

Your First Swim Meet

A guide for beginning Swimmers and Parents

First of all RELAX!!! Swim meets are a fun learning experience. Getting nervous is normal, but don't let it be the only thing you think about. Most swimmers are nervous because it is a new environment to be in. There are people and swimmers everywhere and if it is your first meet you probably don't know what to expect. Each time you swim in a swim meet the experience gets easier and easier. Swim meets are great for swimmers because it allows you to show off all the hard work you have done in practice!

We have put this handout together, which will hopefully make it easier to understand everything that goes on at a swim meet, and make your first swim meet a great experience!!

Entering A Swim Meet

All swim meets have a meet sheet. The meet sheet includes all the details of the swim meet, it explains the rules for the swim meet, and it has a list of all the events offered for each age group. Each swim meet has a different entry procedure, but as a general rule of thumb, we will send the meet sheet out to the club (via e-mail), with directions on how to enter the meet. The directions are generally the same:

1. Print out the meet sheet.
2. Write the swimmers name on the top of the meet sheet.
3. Circle or highlight the events you wish to swim.
4. Bring the meet sheet back to the swim club office with a check for the appropriate entry fees.

If you ever have any questions on how to enter a swim meet or what events you think you should swim, just talk to your coach.

Prior To The Meet

Before you go to a meet it is important to know where the swim meet is. If it is one of our home meets, the meet will be at our normal practice pool (Sinshiemer Pool). But sometimes the meet will be an away swim meet. Make sure you know the location of the pool. You don't want to be stressing out about not being able to find the pool while you are driving, so it is important to get directions to the pool before you leave. Also it is good idea to check the weather forecast for the day of the meet, so you know what to wear/bring.

What To Wear

It is important to wear warm clothes!! You will be sitting around waiting for your events longer than you will be swimming, so you must stay warm. What you wear will also depend on the weather. If it is colder you will want to wear more layers than if it is hot outside. However, even if it is warm outside you still want to wear warm clothes because you still might get chilly. Most swimmers forget about covering their feet, so bring shoes.

- **Team Gear:** If you have team apparel....wear it!! Show your team spirit!! If you don't have any, come by the office and we might have apparel for you to purchase.
- **Team Suit/Cap:** If you have a team cap and swimsuit then you should wear them to the swim meet. We have suits and caps available for purchase in the office. If you want to buy them, please remember that swim meets are usually very busy for the coaches, so plan on purchasing your cap and suit a few days prior to the meet. Although wearing team suits and caps are not mandatory, we highly encourage it because it makes everyone look more like a team.

What To Bring/Pack

It is always a good idea to pack your swim bag the night before your swim meet. You don't want to be frantically rushing around looking for your suit, goggles, shoes, etc. Of course, what you bring depends on the weather, but like we stated earlier...you always want to stay warm.

Tip #1: It is also a good idea to write your name on everything...caps, goggles, swimsuits...they all look the same, labeling is a good way to keep track of your belongings.

Tip #2: If the weather calls for rain, it is a good idea to pack some of your stuff (extra towels, extra clothes, etc.) in a ziplock bag. If all your other stuff gets wet, at least you will have some dry back-ups available.

Tip #3: Remember that you have to carry everything you pack from your car to the pool, so don't go overboard on packing. You don't want to make 10 trips from the car to the pool just to get all your stuff. Bring the necessities, and keep all the non-essential items in your car...if you need them then you can go out and get them.

Below is a list of things a SWIMMER should bring:

- **Swim Suit** – In addition to your competition suit, it is a good idea to bring a spare “just-in-case” suit.
- **Swim Cap** – Bring your competition swim cap plus an extra. Swim caps are easily misplaced and can tear easily.
- **Goggles** – Bring goggles that you know work properly. You don't want to be fussing with leaky or broken goggles right before your race. It is also a good idea to bring an extra pair of goggles in case your first pair breaks or gets misplaced.
- **Towels** – The number of towels you need depends on you...but you should always bring more than you think you would need. There is nothing worse than getting out of the pool and having a wet towel
- **Sunscreen** – Even if it is cloudy outside you will still need sunscreen.
- **Warm Clothes** – Like we stated earlier you don't want to be cold in-between races so bring plenty of warm clothes.
- **Parka** – If you have a parka bring it. It is an easy way to stay warm.
- **Shoes** – It is important to keep your feet warm and dry.

