

# Guide for Swim Meet Newbies

We hope that this guide will give you a general idea of what to expect at your first swim meet. A swim meet is a fun and exciting time for you and your children. This Guide aims to help new swimmers and parents learn the ins and outs of a typical swim meet.

Don't be afraid to approach someone from our team to ask a question. Our friendly swimming community is always happy to provide guidance and help.

## The Night Before

### The Swim Bag

In addition to the routine stuff to bring to your lessons or training (swimwear, towel, goggles and cap), you will need a few more things for a swim meet.

Here's a basic checklist:

- Bathers
- Goggles
- Cap
- Extra-large towel or blanket for to keep warm between races
- Towels...two are better than one
- Warm, loose fitting, comfortable clothing to wear in between races
- Sunscreen/Hat

### The Food Bag

Suitable food supplies to ensure that swimmers have the right energy levels to perform at their best. This is especially relevant if you are swimming a number of events during the day. Easily digestible, portable foods are your best choices, including:

- Salad Rolls or Bagels
- Carrot and celery sticks
- Fruit – grapes, bananas & apples
- Granola bars, oatmeal
- Oh yes, and lollies – because you have to have lollies at a swim meet

A drink bottle full of water. Water is the best way to rehydrate your Swimmer

### What Parents/Spectators Need

While some people enjoy watching the competitors and spend nearly all of their time watching the events in the pool, other people prefer to relax with their children in between events. You may want to consider bringing some of the following:

- Folding chairs and/or picnic blanket
- Ball-point pen, highlighter & sharpie (writing events your swimmer's arm is very useful)
- Book, newspaper, magazine or just your phone

### Meet Documentation

Meet documentation is usually available prior to the Meet. This includes information like the Timeline (also referred to as Session Report) and the Meet Program. The Meet program is where you will find information relating to the Event, Heat and Lane allocations for your Swimmer. Documentation can usually be obtained from the Organiser's website or from the Meet on Swim Central. It is a good idea to make a note of the Heat and Lane allocation for each event that your swimmer is competing in. You might also like to print a hard copy of the program and highlight each entry for your swimmer.

## The Arrival

### What do I do FIRST?

It is best if your swimmer arrives wearing their swimwear under their clothes. Otherwise, arrive with plenty of time to find the changerooms and put on bathers.

Swim Meets usually start with a Warmup before racing starts. This allows swimmers to familiarise themselves with the pool and to prepare their bodies for the rest of the Meet.

Once your swimmer returns from warm up, make sure they drink something and wrap up in something warm. They should just hang out and rest for their first race!

It is also a good time to make sure they know their events. Write them down on your child's arm. Remember to use a waterproof marker. Sharpies are perfect!



E = Event#

H = Heat#

L = Lane#

Distance & Stroke

Don't worry too much; your swimmer will get a helpful reminder at the marshalling area and also on deck before they jump in the water.

Make sure that your swimmer stays warm and hydrated. The body uses energy to warm itself and energy is something to conserve before events. Make sure that they keep up with their cap and goggles – there's nothing more nerve wracking than searching for caps and goggles seconds before its time to report.

If you swim with a Club, swimmers should remember to talk to their coach both before and after their race to discuss race strategy, their performance and to get warm down instructions.

### Relax, Wait and Be Ready

There is plenty of waiting at Swim Meets. Be sure to follow the meet progress so your swimmer is ready and at the correct location in good time before their race.

Listen for event announcements.

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## Racing

It is important to listen for instructions telling swimmers where and when to go for their races. There might be a marshalling area to organise swimmers into their heats and lanes shortly before their race. If self-marshalling is in place, swimmers are expected to go to the area behind the starting blocks at a particular number of events or heats before their race. There is usually a marshalling board indicating which events should currently be at the pre-race area. It is the swimmers responsibility to ensure that they do not miss their race. If they are not there, the race will run with an empty lane, no one will go looking for the missing swimmer. If unsure – just ask.

A couple of heats before their race, swimmers will be lined up in the correct lane behind the starting blocks in a row with the rest of their heat. Swimmers should move forward as a heat, until they are the next heat to start. NB swimmers should ensure that they stay with their heat and not move into the heat before them, if there is an empty lane in that heat.

During the heat before theirs, swimmers should make sure that their swim cap is on correctly, tighten their goggles and put them over their eyes, secure the goggle straps high on their head, and take off any warm up clothing.

### Starting the race

There are two-three different whistle commands that officials use in swimming to help swimmers know what to do.

1. Short Whistles: A series of short whistle blasts. This means, "Get ready to swim." Swimmers should be behind their block (or at the start end of their lane), goggles on, shoes, off, etc.
2. Long Whistle: One long whistle blast. This means, "Get to where you are going to start."
  - Forward Starts: (Freestyle, Breaststroke, Butterfly) For many, this means "Step up onto the block." For others, it means "Step to the edge of the pool or get into the pool and have at least one hand on the wall."
  - Back Starts: (Backstroke) Step into the water. Backstroke only: 2nd Long Whistle: This tells the swimmers to come to the wall and get ready. It's helpful to set feet and hands. Swimmers can still "stay loose." (This 2nd long whistle does not mean "get into a "tight" starting position")

By now, most people should be quieter. The whistles have let them know what's going on too. If not, the starter might ask them to quiet down. The next thing you'll hear is the starter say, "Take Your Mark." At this point the swimmer should take their starting position and hold it. It's important to NOT move at all, until you hear the loud and distinctive **BEEP** of the "start" horn. You'll hear this when everyone is ready. If someone else in your heat accidentally jumps in before the horn is blown, do not be tempted to move. Wait until the referee tells everyone to stand down. You will then wait for a few moments, let the swimmer get out of the pool and the Start process will repeat. When you hear the **BEEP**, dive in and swim your fastest!

When you have finished your race, stay in the water until all of the other swimmers in your race have finished. A technical official will tell you when to leave the pool. You should leave the pool by the side nearest to your lane (not at the end of the pool).

## Race Results

After a couple of events, you can go looking for where the meet operators are posting the results. The results usually run a few events behind due to processing time. This is where you will find out what your swimmer's time was and how they fared among all the swimmers in their age group. The results are listed by event and show the swimmers in order of finish. The results might also be available on the [Meet Mobile App from Hytek](#)

## And Finally...

One of the wonderful things about swimming is that there are many ways to succeed. Swimmers need to have different types of goals. Everyone always has the goal of winning. However, placement goals are the hardest to achieve because they depend on the performance of other swimmers, which you cannot control.

All swimmers should have personal performance goals, such as making a goal time, swimming a personal best time, or even completing a new event. Even with different goals, a swimmer can sometimes have a disappointing race.

Help your child understand that they will not always swim their best race every time and that's ok. A good balance to shoot for is to have fun while doing their best. Their time and placement will vary (especially as they gain more experience.) Their coach can help guide them to "their best" for that day. Your love and care can keep them coming back and striving. Allow them space to feel, learn, and grow.

... Remember to have fun and ...

**ASK FOR HELP IF YOU NEED IT**, especially from experienced swim parents and swimmers. They have all had a "First Swim Meet" too!