

Piranha Swimming

Team Handbook

Welcome to Piranha Swimming and the exciting world of competitive swimming. We are a non-profit organization which has been developing competitive swimmers since 1983. As a team, it is our objective to promote the sport of swimming at all levels; from the beginner to the advanced, the age-grouper to the Olympian. Our program seeks to foster not only the young swimmer's ability in the water but, through the vehicle of sport, to encourage maximum participation, provide educational experience, enhance physical strength and mental conditioning, and develop a rich base of swimming talent.

We realize that as a new family to swimming you will have lots of questions. If you cannot find the answers here, do not hesitate to speak with your swimmer's coach or e-mail the team e-mail address.

Communication

There are several ways in which we try to communicate with our membership to let you know of team activities, meets, parent meetings, and announcements.

Each family has a **family folder** at the pool where all kinds of information will be deposited. Have your swimmer check the folder daily for things such as meet flyers, the team newsletter, upcoming events, last minute info, and major announcements.

Please check our **Bulletin board** for news of upcoming swim meets, meet sheets, past and future events, swim meet results, best times, time achievements, job assignments, and more.

Please check our **website** regularly. Our calendar is posted on the site. We post meet results. We post newsletters. If you wish to be notified of current events and updates by **e-mail**, be sure to fill in your e-mail address on your family information form or give your e-mail address to the Head Coach or a Board Member.

As a member of Piranha Swimming, please request to join our private Piranha Swimming, Rohnert Park Facebook page. Our private group page is only for our team members and is monitored for safety and appropriate content. Our swimmers are also encouraged to join our private group. We also have a public Piranha Swimming Facebook page. We use our public page to post and share with the public our upcoming events.

Remember, you may always ask a coach (when the coach is not involved with swimmers in the water) whenever you are feeling uninformed. Finally, please try to attend our on-deck parent meetings to stay in touch with the other parents.

During practice, please be sure to wait in the grass, in the bleachers or other designated parent/spectator areas. Only Pacific Swimming carded officials, coaches and swimmers are permitted to be on deck during practice per USA Swimming Safety Rules. Only carded individuals are protected under the liability provided through USA Swimming. USA Swimming, Pacific Swimming, and Piranha Swimming must follow all SAFE SPORT Protocol outlined at usaswimming.org. Please allow the coaches to be responsible for communication with the swimmers during practice. This would include swimmer questions, issues with caps and goggles, etc.

Numbers to Know

Voice Mail (707)536-1349

Ericka Richards, Head Coach (707)235-5570 (cell)

Email – piranhacoachericka@gmail.com

Website: <https://www.piranhaswimming.com>

Practice Schedule

The practice schedule is posted at H pool (Honeybee Pool) on the bulletin board as well as on our team website at www.piranhaswimming.com. Be sure that your swimmer attends practice as much as possible. We understand that things do come up that prevent our swimmers from attending every practice. Please let your coach know when your swimmer may not be attending practice.

Group 1	Monday - Friday	45 mins
Group 2	Monday - Friday	1 hour
Group 3	Monday - Friday	1 hr 15 mins
Juniors	Monday - Friday	1 hr 30 mins
Pre-Seniors, Seniors	Monday - Friday	2 hours
Saturday morning practices for Age Group, Juniors, Pre-Seniors, and Seniors 1.5 -2 hrs TBD		

Early Morning practices for Juniors, Pre-Seniors, Seniors TBD

Dryland training schedule TBD for all groups. This schedule is subject to change please see emails.

FEES:

USA Swimming Registration -This is the annual fee to register a swimmer with USA Swimming within our area – Pacific Swimming. This fee is **\$73.00** and is renewed every December but due in September to allow Pacific Swimming time to process all the teams in our LSC registration.

Team Registration Fee -This is our annual team registration fee and is separate from the USA Registration. The fee is **\$100** and is to be paid each year. A family joining the team after May 31 will be paid through August 31 of the following year.

Dues -Dues are dependent upon which group your swimmer is assigned. Dues are to be paid at the beginning of every month to maintain membership in good standing, and to participate in practices and meets. We will not prorate dues, if you start mid-month your dues will start the first of the following month. Late payments or failure to make monthly dues can result in a temporary break for the swimmer. Please let the head coach know immediately if there are circumstances that will prevent you from making timely payments. We will do our best to work with you and keep your swimmer in the water.

Group 1.....\$95.00/mo.

Group 2.....\$100.00/mo.

Group 3.....\$115.00/mo.

Juniors\$120.00/mo.

Pre-Seniors.....\$130.00/mo.

Seniors.....\$150.00/mo

Families with three or more swimmers receive 50% discount off lowest group fees per month

Inactive/Quit Status

Any change in active status of the swimmer must be reported to the coach and a “**Break/Quit Form**” filled out in advance of the swimmer’s break. Circumstances beyond control of swimmer and family should be brought to the attention of the coach and special considerations can be made on a case-by-case basis. The Inactive/Break fee will be used by the Board in the time of natural disasters and any other out of our control closures. This will prevent us from losing money as the team still has expenses to cover. If you leave the team altogether, please provide notification to your coach and to the team’s bookkeeper to avoid any unfulfilled obligation charges.

If a “Quit Form” is not filled out and notification is not made by the 1st of the month, the swimmer’s family will still be responsible for that month’s dues.