- **Water Bottle** – It is very important to stay hydrated during a swim meet. Most meets have a concession stand where you can buy bottles of water or Gatorade, but if you have your own water bottle on hand you hopefully won't forget to drink it.
- **Healthy Snacks** – Bring plenty of food. It is important to keep your body nourished during a swim meet. Most swim meets offer food at a concession stand, but they aren't always the best options, so bring things like granola bars, fruit, bagels, peanut butter sandwiches, etc. You know your body, so eat things that will make you feel good, not blah.
- **Chair** – Some swim meets don't offer a place to sit (and even if they do, they aren't always the most comfortable). So bring a chair or blanket to sit on. Some swimmers bring sleeping bags to sit/rest in during the meet to keep them warm.
- **Activities** – Some swim meets may take a long time or you may have a long break in-between your events, so it is a good idea to bring something to keep you occupied. Games, books, music, homework, etc.
- **Miscellaneous** – Any medications you may need (Ibuprofen, Inhalers, etc.), shampoo, conditioner, toiletries, etc.

Below is a list of things a PARENT should bring:

- **Chairs** – In-between watching your kids swim, and making sure they get to their races, you will want to have something comfortable to sit on and relax in. Some meets may offer seating, but it is usually limited and not very comfortable.
- **Sharpie, Pen, or Highlighter** – These are useful in keeping track of the events your swimmers are entered in and the heats and lanes they are swimming in.
- **Warm Clothing** – You will be sitting around during the races, so it might get chilly depending on the weather.
- **Snacks** – It would be good to bring a cooler for snacks not only for your swimmer but also for you. You may not have time to hit up the concession stand, so it is good to have some snacks easily on hand.
- **Activities** – Bring something to do in-between your swimmer's events.

When To Get To The Meet

Usually your coach will tell you when to be at the pool. Prior to the start of the meet there are many things you will need to do (put your stuff down, get situated, check-in, and warm-up), so allow yourself enough time to do so. If in doubt, arrive at least 15 minutes prior to the start of warm-up.

When You Arrive At The Meet

When you arrive at a meet it can be kind of overwhelming. Usually everyone arrives at the same time, so it seems like people are everywhere....don't worry, it thins out quickly. Below is a list of things you should do when you arrive at a meet.

1. **Team Area** – Look for our team area. At home meets we are in the same location (usually the back right corner of the pool on the concrete bleachers). At away meets, we don't have assigned team areas, so you will just need to be on the lookout for other Seahawk Swimmers. Once you find our team area, put your stuff down and go check-in.
2. **Check-In**
3. **Find & Report to your Coach**
4. **Warm-up**

Check-In

What is Check-In

You must check-in every day of the swim meet. Checking-in allows the meet directors to know that you are at the meet and plan to swim your events. Every swimmer must check-in. If you do not check-in you will not be able to swim your events.

How to Check-In

Look for where to check in. Sometimes there is a sign informing you where to check-in, sometimes there isn't. Just look for a few tables surrounded by a line of swimmers. Check-in tables/lines may be divided by gender and age group. Get in the line that is appropriate for you.

Once you get to the front of the line, you will tell the worker your last name. Once they find your name they will check/mark all the events you are entered in...make sure they check all your events. There will usually be markers available at the check-in table for you to write your event numbers on your hand (this is a good way to remember your events). If you think there is a problem with the events you are signed-up for, talk to your coach.

Tip: It is a good idea to know what events you are entered in prior to checking-in. That way it will be easy to tell if the check-in workers missed an event you were entered in or if there was a mistake with the entries.

YOU MUST CHECK-IN EVERY DAY OF THE MEET YOU ARE ENTERED IN!!!

Report To Your Coach

After you have checked-in, go find your coach so that they know you have made it to the meet. Let your coach know that you have checked-in and let your coach know if there were any problems at check-in. Your coach will let you know when you will begin warm-up.

Warm-Up

What is Warm-Up

Pre-Meet Warm-up is when the competition pool is open to all swimmers to get a warm-up swim in prior to the start of the meet. All swimmers must be under the direct supervision of their coach. Do not get in to warm-up until you have talked to your coach.

