

Guide to Swim Meets for New Swim Team Parents

No doubt about it, swim meets are controlled chaos. There are a lot of moving parts. But the good news is that every meet, for the most part, runs the same. It's just where things are located that are different.

Planning for the Swim Meet:

1. **Bring some cash:** Most meets sell “Heat Sheets”, which is your program for the swim meet. You will need one Heat Sheet per family. (*Sometimes* the Heat Sheets are available on-line for you to print yourself the night before.) Heat Sheets are usually \$2-\$3 for regular season meets and around \$5 for the Meet of Champs at the end of the season. Many times there are also concessions at the meet, but you are welcome to bring your own food & drink. However, no food or drink (other than water in plastic bottles) are allowed on the pool deck. There is no admission due at the door to attend a meet. This is all covered in your registration fees.

2. **Bring a Sharpie marker and a highlighter.** More on what to do with the Sharpie and highlighter later.

3. **Spectator seating is BYOC** (bring your own chair.) It is also helpful to have a canopy because it is HOT & SUNNY at the meet (see an aerial photo of Bishop Meet below). If you don't have a canopy, make friends with someone who does! It is also helpful to have some old quilts, blankets or sleeping bags to put on the ground/floor. Sometimes you're on asphalt, sometimes grass, sometimes dirt, sometimes pool deck etc. Most kids enjoy being able to lay down in between swims. (A few pools are indoors but most are outdoors.)



4. **Swimmers need to stay hydrated and fed during meets.** Pack protein and high-quality carbs, not junk- those bodies are working hard. Water bottles are a must. Bring a cooler and a tote bag for your food. Some families find these wagons helpful in carrying all their gear!



5. **Pack 1-2 towels per swimmer and try to have an extra pair of goggles on hand.** (If you have an extra swim suit, bring that too...you never know if there will be a suit malfunction!) There is quite a bit of 'down time' in between races so bring something for your swimmer to do. Bring sunscreen just in case you need it. You can determine at each venue if it's needed...some are more shaded than others.

6. **Photography:** No flash photography is allowed in the pool area. Also, no photographs allowed behind the blocks (where the swimmers dive in.) If you are a timer, you are not allowed to use your cell phone while timing. All these rules are for the safety/protection of our swimmers.

7. **Swimmers wear their Barracuda t-shirt, team suit (or similar), swim caps (optional if hair is very short) and flip-flops.** Sometimes swimmers have to walk on hot concrete or asphalt. Have pull-on shorts/pants & jacket if it's chilly...yes, it has happened on occasion and some of the indoor meets are pretty cold.

Once you are at the Meet- Getting ready for the meet to start:

1. **Meets are approximately 4 hours long.....**BUT you don't have to stay the whole time. Once your swimmer's events are over, you can leave anytime. Just make sure your swimmer isn't in a relay before you leave! The meets start around 8:00 am and end around 12:00 pm. Warm-ups are usually at 7:00 am.

2. **Punctuality is a virtue.** Warm-ups usually start an hour before the meet- it's important for swimmers to be there ready to get in the water right when warm-ups begin. Watch for instructions for each meet that will include when each team's warm-up time will be. The coach will decide if the swimmers will be swimming the entire warm-up period or for a shorter time; whatever the decision by the coach, swimmers should be available to swim when warm-ups begin.

3. **Meets will run in the order of the Heat Sheet** (unless instructed otherwise...sometimes the relays are held out-of-sequence) How quick or slow a meet runs depends upon a lot of factors. Some meets are more organized than others. Remember, the people running the meets are volunteers like you & I. Be kind and patient.

4. **Back to that Heat Sheet and the highlighter!** Heat Sheets contain the following information:

- the individual swim events
- the participants in each event
- what heat they are in
- what lane each swimmer will occupy
- if the swimmer has a history of swimming that event, what his/her previous best time swimming in that event was

To keep track of when your kid is swimming, read through the heat sheet and highlight each of your swimmer's events. This is your job while your swimmer is warming up. (That is, if you are not volunteering for a job.)

5. **Now for the Sharpie marker.** Swimmers don't have Heat Sheets, so how do they keep track of what events they are swimming in? *By writing on themselves, of course.* Make sure when you write, it is upside right for your swimmer to read!