Scholarships - Financial Scholarships may be available and are based on need, on a case-by-case basis. Please see Coach Ericka for scholarship considerations. Families on scholarship will be expected to contribute more to the team in fundraising and family commitment hours.

Team Unify Website www.piranhaswimming.com

Our Website can be a place to go to for events, meets, job signups, and for paying your team bill. Shortly after you have turned in all your registration paperwork and payments, you will receive an email from our website to log in and set up your profile. Once you have set your profile, you can choose your method of payment. Go to your account and choose payments options. You will have 3 options:

1. **Bank account** – You may choose this option if you would like to have your dues and other payments withdrawn directly from your checking acct. This withdrawal takes place on the 1st of each month.
2. **Credit Card** – You may enter a credit card account to have charged each month for your dues. This charge is made on the 1st of each month.
3. **Manual** – under the manual payment method you may choose to pay by:
 - A. mailing a check
 - B. dropping off cash or check at the pool or
 - C. You may use **PayPal, Square or QuickBooks** to pay your team account. PayPal payment options are available on the website. Square payment is available thru Coach Ericka.

There is a **\$5** processing fee regardless of how you choose to pay please note it will be added to your payment. You can change your payment options whenever you need to by simply clicking on any of the other options available. However, any changes must be made **before the 1st of each month.**

Dues, meet entry fees, fundraising, volunteer commitment, or anything that is required of your family in the current year for Piranha Swimming Registration appears on monthly billing.

Piranha Swimming will send you an invoice informing you of the charges that are due on the 1st of the current month. If money for any of the above is not received on the 15th of the

month, you will get 1 (one) courtesy invoice from Piranha Swimming explaining charges and a late payment fee will be applied to your account in the amount of \$15.00.

If payment has not been received by the next month's billing cycle grace period (the 15th of the month), family must make payment arrangements by the 20th of that month to pay off the debt incurred before swimmer will be allowed back in the pool. Piranha Swimming has 2 options for payment arrangements. A signed contract for both parties will be provided with details of that payment arrangement.

Piranha Swimming **Volunteer Hours and Fundraising**

Piranha Swimming is very fortunate to have a talented group of parents **and it takes all of you to keep this team running smoothly and efficiently.** We need your participation and commitment to ensure our continued success.

Jobs & Hours: We have several jobs that parents can help with and each family is required to earn a certain number of volunteer hours, depending on the group of their most advanced swimmer.

There are 2 types of volunteer hours required:

- A. **Meet Jobs:** Piranha Swimming hosts to 3-5 meets per year, with a typically meet day running 4-5 hours.
- B. **Club Jobs:** These are jobs which are critical to running our club such as fundraising, publicity, Board of Directors positions, coordinators, team spirit activities, social activities, and social media are just a few.

The number of hours required by each family is 15 hours. We hope those families with older swimmers will help more, provided they have more experience with the duties of the team. But if you have talents and experience that can help us, please feel free to do as much as you can.

All families are required to earn volunteer hours working at our meets, whether or not they have swimmers in the meet. We need everyone to help fill the meet positions in order for these meets to run smoothly. These meets are not only a good source of income for our team, but we fulfill a need within our zone for meets so our swimmers get more opportunities for competition.

Meet jobs and other such jobs are posted on our website under events. Parents can sign up for as many slots as they choose for each event.

Volunteers who do not satisfy their hour requirement by the end of the season will be charged **\$30.00 per hour** not fulfilled. We will work with a parent to help find ways to fulfill volunteer hours. Please reach out to us early and do not wait until July or August. Please remember we prefer your time, not your money.

If you have extenuating circumstances that will not allow you to earn your volunteer hours, please talk to a board member or coach. Often, we can find a job that will fit in with our restrictions. If you truly have unique circumstances, we will take that into consideration.

Volunteer Hours Requirements Based on Groups

Training Group	Club Hours	Fireworks Booth
Group 1	15	4
Group 2	15	4
Group 3	15	4
Juniors	15	4
Pre Srs/Seniors	15	4

Families joining after **May 1** will be responsible for **4 hours** in the fireworks booth only. Hours are per family and two parents working same shift is still 2 hours. **If your child takes a break, you are still obligated to fulfill volunteer positions during that time.**

Referral Credit

You will earn a **\$25** credit on your account for any family you refer to join our team and they join. This can be used towards your \$500 annual fundraising commitment, just let Coach Ericka know.

Meet Positions:

Our team hosted meets require a great deal of parent power to run smoothly. We need parents to fill these positions. These require little or no training: Setup/takedown, meet marshals, snack bar, hospitality, announcing, clerk of course, awards, computer, dolphin operation, head timers.

Meet officials: Our team is required to provide officials at all meet we host and meets we attend. These positions require training but can be a great way to help our team and can be a rewarding experience. See our section on officials for the opportunity to earn volunteer credits.

Away meets – All parents have an obligation to time at away meets (meets hosted by other clubs). This is an expectation amongst all swim clubs in USA Swimming. We in turn, expect the visiting teams at our meets to volunteer to time. If you attend a meet with your swimmer(s), remember that the host teams will be happy to time for our meets when we can help timing at their meet.