The competition pool will generally close at least 15 minutes prior to the start of the meet. When the pool closes, there may still be warm-up lanes available in the warm-up pool. If available, the warm-up pool will be a separate pool or designated lanes in the same pool.

Warm-up Rules/Procedures

Warm-up rules may vary from swim meet to swim meet, but below are rules that EVERY swimmer MUST follow and ANY swim meet.

- **3-Point Feet First Entry**

IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER TO ALWAYS ENTER THE POOL DURING WARM-UP WITH A 3-POINT FEET FIRST ENTRY!! This 3-point entry is for the safety of all swimmers. NEVER dive into the warm-up pool. A 3-point feet first entry is when you enter the pool with both feet while keeping one hand on the wall. During the pre-meet warm-up there will be lanes available for dives from the starting blocks, ONLY under the direct supervision of your coach.

- **Circle Swim**

There are usually many swimmers swimming in the same lane during warm-up (more than during practice) some are faster than you and some are slower than you. It is important to always swim on the right side of the lane. If you are always swimming on the right side of the lane you will be swimming in a circle. You want to stay out of the middle of the lane. The middle of the lane is used for passing only. If you want to pass a slower swimmer, or if a slower swimmer wants to pass you, they will pass you on the left side down the middle of the pool.

- **Don't Stop**

You never want to stop in the middle of the lane. If you need to stop for any reason wait until you get to the wall. It is dangerous if you stop in the middle of the lane as you might get swum over by other swimmers.

- **Get out of the way**

If you are stopped (you may only stop on the wall) you must move to the right side of the lane. Do not block the wall. Other swimmers might be doing a flip turn on the wall and you don't want them to flip turn/push-off on your body, so move out of the way.

- **Be Aware**

While you are warming-up be aware of the swimmers around you. If someone wants to pass you...let them. If you are on the wall...move. If you are swimming up on a slower swimmer...go around them.

If you follow these rules, you will have a safe and successful warm-up.

How to Warm-Up

Each swim group will have a specific warm-up. Your coach will tell you what you should do in order for you to be ready to race. Warm-up time is limited and the pool will be very crowded, so you need to make the best possible use of this pool time. Do exactly as your coach tells you and remember to follow the warm-up rules and procedures. It will be loud during warm-up (many swimmers, packed into one pool) so it is important to listen to your coach. Don't talk to other swimmers while you are warming-up or while your coach is telling you what to do. Don't let others interfere with your warm-up.

As swimmers get older, they will memorize their warm-up routine. It is important to follow your routine. The only person that can make adjustments to your warm-up routine is your coach. After you finish warming-up, go to our team area, relax, stay warm, and wait for your event.

How To Find Out When You Are Swimming

Each swim meet will have an area where they will post heat sheets. This is usually called the posting board. Girls and Boys are generally on different boards. Meet administrators will post heat sheets throughout the meet. Heat sheets assign swimmers to the heat and lane they will be swimming in. You will have to check periodically to see if your event has "posted".

Events are posted based on event numbers (in order). Find the event number you are swimming in. Then find your name. The number next to your name will be the lane you are swimming in. Each event will be broken down into heats. The heat you are swimming in will be listed above your name.

It is important to write down your heat and lane. Once, you find your heat and lane go tell your coach. It is important to let your coach know your heat and lane so that they will be able to know when you are swimming and they can be sure to watch your race.

Tip: It is a good idea to see how many heats are in the 2-3 events before yours, so you know how much time you have before your race.

Follow the events that are in the water

Before each event/race the announcer will announce the event number and heat that is in the water. It is important to listen to what event is currently swimming. This will let you know how much time you have until your event. In addition to the announcer, some swim meet will have scoreboards or 'event in the water' signs that will let you know what event is currently swimming. These are useful, however not every swim meet has these. So it is important to not rely on those and just pay attention to the flow of the meet.

Pre-Race

Swimmers should have a pre-race routine that they do before every race.

- **Talk to your coach**

If you haven't already talked to your coach about your race strategy, it would be a good time to do so before your race. Also, ask your coach about what you should do for your post-race warm down.

- **Pre-race warm-up**

Some swimmers will require pre-race warm-up. Ask your coach about when to start and what to do during your pre-race warm-up.

