

Communicating With Your Child's Coach

If you have questions about your swimmer's workouts, abilities, strengths, weaknesses, or even more specific questions, i.e., "When will my swimmer move up?" – Talk to your swimmer's coach first. Also, please feel free to talk with the head coach about any questions you may have about your swimmer. Whenever possible, encourage your swimmer to interact directly with his/her coach.

One of the traditional swim team communication gaps is that parents sometimes feel more comfortable in discussing their disagreements over coaching philosophy with other parents rather than taking them directly to the coach. Not only is the problem never resolved in this manner, but in fact, this approach often results in new problems being created. Listed below are guidelines for parents raising difficult issues with a coach:

1. **Remember to keep foremost in your mind that you and the coach have the best interests of your child at heart.** The coach's goals do match yours, even though his/her approach may be different. You are more likely to enjoy good rapport and a constructive dialogue if you approach the coach with a positive attitude. Remember the coach is the expert in swimming and knows the best direction for BBST.
2. **Keep in mind that the coach must balance your perspective of what is best for your child with the needs of the Team or training group** that ranges in size from 12 to 140 members. On occasion, an individual child's interest may need to be subordinate to the interests of the group, but in the long run the benefits of membership in the group compensate for occasional short-term inconvenience. ?
3. **If your child swims for an assistant coach, always discuss the matter first with that coach,** following the same guidelines noted above. If the assistant coach cannot satisfactorily resolve your concern, then ask that the age group coach or head coach join the dialogue as a third party.
4. **If another parent uses you as a sounding board** for complaints about the coach's performance or policies, listen empathetically, but encourage the other parent to speak directly to the coach. He/she is the only one who can resolve the problem.
5. **Please ask the coach for a meeting to express concerns outside of practice.** The coach's attention in practice needs to be on the swimmers and not on the parents.

What You Can Expect From Your Child's Coach

1. Willingness to make an appointment to speak with you in a timely manner.
2. Courteous listening and acknowledgement of your concerns.