Piranha Swimming hosts 3 meets per year:

- Piranha C/B/A+, usually in March
- Piranha C/B/A+, usually in May
- Piranha Distance Meet usually in late October or Early November

Officials -

All teams within our zone must provide officials to meets we attend within this zone, whether the meet is home or away. If we attend a C/B/A meet in another zone, we will also be required to bring officials. For every 11 swimmers we have at meet, we must provide one official. When we attend a championship meet in another zone, we are not required to bring an official, however, all teams hosting a meet greatly appreciate it when a visiting team can provide an official.

All officials that you will see at every meet we attend are volunteer parents like yourself. Becoming an official does require a little bit of time and practice, but many parents find it very rewarding and a great way to give back to the sport of swimming. Being an official requires some training, some tests, and certifications. Officials must also wear a required attire when working at a meet.

All teams must have trained, qualified, and willing officials and all teams face the challenge of keeping trained officials. Piranha Swimming recognizes how hard our officials work and we want to let you know this by being able to help you with expenses and give you volunteer credits for all the time you spend on deck.

Each official will receive:

- 2 shirts per year (polo/dry wick) from USA officials shirt site
- All official's registration and background check paid

Our officials can earn credits for each session worked:

- C/B/A meet = 1 credit
2 credits if we have more than 11 swimmers that day
- Championship meet, trials/finals =
Prelims = 1 credit, 2 credits if more than 11 swimmers
Finals = 2 credits, 4 credits if more than 11 swimmers
- Senior Open, II = 2 credits, 3 credits for more than 11 swimmers
- Senior T/F = Prelims = 3 credits, 6 if more than 11 swimmers
Finals = 5credits, 10 if more than 11 swimmers

1 credit = \$5.00

Officials can redeem their credits, up to 5 credits a month (\$25.00 max) on dues per month.

20 credits = White officials' parka, or other officials gear.

It is up to each official to make sure their sessions are documented by the head official at each meet they work.

Club Jobs:

Along with hosting and running our meets, our club must run the business of the team. We need our parents to share their strengths and talents with us to keep our club running smoothly and financially strong.

Club Management – Piranha Swimming is a non-profit 501 (c) (3) business. Therefore, we are managed by a Board of Directors made up of coaches and parent volunteers. The B of D has the responsibility of managing business of the club. The board oversees all committees. Committee chairs are part of our team management and can be a rewarding way to contribute to the stability of our program.

Membership – The role of our membership committee is the maintenance of our current membership, distribution of information, recruitment, and publicity for growth, as well as organizing team spirit activities for swimmers such as potlucks, holiday events, and awards ceremonies.

Fundraising – As a non-profit we rely on the dues from our membership and the funds that we can raise to keep our business healthy. Fundraising includes our traditional Fireworks booth, our lap-a-thon, corporate sponsorship, and other events. Sponsorship is the backbone of our financial stability. We need to seek out new sponsors, renew current sponsors, distribute our benefits to each sponsor and ensure those sponsors see their banners on our walls. Sponsors are recognized in our programs at our team hosted meets, and on our website.

Fundraising Commitment:

Fundraising consists of participating and raising necessary funds for the ongoing lease of our facility and operational costs. Each family has annual requirement to raise or pay **\$500**. You can do this thru our fundraisers or your own.

Piranha Swimming hosts a spring fundraiser, and this event typically requires our families to sell tickets to the event. Events in the past have been a pasta feed, crab feed, pancake breakfast. These events need ticket sales to be successful, along with raffles and silent auctions. Each family is required to sell tickets. We ask that families make the effort to sell the tickets rather than the burden to purchase them all.

Our summer fundraiser is our **TNT Fireworks booth**. The booth operates from June 30 – July 4, 8:00 am to 10:00 pm. The funds we earn from the week-long event provide us the ability to pay for our pool lease through the winter months. Because this fundraiser is a five-day, 12 hours per day event, we need each family to work 2 two-hour shifts at the booth. Of course, we can always use as much help as possible.

Our annual Swim-A-Thon is held in the fall. See team Calendar for the date. Swimmers collect pledges for laps swum in 2 hours. It is fun, challenging, and way for the athletes to contribute to their team. Prizes are awarded to those who can bring in the most funds raised.

TEAM ATTIRE POLICY

Piranha Swimming is an Arena-sponsored team and benefits from their sponsorship in many ways. We ask that our swimmers support Arena in return by purchasing their products (suits, backpacks, warm-up suits). This does change so check team Unify page for most up to date information.

Swimoutlet.com. is where you can buy Team suits at any time online thru our website.

See Team Unify to order your team gear! Log in, click on “For Our Parents” the look for “Competition Gear” in the list. You can also click the link in our Partners section, this is the banner on the lower left. Swim Caps are ordered a couple times a year, watch for emails or other communications as to when the order is being taken.

Practice

Suits. Swimmers are not required to wear team suits during practice. In fact, we discourage swimmers from wearing team suits during practice to prolong their use and keep them from fading. Practice suits should meet accepted standards of decency and should not restrict a swimmer’s movements or interfere with the swimmer's ability to use proper technique. Typical practice suits can be purchased at local sporting goods shops or online. Board shorts and swim shirts are strongly discouraged, since these items are not permitted to be worn in competition and we want our swimmers to be accustomed to wearing swimsuits that will be permitted in a meet.