- **Go to the starting blocks**

Go to the lane that you are swimming in and get behind the blocks. It is a good idea for a new swimmer to be behind the blocks at least 2 heats before your race. While you are waiting behind the blocks for your event, it is important to stay warm. Bring a towel or parka to wear while you are waiting for your event to start.

Race Time

This is the most exciting moment. This is where you get to show off all the hard work you have done in practice.

1. Check with the timers in your lane to make sure you are in the right lane and double check the stroke/distance you are swimming.
2. Follow the official's commands. Some commands will be whistle commands and others will be verbal. Below is a description of the official's commands.
 - a) **Series of Short Whistles:** This is a call to the blocks. You should step up next to your starting block. The announcer will say the event/heat.
 - b) **Long Whistle:** This means to step up on the starting block. If you are starting on the deck, then step up to edge of the pool. For backstroke, this whistle means to enter the water (feet first). For backstroke, there will be an additional long whistle which will signal swimmers to place their feet on the wall.
 - c) **"Take Your Mark":** The official will say "Take Your Mark." At that point you will take your mark (your starting position).
 - d) **BEEP:** Once the starter has determined that the field is ready to start they will hit the start button. In most cases the sound will be a loud beep. At that point you dive into the water and start your race.
3. Swim your race
4. After the completion of the entire heat, you may exit the pool. Some swim meets do fly-over starts, which means swimmers from the previous heat stay in the water until the next heat of swimmers dive in.

Post-Race

First off...NICE JOB!! Congratulations on finishing your race. Every swim is a learning experience, whether you had a personal best time, or if you completed a race you never swam before, or even if you got disqualified...each swimmer learns something after each race.

- 1. Warm Down:** The first thing you should do after you finish your race is warm down immediately. Most swimmers do not warm down after a race as much as they should. If you do not warm down enough it will have an effect on your races later in the day. A good rule of thumb is warm down until your heart rate returns to normal and you are not breathing hard. Ask your coach how much warm down you should do...make sure you do this during your pre-race routine.
- 2. Get Dressed & Stay Warm:** After warm down it is important to change into warm dry clothes. Staying warm will benefit you throughout the duration of the swim meet.
- 3. Talk to your coach:** This is an excellent time to learn about areas that you need to work on to improve and also to get reinforced on things that you did well.
- 4. Relax and wait for your next race:** This is a good time to eat something and drink some water or Gatorade...staying hydrated and keeping your body fueled is important!!!

Missing Your Event

If you miss an event you were supposed to swim, the most important thing is to get to the blocks before the race is finished. If you get to the blocks before the race is finished you can talk to the referee and you might only be charged with a disqualification from that event. If you are granted a DQ, be generous and say “thank you” to the referee.

If you completely miss an event and don't talk to an official you will be charged with a “no-show” and will not be able to swim your next event. In some instances, there will be a financial penalty assessed to the swimmer. This is why it is very important to pay attention to the flow of the meet, so you won't miss your event.

Scratching Your Event

Sometimes things come up, you may have to leave early or you don't feel well and are unable to compete in the rest of the events you are entered in. If this is the case, don't just leave. First, come and talk to your coach. Your coach will direct you on how to “scratch” your upcoming events. If you just leave, without scratching, you will be assessed a penalty by the meet director.

Cheering For Your Teammates

If you are not swimming in a race you should be cheering on your other Seahawk teammates.

Swimmers Attitude

It is important that swimmers have a good attitude at the meet. Your attitude affects your swimming and your teammates' swimming. It is alright to get upset after a poor race, it's natural, but you need to get over it quickly and move on, and put the rest of your energy into thinking about and preparing for your next races. If you need help dealing with a race, talk to your coach. Good swims are contagious. If a swimmer has a good swim and gets excited, then other swimmers see that and get excited and they swim fast and pretty soon the whole team is swimming fast.

Relays

For some swim meets we will have Seahawk relays. Relays are a fun way to swim with your teammates. The coaching staff will put swimmers on relays. Our goal is to do the best we can to get every swimmer on a relay, but sometimes we just don't have the right number of swimmers to allow everyone to be on relay.

Coaches

The coaches are usually very busy during a swim meet. We are there to watch every swim, so our first priority is to the swimmers in the water. If you come over to talk to your coach, be patient. If we can talk to you right away we will, otherwise we will ask you to wait just a little bit. As coaches, we are juggling watching swimmers in the water, talking to swimmers before and after their races, and making sure swimmers are all prepared, and at home meets we may be helping run the meet as well. We might not always be able to go into great detail when we are talking to you, so if we are short with you please understand, and we will do our best to answer all your questions.