Each swimmer will need to have written on their arm or leg **a grid** showing the **Event** number, the **Heat** number, the **Lane** number, and the distance/stroke. Using a waterproof marker is kind of important to this process.

E	H	L	
7	2	3	100 IM
19	3	3	25 F
31	3	5	25 Ba
61	1	4	R Ba

See the example below:

EXAMPLE of EVENT CHART SWIMMER'S ARM or LEG

#7 Girls 8 & Under 100 Yard IM				
Lane	Name	Age	Team	Seed Time
Heat 1 of 2 Finals				
2	Sydney Boyer	6	BVCC	NT
3	Maddie Williams	7	BVCC	NT
4	Laura Stroud	7	WWST	NT
Heat 2 of 2 Finals				
2	Bree Sullivan	8	WWST	NT
3	Ruth McGee	8	WWST	2:19.99
4	Delaney Byrne	8	WWST	NT
5	Elena Williamson	7	WWST	NT

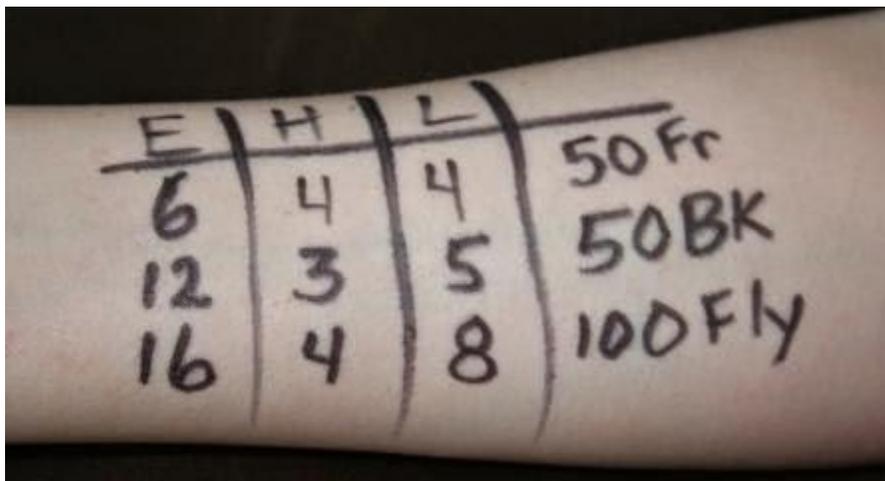
#19 Girls 7-8 25 Yard Freestyle				
Lane	Name	Age	Team	Seed Time
Heat 1 of 3 Finals				
2	Natalie Potter	8	BVCC	NT
3	Maddie Williams	7	BVCC	NT
4	Maeve English	7	WWST	NT
Heat 2 of 3 Finals				
2	Andie Smiley	8	BVCC	NT
3	Ava Griffin	7	BVCC	NT
4	Skyeler Jackson	8	BVCC	NT
5	Meredith Setser	7	WWST	NT
Heat 3 of 3 Finals				
1	Elena Williamson	7	WWST	NT
2	Noelle de Vente	7	WWST	NT
3	Ruth McGee	8	WWST	21.72
4	Jeannie Ridley	7	WWST	40.28
5	Alexandra Johnson	7	BVCC	NT

Heat 3 (#31 Girls 7-8 25 Yard Backstroke)				
Lane	Name	Age	Team	Seed Time
1	Hayley Ferrell	7	WWST	NT
2	Claire Crane	7	BVCC	NT
3	Sarah McGee	8	WWST	29.78
4	Delaney Byrne	8	WWST	35.94
5	Ruth McGee	8	WWST	NT

#61 Mixed 8 & Under 100 Yard Medley Relay				
Lane	Team	Relay	Seed Time	
Heat 1 of 1 Finals				
2	WWST	B		NT
	Jeannie Ridley W7	Laura Stroud W7		
	Luke Leong M8	Cayman Choate M8		
3	BVCC	A		NT
	Maddie Williams W7	Sydney Boyer W6		
	Cameron Taylor M8	Ethan Boyer M8		
4	WWST	A		NT
	Ruth McGee W8	Colin Kruse M8		
	Jenna Rupp W8	Bree Sullivan W8		

E	H	L	Event
7	2	3	IM
19	3	3	Free
31	3	5	Back
61	1	4	Relay (Back)

Here is an example written on the arm:



If your swimmer is young, like age 8 & younger, it is very helpful to have their last name written in Sharpie on their back. This is helpful to those working the Clerk of Course as the younger swimmers often don't pay attention.