Goggles. Swimmers will be asked to come to practice each day with a well-fitted pair of goggles. We want our swimmers to learn to adjust these themselves, learn to manage them when they fill with water, and to dive for races with them.

Caps. Swim caps are required for swimmers with hair that covers their ears or falls into their Eyes. Team caps are not required for practice.

Meets

Team Suit. Swimmers must wear team suits to all swim meets. The Piranha suit is available with the printed team logo, from **Swimoutlet.com.** The logo is not required. Solid, Navy suits, such as the (Arena Madison) and (Arena Board Jammer), Tech Suits are also acceptable but should be (Arena brand).

Meet suits should be tight fitting with very few wrinkles. A good rule of thumb for female meet suits is that you should not be able to pull the straps higher than the bottom of the earlobe. Any higher and the suit is too big. Jammers should fit tight around the waist and thighs and end just above the knees.

Tech Suit Policy. We ask that our Piranha swimmers 12 years old and younger not wear tech suits (knee suits) except at a JO+(Junior Olympic) level competition meet or higher. Tech suits are designed to reduce drag through compression and reduced absorption of water. While they can give a slight boost in performance, they cannot substitute for a good foundation in swimming. We want our age group swimmers to focus on basic skills and proper technique and understand that improvement comes through effort rather than technology.

Team Caps. Team caps are required of all Piranha swimmers (male and female) at meets. Arena team caps are available at the pool in latex and silicone. Silicone caps with swimmer's names are generally ordered once or twice a year with a two-cap minimum order. Coaches will have team caps at practice and at meets if you need to purchase one.

Piranha Wear. The team has a variety of T-shirts, sweatshirts, and sweatpants available for purchase. In order to project a cohesive team image and show pride in our team we highly recommend that swimmers

have some form of Piranha Wear with them at meets. Piranha Wear is required for all travel and championship meets.

Other optional items for swimmers such as team parkas, team Backpacks and such, can also be ordered through *Swimoutlet.com*.

Following is a list of suggested equipment for daily practice:

- Goggles (2) Mirrored/Non
- Practice Swim Cap
- Practice Swimsuit
- Kick Board
- Pull Buoy
- Fins and/or Zoomers
- Equipment Bag
- Hand Paddles
- Snorkel

If you should have any questions, check with your swimmer's coach.

BEHAVIOR CODE FOR SWIMMERS & PARENTS

Our guidelines are founded on the principles of mutual respect & cooperation.

SAFETY

1. Lightening, earthquake, fire or personal injuries are incidents that require the full cooperation of all members. Please stay calm and listen for directions from our coaches.
 - a. During an electrical storm, no one can be outdoors. Coaches must maintain order in the locker/bathrooms rooms and NO SHOWERS can be used.
2. Due to drowning risks and other conditions, children not participating in swim practice or competitions must be accompanied by a responsible adult.
3. No one should ever submerge below a pool cover, nor climb on lane line/cover reels.
4. Running, pushing, or horse play on the deck area are not permitted.
5. It is unsafe to throw training gear. Weights, surgical tubing, medicine balls and exercise balls should be used with supervision and only in the way they were designed for exercise.
6. Swimmers who are waiting for transportation should always wait inside the swim center complex.

7. Persons who seem out of place or unfamiliar and activities of an unsafe, unusual nature should be reported immediately to one of the coaches.
8. No unauthorized or uncarded individuals shall be on deck during practice.
9. Each swimmer should have a current Medical Authorization Form with Medical Release on file with the team.
10. No cameras or cell phone photography of any kind in the locker rooms or behind starting blocks.

CITIZENSHIP = TEAMMANSHIP

1. We will refrain from judging or criticizing others. We will not discuss individuals when not in our presence.
2. We will "PRAISE IN PUBLIC AND CORRECT IN PRIVATE".
3. We will treat all members of the team (coaches, swimmers, parents) and our opponents with dignity and respect.
4. We will refrain from using drugs, alcohol, and tobacco.
5. We are all responsible for the care and proper use of equipment. Practice is not finished until all supplies are returned to storage. Everyone helps.
6. Physically or verbally abusive behavior is unacceptable for members of Piranha Swimming. Piranha Swimming follows USA Swimming's policy for **No Bullying**, and this type of behavior will not be tolerated.
7. We will be dedicated and loyal to our club and teammates. We will be vocally supportive. We will always display our team pride by competing in Piranha Swimming attire. Team caps and suits are to be worn when competing.
8. We will arrive to practice allowing enough time to prepare and begin on time.
9. We will be committed to our best effort every day. An honest effort does not include cutting laps, pulling on the lane line or missing sendoff/sets.

Parents Code of Conduct

Piranha Swimming as an organization highly encourages the following parental behavior:

- Open communication between parents, swimmers and coaches emphasizing goal setting and focusing on the performance expectations of both the swimmer and the parents
- Meeting with the coaches/swimmers/parents during appropriate times to discuss issues
- Positive reinforcement of all swimmers in all situations - team spirit, team loyalty
- Parental involvement on the Board of Directors and in organizing and running of meets and other team events

Piranha Swimming as an organization will not tolerate the following behavior from parents:

- Coaching your children at practice or during meets, that is the coach's job
- Interrupting or confronting the coaching staff on the pool deck during practice or meets
- Abusive language towards coaches, swimmers, parents, officials and your own children
- Any behavior that brings discredit or disruption to our swimmers and our organization

**As a parent of a swimmer and member of Piranha Swimming,
I will abide by the following guidelines:**

1. Practice *teamwork* with all parents, swimmers, and coaches by supporting the values of *Discipline, Loyalty, Commitment and Hard Work*.
2. As a parent, I will not coach or instruct the team or any swimmer at a practice or meets (from the stands or any other area) or interfere with coaches on the pool deck.
3. Demonstrate good sportsmanship by conducting myself in a manner that earns the respect of my child, other swimmers, parents, officials, and the coaches at meets and practices.
Maintain self-control at all times. Respect everyone's role.