After The Meet

After the meet, it is important to make sure you take all your stuff home. Please remember to clean the area around you and check the area for any lost and found items that may be yours or your teammates.

Jobs for Swim Parents

At any swim meet, parent support is very important. At away meets, the swim club will be responsible for assisting with lane timing. We will usually have to supply 3-6 parents to help with timing. These are usually broken down into 1 hour shifts. If it is your first swim meet, we won't necessarily expect you to help with timing since you are still figuring out how everything works. But after you have a meet or two under your belt, assisting with timing will be very much appreciated.

At home meets, the support of parents is much more crucial. We have a reputation of putting on the best swim meets in the area, and that is only with the help of each and every swim club parent. For home meets, we are responsible not only for a timing lane or two, but also running the meet. This includes staffing the administration tent, helping with the hospitality or concession stand, helping run the meet, helping set-up the meet, and helping clean-up after the meet. The support of parents and families are a vital part of making our swim meets the huge success they are. Any help that you may give will be greatly appreciated.

Tips for Swim Parents

- It is helpful if the parent is familiar with the meet procedures and have their swimmers understand the procedures.
- For new swimmers, the most important role you will play will be getting your swimmers where they need to be...check-in, warm-up, to the blocks, etc.
- It's important to stay out of the way of the officials. They are there doing their job watching the swimmers in the water. Don't walk in front of them. It is generally a good idea to never walk in front of the administration tent.
- Don't argue with an official. If your child is disqualified, the official will let the swimmer know what they are disqualified for and then the swimmer should talk to the coach about it. If anyone should talk to the official it will be the coach only.

- The coach will discuss strategy and technique with your swimmer...this is not your job.
- Make sure your swimmers are staying hydrated, eating, and resting.
- Cheer on your swimmers, congratulate them, and console if necessary.
- Support and cheer on all swimmers on the team
- Monitor your swimmers behavior.
- Remind your swimmer that their behavior reflects on their team; they must behave like a champion at all times, with grace and humility and a smile on their face no matter the outcome of any one race.

Things to Remember

- Some swim meets may have slight glitches, so be prepared to have to wait for breaks, or check-in to open late, etc.
- The meet does not start with event #1 each day. The first day of the meet will start with event #1 and each day will start where the previous day left off.
- Also, some events might be skipped. There might not be any swimmers entered in that event so they will just skip it. Pay attention to this, especially if you are swimming in the next event.
- Cheer on your teammates...We are one team.
- Swim meets are meant to be a fun learning experience!! Good Luck!! Have Fun!! Enjoy the Experience!!

Swim Meet Terminology

USA Swimming – USA Swimming is the national governing body for competitive swimming in the United States. They are in charge of the overall organization and operation of the sport including swim clubs, swimmers, and swim meets.

LSC – LSC stands for Local Swimming Committee. USA Swimming is divided into 59 LSCs. These LSCs are responsible for governing competitive swimming in their respective areas. In California there are 5 different LSCs.

Southern California Swimming (CA) – This is our LSC. Within SCS we belong to the Coastal Section, which stretches from San Luis Obispo County south to Northridge. Most of the meets we attend are hosted by SCS swim clubs.

Central California Swimming (CC) – This LSC includes swim clubs in the Central Valley. We attend a few meets each year hosted by CCS swim clubs.

Pacific Swimming (PC) – Includes swim clubs located in Northern California and Northwestern Nevada, with the exception of Sierra Nevada.

San Diego-Imperial Swimming (SI) – Includes swim clubs from the San Diego area.

Sierra Nevada Swimming (SN) – Includes swim clubs from Stockton, Sacramento, Redding, Davis and surrounding areas.

Swim Guide – The swim guide is an annual publication, distributed by each LSC. It is a booklet that contains the rules and procedures for swim meets and LSC operation. It also contains time standards, records, and a calendar of swim meets/events. Southern California Swimming also has this information available on their website at: www.socalswim.org. USA Swimming also publishes a swim guide, which is more of a rule book for the sport of swimming conducted in the United States. High School Swimming and Collegiate Swimming also have their own rule books. While most rules agree, there are a few differences.

