that no swimmer gets an unfair competitive advantage over another swimmer. COURSE Competition pools may be short course (25 yards or 25 meters), or long course (50 meters). The international standard (as used in the Olympics) is 50 meters. World records are accomplished in 25 and 50 meter pools. USA Swimming maintains records for 25 yard, 25 meter and 50 meter pools.

## **COMPETITION**

Participants compete in different age groups and meets depending on their achievement level and how old they are on the first day of the meet. Traditionally recognized age groups are 8 and under, 9-10, 11-12, 13-14, 15 and over. Many local meets feature 8 and under, single age groups, or senior events.

## **OFFICIALS**

Officials are present at all competitions to enforce the technical rules of swimming so the competition is fair and equitable. Officials attend clinics, pass a written test and work meets before being certified. All parents are encouraged to get involved with some form of officiating.

## **SWIM MEET BASICS**

Swim meets are a great family experience. They're a place where the whole family can spend time together. Listed below are some very in-depth guidelines geared to help you through your first couple of

swim meets. It may seem a little overwhelming, but we tried to be as specific and as detailed as we possibly could. If you have any questions, please ask your coach or your group moms.

## **BEFORE THE MEET STARTS**

1. Arrive at the pool at least 15-20 minutes before the scheduled warm-up time begins. This time will be listed in the information email sent prior to the start of the meet.
2. Upon arrival, find a place to put your swimmer's blankets, swim bags and/or sleeping bags. The team usually sits in one place together, so look for some familiar faces.
3. Find the check-in place. There are meets where parents are not allowed on deck, so this may be a responsibility of your swimmer or your swimmer's coach. Make sure your swimmer checks in with his or her coach! Check for special posted instructions in the check-in area.
4. Write or have the swimmers write each event-number on his or her hand in ink. This helps him/her remember what events he/she is swimming and what event number to listen or watch for.
5. Your swimmer now gets his/her cap and goggles and reports to the pool and/or coach for warm-up instructions. It is very important for all swimmers to warm-up with the team. A swimmer's body is just like a car on a cold day-he/she needs to get the engine going and warmed-up before he/she can go all out.
6. After warm-up, your swimmer will go back to the area where his/her team is sitting and wait there until his first event is called. This is a good time to make sure he/she goes to the bathroom if necessary, gets a drink, or just gets settled in.
7. The meet will usually start about 10-15 minutes after warm-ups are over.
8. Heat Sheets. It lists all swimmers in each event in order of "seed time". When the team entry is sent in, each swimmer and his/her previous best time (up to the date that the entry was submitted) in that event is listed. If the swimmer is swimming an event for the first time, he/she will be entered as a "no-time" or "NT". A "no-time" swimmer will most likely swim in one of the first heats of the event.

## **HOW A MEET IS RUN**

1. Meets are computerized. There are generally two ways a swimmer gets to his/her lane:
  1. A swimmer usually reports directly to his/her lane for competition a number of heats before he/she actually swims. Check with your swimmer's coach for specific instructions.
  2. In some meets, a swimmer's event number will be called, usually over the loudspeaker, and he/she will be asked to report to the "clerk of course". Swimmers should report with his/her cap and goggle.
    - Generally, girls' events are odd-numbered and boys events are even numbered. Example: "Event #26, 10-Under Boys, 50 freestyle, report to Clerk of Course." The clerk volunteer will usually line up all the swimmers and take them down to the pool in correct order. You can expect at least 4-8 heats of each event.
    - The swimmer swims his or her race.

- After each swim:
  - The swimmer should then go immediately to his or her coach. The coach will discuss the swim with each swimmer.
- Generally, the coach follows these guidelines when discussing swims:
  - Positive comments or praise
  - Suggestions for improvement
  - Positive comments
- Things you, as a parent, can do after each swim:
  - Tell him how great they did! The coaching staff will be sure to discuss stroke technique with them. You need to tell your swimmer how proud you are and what a great job they did.
  - This is another good time to check out the bathrooms, get a drink or something light to eat.
- The swimmer now waits until their next event is called and starts the procedure again. When a swimmer has completed all of their events for the day, they get to go home. Make sure, however, you, as a parent, check with the coach before leaving to make sure your swimmer is not included on a relay. It is not fair to other swimmers who may have stayed to swim on a relay where your swimmer is expected to be a member and they are not there.
- Results are usually posted somewhere in the facility and available on the Meet Mobile app. Awards are often gathered for a team and given to the coach at the end of the meet. The coach will give the awards to the swimmers at a later time.