Swimmers – Swim	Coaches – Coach
Officials – Officiate	Parents – Parent
4. As a parent, I understand that criticizing, name-calling, use of abusive language or gestures directed toward the coaches, officials, and/or any participating swimmer will not be permitted or tolerated.
5. Enjoy involvement with Piranha Swimming by supporting the swimmers, coaches and other parents with positive communication and actions.
6. During competitions, questions or concerns regarding decisions made by meet officials are directed to a member of our coaching staff. Parents address officials via the coaching staff only.

Sanctions. Should I conduct myself in such a way that brings discredit or discord to Piranha Swimming, or USA Swimming, I voluntarily subject myself to disciplinary action. Piranha Swimming maintains the right to terminate any membership with/without cause in the interest of our vision, mission and objectives.

Your Responsibilities as a Swim Parent

- Encourage your child to swim, but do not pressure. Let your child choose to swim (and to quit) if he or she wants.
- Understand what your child wants from swimming and provide a supportive atmosphere for achieving these goals.
- Put your child's participation in perspective. Don't make swimming everything in your child's life; make it part of life.
- Make sure the coach is qualified to guide your child through the swimming experience.
- Keep winning in perspective and help your child do the same.
- Help your child set challenging but realistic performance goals, rather than focusing only on "winning or getting the best times".
- Help your child understand the valuable lessons sports can teach.
- Help your child meet responsibilities to the team and to the coach.
- Discipline your child when necessary.
- Turn your child over to the coach at practices and meets – don't meddle or coach from the deck.
- Supply the coach with information on any allergies or special health conditions your child has. Make sure your child brings any necessary medications to practices and meets.

Modeling Good Sportsmanship

It's especially critical that you model good sportsmanship for your child. "Being a good sport" is much easier said than done – just look at the examples of certain professional and collegiate coaches and athletes who do the opposite. It's crucial that you maintain a cool head and a healthy attitude toward sport if you expect your child to.

Here are ways to model appropriate attitudes and behaviors when you're at your child's meets:

- Encourage all swimmers.
- Control your emotions in frustrating situations.
- Abide by referee's or official's decisions. Most swimming officials are volunteers who have received special training.
- Congratulate the opponents when they win.

A Swim Parent's Dos and Don'ts at a Meet

1. Remain in the spectator area during competitions.
2. Don't advise the coach on how to do their job.
3. Don't coach your child during the meet
4. Don't make insulting comments to swimmers, parents, officials or coaches from other teams
5. Don't drink alcohol at meets or come to one having drunk too much.
6. Cheer for your team.
7. Show enthusiasm, and support for your child.
8. Be in control of your emotions.
9. Help when you are asked by a coach or an official.
10. Thank the coaches, officials, and other volunteers who conducted the event.

Values Kids Learn Through Sports

Your child can benefit greatly by participating in sports – but those benefits are not guaranteed. They are the result of a cooperative effort among clubs and administrators, coaches, officials, and parents. These benefits come more readily when adults put the interest of the children first and leave their own egos and desires about winning at home.

Through sports, your child can:

- Acquire an appreciation for an active lifestyle.
- Develop a positive self-concept by mastering sport skills.
- Learn how to work as part of a team.
- Develop social skills with other children and adults.
- Learn about managing success and disappointment.
- Learn about fair play and being a good sport.
- Learn respect for others.

Developing a Winning Perspective

Every decision parents make in guiding their children should be based first on what's best for the child, and second on what may help the child win. Stated another way, this perspective places *Athletes First, Winning Second*.

We are not saying winning is unimportant. Winning, or striving to win, is essential to enjoyable competition. Pursuing victory and achieving goals are sweet rewards of sports. But they can turn sour if, through losing, you or your child's proper perspective is also lost.

Maintaining this proper perspective can help some children achieve even more than they would if they were consumed with the idea of winning. An obsession with winning often produces a fear of failure, resulting in below average performances and upset children.

Building Your Child's Self-Esteem

Building self-esteem in your child is one of your most important parenting duties. It's not easy, and it's made even more difficult in sport by the prevailing attitude of "winning is everything." Athletes who find their self-worth through winning will go through tough times when they lose.

An athlete can be successful *without* winning. Success is a measure of an athlete's competency; winning reflects the outcome of a contest. Your child will not be able to control all of the factors that go into winning a race, but he or she can find success in developing and improving skills.

Building self-esteem in your child takes more than encouragement. You need to show your child encouragement. You need to show your child unconditional approval and love. It's easy to show that approval and love when a child succeeds; you might be challenged to do the same when your child fails. Don't praise dishonestly; children can see through that. If your child has a poor meet, don't tell them that they swam well. Just show the same amount of love and approval for them, not their performance, as you showed before the meet.

