

## ONE TIP FOR SWIM PARENTS ABOUT RELAYS

Courtesy of Elizabeth Wickham

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Relays can be the most exciting and funnest part of swimming—for both swimmers and parents.

I remember when my daughter was in 10 and unders. A bunch of 8 and 9 year-olds were competing for the coveted fourth spot on the JO relay. Their coach said that whoever swam the fastest 50 free at last ditch would make the team. My daughter didn't make it. I found her in the warm-down pool crying.

Grandpa was with us and he said, "This is way too much pressure for a young kid." She used this "failure" as motivation to work harder and earned a spot on relays from then on.

When my son was in the 11-12 age group he was picked for a JO relay. As a "relay only" swimmer he was thrilled to be part of the meet. It was a big deal for him to get a goodie bag, t-shirt and JO cap. When we arrived at the pool—after driving two hours and checking into a hotel—the coach said he had some bad news.

One of the dads, whose son was swimming individual events, didn't want to stay for relays. My son was devastated. I asked the dad why they couldn't stay the extra hour? He said, "It doesn't matter. They aren't going to score points."

I've heard stories repeatedly through the years of relay teams being let down by a swimmer. If you've got a kid who is fortunate to be picked for a relay, remember this is part of being a TEAM. Many kids love swimming on relays more than anything else. They often swim their fastest times because their teammates are depending on them. Being on a relay helps form friendships, good sportsmanship—and gets kids excited to swim.

If you ditch your kid's relay, you're showing your child that being a team player isn't important. Animosity and drama get stirred up by skipping a relay. It won't quickly be forgotten.

### **Here's my one tip for parents about relays:**

If your team is depending on your swimmer to be on a relay, remember that three other swimmers and their families are involved. Please communicate with your coach and other families. Don't leave your swimmer's teammates and families high and dry at a meet.

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