

Your Role as Parents

SWAT is a non profit parent run organization. As such, parents do play an important role for the club and the swimmer. Parents serve as role models and their children often emulate their attitudes. Be aware of this and strive to be positive models. Most importantly, show good sportsmanship at all times toward coaches, officials, opponents and teammates.

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 deal with defeat, 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, and by coming to swimming meets.

USA Swimming is a non-profit organization made up of very dedicated volunteers. Interested parents donate their time, energy and expertise at every level from local swimming clubs to the national Board of Directors. Your role as a volunteer is important to our sport. You can be actively involved in your child's swimming program and can also be instrumental in strengthening swimming in the United States. With a positive attitude and a willingness to lend a hand, you will also have a great impact on your child's athletic environment, and love of swimming. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, talk to your coach and/or club president of the SWAT Board.

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 over burden your child with winning or achieving best times. 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.

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. Encourage your child's efforts and point out the positive things. The coach is the only one qualified to judge a swimmer's performance and technique. Your role is to provide support.

Are You a Pressure Parent?

The following survey has been taken from the Amateur Swimming Association of Great Britain. If you answer yes to one or more of these questions, you may be in danger of pressuring your child. It is important to remember that the parents' role is critical and should be supportive at all times to ensure a positive experience for your child.

1. Is winning more important to you than it is to your child?
2. When your child has a poor swim, is your disappointment obvious?
3. Do you feel that you have to "psyche" your child up before competition?
4. Do you feel that winning is the only way your child can enjoy the sport?
5. Do you conduct "post mortems" immediately after competition or practice?
6. Do you feel that you have to force your child to go to practice?
7. Do you find yourself wanting to interfere during practice or competition thinking that you could do better?
8. Do you find yourself disliking your child's opponents?
9. Are your child's goals more important to you than they are to your child?

SPORTSMANSHIP IS FOR PARENTS TOO!

No parent should behave in such a way as to bring discredit to the swimmer, coaching staff, the team or the sport. Any disagreement with a meet official should be brought to the attention of the coach, and handled by the coach.

TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR PARENTS:

- I. Thou shalt not impose your ambitions on thy child.** Remember that swimming is your child's activity. Improvements and progress occur at different rates for each individual. Don't judge your child's progress based on the performance of other athletes and don't push them based on what you think they should be doing. The nice thing about swimming is every person can strive to do their personal best.
- II. Thou shall be supportive no matter what.** There is only one question to ask your child "Did you have fun?" If the sport is not fun, your child should not be forced to participate.
- III. Thou shalt not coach your child.** You have taken your child to a professional coach, do not undermine that coach by trying to coach your child on the side. Your job is to support, love and hug your child no matter what. The coach is responsible for the technical part of the job. You should not offer advice on technique or race strategy. That is not your area. This will only serve to confuse your child and prevent that swimmer/coach bond from forming.
- IV. Thou shalt only have positive things to say at a swimming meet.** If you are going to show up at a swimming meet, you should cheer and applaud, but never criticize your child or the coach.
- V. Thou shalt acknowledge thy child's fears.** A first swimming meet, 500 free or 200 IM can be a stressful situation. It is totally appropriate for your child to be scared. Don't yell or belittle, just assure your child that the coach would not have suggested the event if your child was not ready to compete in it.
- VI. Thou shalt not criticize the officials.** If you do not have the time or the desire to volunteer as an official, don't criticize those who are doing the best they can.
- VII. Honor thy child's coach.** The bond between coach and a swimmer is a special one, and one that contributes to your child's success as well as fun. Do not criticize the coach in the presence of your child or any swimmer, it will only serve to hurt that child's swimming.
- VIII. Thy child shalt have goals besides winning.** Giving an honest effort regardless of what the outcome is, is much more important than winning. One Olympian said, "My goal was to set a world record. Well, I did that, but someone else did it too, just a little faster than I did. I achieved my goal and I lost. This does not make me a failure, in fact, I am very proud of that swim."
- IX. Thou shalt not expect thy child to become an Olympian.** There are 225,000 athletes in U.S. Swimming. There are only 52 spots available for the Olympic Team every four years. Your child's odds of becoming an Olympian are 1 in about 4,300. Swimming is much more than just the Olympics. Ask your coach why he/she coaches. Chances are, he/she was not an Olympian, but still got enough out of swimming that he/she wants to pass that love for the sport on to others. Swimming teaches self-discipline and sportsmanship; it builds self esteem and fitness; it provides lifelong friendships and much more. Most Olympians will tell you that these intangibles far outweigh any medals they may have won. Swimming builds good people and you should be happy your child wants to participate.
- X. Be involved with your child's activities and supportive of the volunteers giving up their time to improve and help your club.** In this day and age, parent-child time is decreasing. There are many club jobs or activities that need volunteers for meets or daily functions. By getting involved in your child's club you will help the team function better, your child will see that you're interested in their interest and you get to make new friends while spending more time with your child.