Questions to Ask Your Child after Practice or Competition

- Did you swim better this week?
- What did you learn in practice?
- What do you feel you need to work on?
- What did the coach emphasize after the event?
- Did you have fun swimming today?
- Was your opponent a good sport? Were you?
- Are you getting in better shape?
- What was your favorite part of the event?
- What's the best part of being part of the team?
- What do you like most about your coach?
- Were you nervous competing today? If you were, why?
- How can your coach help you improve?

Emphasizing Fun, Skill Development, and Striving to Win

The reason you should emphasize fun is quite simple: Without it, your child may not want to keep swimming. Children don't have fun when they stand around in practice and don't get to swim in meets, when they feel pressure to win, and don't improve or learn new skills. Conversely, they *do* have fun when practices are well organized, they get to swim in meets, they develop new skills, and the focus is on *striving* to win.

A focus on developing skills and striving to win takes the pressure off winning, which one child cannot control. But all children can improve their swimming skills and when they see that improvement, they are usually motivated to improve more. Developing skills is one of the most satisfying aspects of playing a sport.

Helping Your Child Set Performance Goals

Performance goals, which emphasize individual skill improvement, are much better than the outcome goal of winning for two reasons:

1. Performance goals are in the athlete's control.
2. Performance goals help the athlete improve.

Performance goals should be specific, and they should be challenging but not too difficult to achieve. For example, you might help them set the goals for completing each swim legally, applying the race strategy their coach taught them, and finishing aggressively.

Your child's coach and you should help your young athlete set such goals. Help your child focus on performance goals before a race; this focus will help swimming be an enjoyable learning experience for your child.

If you can't attend one of your child's meets, don't ask "Did you win?" afterwards. Ask performance related questions: You could ask, "How did your stroke feel?" "Were you able to visualize the race before you swam?" and "Did you talk to the coach after your swim?"

Talking with Your Child after a Poor Performance

Sometimes it's hard to know what to say to your child after a disappointing performance. When children know they did not swim well, they don't want to hear "You swam great!" And when they have had a poor race they don't want to be told "It's really not important." At the moment, it is important to them, and they should be permitted the dignity of their unhappiness.

Although parents mean well, remarks like these sound superficial and lack sincerity. Children can detect phony comments and resent them. When parents are insincere or provide false praise, children learn to place less value on their words and later may be unable to get full satisfaction from deserved praise. In short, praise generously and criticize sparingly, but don't be a phony.

Swim Meets

Your swimmer is ready for his/her first meet as soon as they can swim the distance required and feel confident enough to compete. The sooner your swimmer begins to compete, the sooner they will see improving times. A meet is a great teaching medium, and everyone is encouraged to improve their skills in preparation for the next meet. The weeks of practice before a meet and between meets are particularly important. It is during these practices that a swimmer perfects new skills and techniques and prepares for the next competition.

How to enter your child into a swim meet

1. Make sure that the swim meet is an approved swim meet that the Piranha coaches plan to attend. You can check the team website. You should also be sure to ask the coach which events your child should enter for any meet. Go to www.piranhaswimming.com under the events tab to make sure the meet is on our schedule.
2. Go to **PacificSwimMeets.com** find the meet and click on online entries. It will take you to <http://ome.swimconnection.com/meets> or **Fastswims.com**
3. Create an account and add your child/children. Please be sure you enter your child's USA Swimming number and that it is entered correctly. The number usually is the child's 6-digit birthdate, first 3 letters of the first name, middle initial, first 4 letters of the last name. If there are not enough letters in a name, an * is used. An example would be Suzy

Ann Smith July 4, 2006 070406SUZASMIT. If Suzy did not have a middle name: 070406SUZ*SMIT. Our LSC is Pacific – abbreviated to PC. Our Club Code is PRNA.

4. Once you have an account you do not need to enter this information again.
5. Click on “Enter Meets” tab and click on the meet you want to enter.
6. Click on the child that is entering the meet and choose the events to be entered. If the child has not swum this event before, a time of NT appears.
7. Save events, if there is another child to enter, then choose that child, enter events and then save events. When events are entered and saved, go to the payment page to complete transaction and pay.
8. Print the meet summary page and ring to the meet with you so you and your child know the events entered.
9. It is recommended to print the meet sheet itself to have important information regarding address, directions, start times, etc.

The next time you need to sign up for a met, you will just sign into your account, choose the child, enter events, pay and print.

If you have any problems be sure to ask your coach or any Piranha board member for assistance.

At the meet

Each meet has a warm-up time and a starting time. The swimmers should be on deck and ready to get in the water when warm-ups begin. The quality of each warm-up decides the quality of the performances in the meet. Arriving late for warm-ups starts your child off on the wrong foot before the meet even begins.

You will want to bring drinks and snacks to the meet. Suggested items are Gatorade, fruit juices, fruits, muffins, and vegetables. Be aware that concessions are not available at all meets. Food and drinks can make a real difference in your swimmer’s performance. Always have your swimmer bring plenty of towels, *warm clothes* and some sort of deck shoes or flip flops. A sleeping bag seems to be a favorite of competitive swimmers.