## **Parent & Athlete**

Competitive swimming programs provide many benefits to young athletes including self-discipline, good sportsmanship, and time management skills. Competition allows the swimmer to experience success and to learn how to treat success and failure as two sides of the same coin, while becoming healthy and physically fit. As a parent, your major responsibility is to provide a stable, loving and supportive environment. This positive environment will encourage your child to continue. Show your interest by ensuring your child's attendance at practices, by coming to swimming meets and volunteering for your club at swim meets, or by participating in fundraising, etc. Parents contribute to the success experienced by the child and the team. Parents serve as role models and their children emulate their attitudes. Be aware of this and strive to be positive role models. Most importantly, show good sportsmanship at all times toward coaches, officials, opponents and teammates. Remember that you are teaching your child at all times.

## **Be Enthusiastic and Supportive!**

Remember that your child is the swimmer. Children need to establish their own goals, and make their own progress towards them. Be careful not to impose your own standards and goals. Do not overburden your child with winning or achieving best times. Let them know that first they are the child you love, and second, a swimmer. Tell them you will love them whether they swim well or not, and ask only that they give their best effort. Learning about oneself while enjoying the sport is the most important part of the swimming experience. The swimming environment encourages learning and fun, which will help your child develop a positive self-image.

### **Positive Parenting Tips**

1. Your child needs your emotional, physical, and financial support. Be liberal in providing this support.
2. Support but do not push your child.
3. Understand development – long-term development as an athlete, and growth and development as it impacts performance.
4. Be realistic in terms of expectations; factor in age and skill level; be aware of your child's perception of your expectations.
5. Emphasize performance and effort, not just outcome. The athlete only has control over his/her performance. Define and measure success as giving maximal effort and as personal improvement.
6. Keep winning in perspective.
7. Do not bribe.
8. Give plenty of encouraging and rewarding statements. Criticize sparingly.
9. View swimming as an arena in which to teach your child about commitment, hard work, and coping with adversity.
10. Work to form an effective Coach-Athlete-Parent Triangle.

### **You & Anderson Barracudas**

Parental involvement is crucial to every club. Regardless of the organizational model of the club, parents play key support roles. In parent owned clubs, parents are needed in leadership roles as board members and committee leaders. Regardless of structure, clubs are looking for volunteers to help with swim meets, coordinate social events and organize fundraising. Volunteering to help your club is a great way to get involved, meet other parents and be a positive role model for your child. Contact the coach or an involved parent to find out more about what you can do and how you can be a positive force in your club.

Getting involved with your child's club is a great way to meet people, have fun and teach your child about commitment. Many swim parents develop long-term friendships and enjoy the family-like atmosphere that develops when people work together. Working at a meet can be a lot more fun than sitting in the stands! Additionally, when your child sees you devoting time and energy to help the team, he or she understands that team loyalty is important and worthwhile.

## **Let the Coach Coach!**

The best way to help your child achieve goals and reduce the natural fear of failure is through positive reinforcement. No one likes to make a mistake. If your child does make one, remember that this is a learning experience. You and your child should learn to treat success and failure as learning experiences and not life changing situations. Encourage your child's efforts and point out the positive things. The coach is the one you have assigned to judge a swimmer's performance and technique. Your role is to provide love and support regardless of outcome.

## **What To Take To The Meet**

1. Most important: ABLY Swim Suit, ABLY Cap--and goggles.
2. Towels-Realize your swimmer will be there awhile, so pack at least two.
3. Something to sit on. Oftentimes the swimmer area may be located in a gym or cafeteria.  
Example: sleeping bag, old blanket, or anything that will be comfortable to sit on. The swimmers will be spending a lot of time on it.
4. Sweat suits/warm clothes/parka! Each swimmer may want to bring two pieces of warm clothing because they can get wet and soggy.
5. Team T-shirt. Each day of the meet will be a different color team shirt. This will be announced before the first day of the meet.
6. Games: travel games, coloring books, books, anything to pass the time. **NO ELECTRONICS!!!!**
7. Food and Snacks! Suggestions for items to bring: Gatorade, Granola bars, bananas, fruit, yogurt, cereal, jello cubes, sandwiches, etc. **NO JUNK FOOD/CANDY DURING THE MEET!!!!** We want to instill healthy eating habits in our swimmers.

Once you have attended one or two meets this will all become very routine. Please do not hesitate to ask any other parent for help or information! These meets are a lot of fun for the swimmers! Your swimmer gets to visit with friends, play games, and meet kids from other teams. They also gets to "race" and see how much they has improved from all the hard work he/she has put in at practice. Special Parent's Note The pool area is usually very warm. Therefore, you need to make sure you dress appropriately. Nothing is worse than being hot at a swim meet. It makes the time pass very slowly! Also, feel free to bring folding chairs to sit on.

**PLEASE DO NOT STAND WITH YOUR SWIMMER AT THE STARTING BLOCKS!!!**

This area is very congested and not a place for parents or cameras!

**REMEMBER: NO FLASH PHOTOGRAPHY AT THE START OF ANY EVENT!! THE STARTING SYSTEM USES A STROBE FLASH AND AUDIO START. CAMERAS INTEFERE WITH THE STRARTING MECHANISM AND CAN DELAY THE MEET**