USMS – USMS stands for United States Masters Swimming. Masters offers swimming and competition for adults aged 18 and over.

Age Group – Division of swimmers by age that determines the events in which they are eligible to participate. Examples: 5-10 years old, 11-12 years old, 13 and over.

Event – Any race or series of races in a given stroke and distance for a specific age-group and gender.

BRW Event – BRW stand for Blue, Red, White. These are divisions of ability based on the time standards that are published yearly in the swim guide for a specific event based on age groups. An event that had BRW next to it means that entries for that event are open to swimmers of all abilities.

Blue = All swimmers faster than the red time standard.

Red = Swimmers slower than the blue time standard but faster than the white time standard.

White = All swimmers slower than the red time standard, including a swimmer with no-time.

Open Event – An open event is an event that requires a swimmer to be 11 years old or older and have an entry time equal to or faster than the time standard for that specific event. A swimmer with no-time may not swim in an open event. However, a swimmer who has never swum the event still may qualify for that event if they have achieved the time standard in the distance immediately preceding that event.

Proof Of Time Meets – A meet in which all swimmers entered in an event must have achieved the given time standard.

Heats – Events will be broken into heats based on the total number of swimmers entered. Heats are generally swum slowest to fastest, which means the final heat in each event will have the swimmers with fastest time going into the meet. Each heat is also seeded from fastest to slowest, for example: starting with the fastest swimmer in lane 4, then lane 5, lane 3, lane 6, lane 2, lane 7, lane 1, and lane 8.

Psych Sheet – Meet programs will be available to purchase at each meet. Included in the meet program will be a list of the events and the psych sheet, which is a list of all swimmers entered in each event ranked by their entry times. Parents can highlight their child and other swim club swimmers in the psych sheet and can also write the heat/lane next to your swimmers name when it becomes available on the posting board, so you do not miss the events they are swimming.

Heat-Sheets –After check-in is completed, the meet directors will seed the meet. Seeding is the process in which each swimmer that checked-in is assigned a heat and lane for each event. Once completed, the heat sheets will be posted for swimmers to check their heats and lanes.

Competitive Strokes – The four competitive strokes are Freestyle, Backstroke, Breaststroke and Butterfly. Events are held in all of the competitive strokes at varying distances depending on the age group of the swimmer.

Individual Medley (IM) – Any event in which swimmers swim equal distances of all 4 strokes in the following order: Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke, Freestyle.

Relay – A race consisting of four legs, each swum by one swimmer. There are two types of relays:

1) Freestyle Relay – Each swimmer swims freestyle.

2) Medley Relay – Each swimmer swims a different stroke. The order is Backstroke, Breaststroke, Butterfly, Freestyle.

Electronic Timing – Most meets have the pools set up with electronic touch pads in each lane to record the swimmers time when they touch the wall at the finish of their race. The time is then sent to the timing computer, which will calculate the overall results of the event.

Backup Timers – 2 to 3 people who hit a manual button when the swimmer touches the wall at the finish of the race. These back-up times are used in case a swimmer did not touch the timing pad. The time is sent to the timing computer as well.

Results – Results from each event will typically be posted on the posted board.

Officials – Many officials are present on the pool deck in a USA Swimming sanctioned swim meet. They usually wear white. They are in charge of the meet. They are the decision makers. They make sure all swimmers are following the rules and swim legally. They will notify a swimmer when they are disqualified.

Disqualifications – A swimmer may be disqualified (DQed) by the officials for not swimming a stroke correctly, making an improper turn, etc. Most swimmers get DQed some point in their swimming careers. Swimmers will be told by the official if they were disqualified and for what reason. The swimmer must see the coach after this occurs for suggestions to see that it doesn't happen again. After a swimmer understands what the mistake was, they should shake it off and focus on their next event. Parents should be supportive, rather than critical, treating the DQ as a learning experience.

False Starts – A false start occurs when a swimmer leaves the block too early (before the starters "beep"). A false start will result in a DQ.

Timeline – At most meets a timeline of events may be posted. This will give you a general idea on when your event will start. The timeline is used as an estimate and the meet will not be held to meet the timeline.

GO Seahawks!!!



Seahawks Fly Together!!!