When a swimmer arrives at the meet, the first thing that they need to do is find the Clerk of Course table and check in. After checking in, the swimmer should locate their team and their coach.

The heat and lane that the swimmers will swim in are typically posted throughout the meet approximately 20 minutes before the event is to be swum. Swimmers need to regularly check and see if their event has been posted. As soon as a swimmer’s event is posted, they need to write down what heat and lane they are in. They then need to go straight to their coach and let them know as well. The coach will instruct your swimmer what to do next. They will tell them when to get into the water to warm up before the event, when to get out of the water and go to the starting blocks, as well as any advice.

Every swimmer needs to report to their coach immediately after finishing a race. After speaking with the coach, the swimmer may then talk to parents and teammates. Coaches attend meets for this purpose; let them do their jobs – coach! Parents should be there for love and support.

The events included in each meet are varying distances of the four competition strokes: butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, and freestyle as well as the Individual Medley, which is a combination of these four strokes.

Explanations of Terms and Times

Age Group: Division of swimmers according to age. The National Age Group divisions are: 10-under, 11-12, 13-14, 15-16, 17-18. Some LSC's have divided swimmers into more convenient divisions specific to their situation: 8-under, 13-over, 15-over, Junior, Senior.

Alternate: In a Prelims/Final meet, after the finalists are decided, the next two fastest swimmers other than the finalist are designated as alternates. If a finalist cannot participate, the alternates are called to take their place, often at a moment's notice.

ASCA: The America Swim Coach Association, the professional organization for swim coaches throughout the nation.

Blocks: The starting platform located behind each lane.

Breaststroke: One of the 4 competitive racing strokes. Breaststroke is swum as the second stroke in the Medley Relay and third in the Individual Medley.

Butterfly: One of the 4 competitive racing strokes. Butterfly (nicknamed fly) is swum as the third stroke in the Medley Relay and first in the Individual Medley.

Cap: The latex, silicone covering worn on the head of swimmers.

Check-In: The procedure required before a swimmer swims a meet.

Colorado: An automatic timing system used at swim meets.

Course: Designated distance (length of pool) for swimming competition. Long Course = 50 meters and Short Course = 25 yards or 25 meters.

Deck: The area around the swimming pool.

Distance: How far a swimmer swims to complete the race, i.e. 25 yards, 50 yards or 500 yards.

Disqualified: A swimmer's performance is not counted because of a rules infraction. A disqualification is shown by an official raising one arm with an open hand above their head.

Dive: Entering the water head first. Diving is not allowed during warm-ups except at the designated time, in specific lanes that are monitored by the swimming coach.

Dryland: The exercises and various strength programs swimmers do out of the water.

False Start: When a swimmer leaves the starting block before the horn or gun.

Flags: Pennants that are suspended over the width of each end of the pool approximately 15 feet from the wall.

Freestyle: One of the 4 competition racing strokes. Freestyle (nicknamed Free) is swam fourth in both the Medley Relay and the Individual Medley.

Goggles: Glasses type devices worn by swimmers to keep their eyes from being irritated by chlorine in the water.

Heats: How events are divided based on number of swimmers and lanes. Your heat and lane are provided for each event according to a timeline. Should be posted somewhere around the pool will be marked with a sign “Girls” or “Boys”

IM: This refers to a race in swimming called the Individual Medley. In the IM race, swimmers swim either one, two, or four laps of each of the four competitive strokes. An IM race is always swum in the same order – Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke, and Freestyle.

Interval: A specific elapsed time for swimming or rest used during swim practice.

JO: Junior Olympics. An age group championship meet.

Kick: The leg movements of a swimmer.

Lane: The specific area in which a swimmer is assigned to swim.

Lane Lines: Continuous floating markers attached to a cable stretched from the starting end to the turning end for the purpose of separating each lane and quieting waves caused by racing swimmers.

Lap: One length of the course. Sometimes may also mean down and back (2 lengths) of the course.

Lap Counter: The large- numbered cards (or the person turning the cards) used during the freestyle events 500 yards or longer.

Leg: The part of a relay event swam by a single team member; or a single stroke in the IM.

Malfunction: A mechanical or electronic failure – not a human failure by the swimmer.

Mark: The command to take your starting position.

Marshall: The adults who control the crowd and swimmer flow at a meet.

Meet: A series of events held in one program.

Meet Director: The official in charge of the administration of a meet.

Non-Conforming Time: A short course time submitted to qualify for a long course meet or vice versa.

Novice: A beginner or someone who does not have experience.

NT: No Time. The abbreviation used on a heat sheet to designate that the swimmer has not swam that event before.

Officials: The certified, adult volunteers, who operate the many facets of a swim competition.

Pace Clock: The electronic clocks or large clocks with highly visible numbers and second hands, positioned at the ends or sides of a swimming pool so that the swimmers can read their times during warm-ups or swim practice.

PB's: PB stands for PERSONAL BEST (also known as BT or Best Time) and refers to a time that is the swimmer's best time in a particular event. (e.g., a swimmer's PB for the 50 free might be 30.45) Earning new PB times is the ultimate goal in swimming, as swimmers are always trying to improve (“shave time off of”) a previous time. A PB is the best indicator of a successful event. A swimmer should memorize all of his/her PB's so they know what they need to beat. A PB is every swimmer's short term goal – they want to earn a PB each time they swim.