During the Meet:

1. **Clerk of Course:** Swimmers will remain with their parents until their event is called to the "Clerk of Course" (aka the bullpen.) About 15-20 minutes before each event the swimmers will be called BY EVENT to report to the Clerk of Course area. Swimmers must go to C of C when their event is called. *Parents are not allowed in the C of C area unless you are volunteering for that area.*

Once you drop off your swimmer in the C of C, head to the pool deck so you are ready to watch your swimmer. Volunteers who work in the C of C area work HARD to organize swimmers by event & heat. They do not need extra people in that area causing more chaos. They try very hard to ensure your swimmer makes it to their race.

Some meets have really efficient, well run C of C and some are not so great. Remember, volunteers are running all of this and we need to be patient & kind.

2. **You will head to the deck area to watch your swimmer swim his/her race.** You do not need to be poolside for the entire meet. In fact, there just isn't enough room to do that. So people come & go constantly in the deck area, moving to the actual poolside when their swimmer swims. Then once done, leave the deck area until your swimmer's next event. This allows everyone the chance to see their swimmer.

3. **Meet your swimmer after they leave the pool area.** Every pool is situated differently, so where you meet your swimmer after they swim will be different. During warm-ups figure out a good place to meet. Ask a coach if it is unclear.

4. **Sometimes race results are available at a meet & sometimes they aren't.** It just depends. Actual winners are rarely announced at a meet. Ribbons are distributed at a later date. Watch for emails, Facebook posts, or texts regarding that.

5. **Cheering on your swimmer and their teammates:** No, your swimmer probably can't hear you cheering them on while they are swimming. It doesn't matter. Cheer them on anyhow! Keeping the team's energy pumping is a good thing. Remember that the swimmers need to be able to hear at the start though, so SHHHH at the start, then go ahead and show them your support!

6. **On that topic of swim team folks being good people....** Parents/spectators have a habit that I find admirable. When a swimmer is really hanging in there and finishes their event, they make sure to applaud the effort of the swimmer, especially for those who struggle to finish. What really impresses me is that the parents & other spectators do this for all the kids, regardless of team. That recognition can mean a lot when a kid may not be feeling great for coming in dead last half a pool length behind the next-to-last person.

7. **Be prepared for hearing that your swimmer has "DQed":** disqualified. The people you see walking around the pool with clipboards wearing white shirts and khaki bottoms are swim meet officials (all volunteers.) One of their jobs is to make sure the swimmers follow the rules, such as swimmers only are to use dolphin kicks during butterfly events, that the swimmers actually use the correct stroke (e.g. no freestyle during a breaststroke event); the proper turns are performed at the end of the pool, etc. When a swimmer is disqualified, this means the swimmer is not eligible for an award in

that event, and their time is not recorded. DQs are important not only to keep the meet fair but also to teach each swimmer proper swim technique.

Hearing that they have DQ'ed can be really tough news, especially for a new swimmer. Some families have a tradition of getting a Dairy Queen (DQ) ice cream cone when a disqualification happens. A little sugar always helps take away the sting of a DQ! (Substitute any treat since we don't have DQ! Ugh.)

8. Here is what the set up looks like at Bishop Meets:



VOLUNTEERING!

I saved this topic for its own section because this is one of the most important aspects of each swim meet. These meets cannot and will not be possible without parent volunteers! The only paid personnel are the lifeguards and coaches, EVERYONE ELSE is volunteers! Each family is required to volunteer for a *MINIMUM* of 4 shifts during the entire season. A shift is half a swim meet or approximately 2 hours. Since all the volunteers are parents, everyone understands that you don't want to miss your child's event. You can simply step away from your assigned area and watch them swim. No need to miss anything! Just make sure you let someone know that you're stepping away for a few minutes. I know what you're thinking. "I have no idea what I'm doing! I can't be a volunteer!" You'd be surprised how SIMPLE these volunteer jobs are! Look on the website under the "Meets" tab, you'll see a detailed description of the Volunteer Jobs. The only volunteer position that requires special training is the Stroke and Turn Judge. This is a critically important job to each swim meet. Watch for announcements of when the training is being held. There are usually only about 1 or 2 sessions each season.