Practice: The scheduled workouts a swimmer attends with their team.

Psyche Sheet: An entry sheet showing all swimmers entered into each individual event, sometimes referred to as a Heat Sheet or a Meet Program.

Pull Buoy: A floatation device used for pulling by swimmers in practice.

Qualifying Times: Published times necessary to enter certain meets, or the times necessary to achieve a specific category of swimmer.

Race: Any single swimming competition.

Referee: The head official at a swim meet in charge of all of the “wet side” administration and decisions.

Relays: A swimming event in which 4 swimmers participate as a relay team with each swimmer swimming an equal distance of the race. There are two types of relays: Medley Relay and Freestyle Relay.

Ribbons/Placing in Events: While ribbons are great, and swimmers should be proud of their placement in an event, placing is not a significant determination of whether a swimmer had a successful meet or event. There are infinite factors that go into placing. For example, a swimmer could get 1st in their event, but be the only swimmer swimming in that age group and therefore earn first by default. Or, a swimmer could get 10th in an event filled with 30+ swimmers in their age group – quite an accomplishment. Also, competition changes from meet to meet. Therefore a 4th place against a group of highly competitive teams could mean more than a 1st place against a less competitive group. Most importantly, a swimmer could earn a 1st place ribbon, but add time to their PB – the opposite of a swimmer’s main goal: to get a new personal best time. It is important to be proud of ribbons and placement, but to remember that they are not the prime indicators of a successful event.

Scratch: To withdraw from an event after having declared an intention to participate. Some meets have scratch deadlines and specific scratch rules, and if not followed, swimmers can be disqualified from remaining events.

Seed: Assign the swimmers heats and lanes according to their submitted times.

Simultaneously: A term used in the rules of butterfly and breaststroke, meaning at the same time.

Split: Splits refer to the time a swimmer uses to complete a certain leg of the race; therefore, in a 100 Freestyle race a swimmer could have two 50-yard splits (the amount of time it took them to do the first 50, and the amount of time it took them to do the second 50), or four 25-yard splits (the amount of time it took them to do each of the four laps). How a race is swum is just as important as a final time and is evaluated by considering the splits for each race. For example, swimmers should have between 2-4 seconds difference between the first and second half of a race. If a swimmer has less than 2 seconds, it means they could have swum the first half faster, and if the swimmer has more than 4 seconds between the two halves, it means the swimmer swam the first half too fast.

Start: The beginning of a race.

Starter: The official in charge of signaling the beginning of a race and insuring that all swimmers have a fair takeoff.

Stand-up: The command given by the Starter or Referee to release the swimmers from, their starting position.

Step-Down: The command given by the Starter or the Referee to have the swimmers move off the blocks. Usually the command is a good indication everything is not right for the race to start.

Streamline: The streamline position is the position a swimmer takes underwater after pushing off a [pool](#) wall. To streamline, a swimmer must tuck the head into the [collar bone](#), pointing both arms straight ahead in a tight line. The underside of both arms should be pressing on the back of the head.

Times: Times are everything to a swimmer. At an early stage, many swimmers will “shave” or “drop” several seconds off previous times whenever they swim that event. This is relatively rare in swimming, and as each swimmer progresses into his/her swim career it will become harder to cut entire seconds off a PB. Some swimmers spend an entire season trying to lose half a second or less off their PB. Therefore, any time shaved off a previous time is a huge success, even if it is a fraction of a second.

Time Standards C/B/A: United States Swimming (USS) has set up categories of times for motivational purposes. When a swimmer swims an event, their time will fall into one of several time standard categories. For most swimmers at their first meet, most or all of their times will fall into the “C” time category – the slowest category established by (USS). In addition to PB’s, swimmers are also trying to move up in the time standards. For example, if a swimmer has a “C” time in the 50 free, she will try to then earn a time fast enough to be a “B” time, and then an “A” time, and so on.

There are time standards for each swimmer that are divided by event and age of swimmer. Therefore, there are C/B/A times for 11-12 girls in each event they will swim at the meet. There are different standards for C/B/A times for 11-12 boys in each event they will swim at the meet. These times can be found in the PACIFIC SWIMMING website at www.pacswim.org.

Swimmers should use the time standards as long term goals. Swimmers should want to earn PB's each time they swim, and therefore move closer to the next time standard with each meet. Once they meet a new time standard ("I got my B time!") they will set the next long term goal of earning an "A" time in that event. PB's are always the most important gauge of a swimmer's success.

Timer: The volunteers sitting behind the starting blocks/finish end of pool, who are responsible for getting watch times on events and activating the backup buttons for the timing system.

Touch Out: To reach the touchpad and finish first in a close race.

USA-ID Number: A 16 part number assigned to a swimmer after they have filled out the proper forms and paid their annual dues. The first 6 parts are the numbers of the swimmers birth date: Day/Month/Year using zeros as place holders. The next three spaces are the first three letters of the athlete's legal first name. The next letter is the middle initial, followed by the first four letters of the swimmers last name. For example: USA- ID# for swimmer Suzanne Eileen Nelson and born Aug 27, 1976 = 082776SUZENELS.

Warm-down: The recovery swimming a swimmer does after a race when pool space is available.

Warm-up: The practice or "loosing" up session a swimmer does before the meet or their event is swum.