



THE SWIM MEET EXPERIENCE: WHAT TO EXPECT

Coaches are often very busy with deck administration before a meet and don't necessarily have time to keep track of the swimmers one on one. This is particularly true at the start of any session. The AM session is often filled with long adjustments at the clerk's desk, reviewing swimmer events and swimmers on the "Heat Sheet." The AM session ends with squeezing in time for lunch before the PM warm-ups start.

Parents are asked to work together to get the swimmers dressed and ready, and in the area that the coach has selected as the meeting place. Younger swimmers have a tendency to wander around, so it is important to remind them that they need to stay put.

Swimmers:

1. Arrive on deck in time for warm-ups and dressed for swimming.
2. Have all their events, heats, and lane assignments written in ink on their forearm (with the help of their parent) to help them remember when and where they report for their events. It looks like this:

E	H	L	S
89	2	4	25 Free
109	1	6	25 Back

3. Properly warm up and take some practice starts.
4. Mentally preparing (with the help of their coach) prior to stepping up to the blocks.

Parents:

1. Make sure your swimmer goes in and puts on his or her suit as soon as they enter the building.
2. Using a purchased or borrowed Heat Sheet, mark your swimmer's forearm in ink with their events, heats, and lane assignments.
3. Have your swimmer store their bag, towels, and other gear with the team on deck.
4. Have the swimmer check in with the coach for any instructions. The coach will acknowledge the swimmer and tell them when and where the warm up will occur and then ask the swimmer to go and sit with the parents or the other swimmers.
5. About ten minutes before the swimming warm up the swimmers should start a stretching routine. It is very important they do this to avoid injury and to allow them to focus on the meet. Parents can help by reminding their swimmer of the importance of stretching.
6. Once the warm up is done, the swimmers are expected to stay in the team area until their events come up.
7. Depending on the facility setup, the coach will often have your swimmer do a brief warm up just before the event, after which your swimmer will get into place for their event.
8. Immediately after your swimmer's event, your swimmer will check in with their coach for feedback and technical comments. After that, they are free to hug and grin with their friends and parents.
9. For more information about swim meets, speak to the coaches.

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THE SWIM MEET EXPERIENCE: WHAT TO BRING

What to bring:

1. Team swimsuit, or plain black swim suit (sometimes bring 2, in case anything happens)
2. Team Cap and Goggles
3. 2 towels (or more). Getting in and out of the water leads to very wet towels - and it is good to have a dry one at the end for after a shower.
4. Healthy snacks, drinks and hot chocolate milk.
5. Warm Sweatshirts and pants
6. Something to read / do. We ask that any electronic games, such as Nintendo DS are not brought on deck They are too distracting.
7. A black Sharpie and a highlighter.

Handling Anxiety:

Swimmers are often nervous before meets, and the anxiety can lead to a loss of appetite and feelings of nausea, panic or desire to go to the bathroom. These are all normal responses to the environment, and as coaches we hope to help the swimmers through these sometimes overwhelming emotions.

To help prepare, try and have a good meal the evening before and get a good night's sleep. Some meets start very early, so breakfast may not be possible - but if your swimmer is not to nervous to eat - a healthy breakfast will help.

At the meet, staying hydrated is more important than snacking if your swimmer is too anxious to eat. Drinks like Gatorade, or grapejuice and water will help keep energy levels up without adding to the 'butterflies'. And hot chocolate milk is great for after an event.

Many swimmers cry. It is perfectly OK, and almost expected as they release some of the tension. We are there to support them, and will help them understand what is going on, and what the expectations are.

Above all, meets are FUN - although sometimes a little chaotic. If this is your swimmer's first swim meet, we will strive to ensure that they have a great time and enjoy the experience... although that feeling often comes when it is all over.

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Vashon Park District

THE SWIM MEET EXPERIENCE: FAQs

1. Do you have to dive in off the blocks?

Swimmers **DO NOT** need to start from the blocks. They can start in the water, jump in, or dive from the side.

2. What is a Heat Sheet?

It is a list of all the events split out into heats and each swimmer's assigned lane. You will be able to find when your swimmer is swimming, in what event, heat, and lane, as well as who else will be swimming at the same time.

3. What is a Heat?

There are usually too many swimmers in one event to all swim at the same time. Swimmers are then broken into a number of heats of 6 swimmers. They are usually seeded, with the fastest swimmers swimming in the last heats. If this is your swimmer's first meet, they will not have a seed time, so will be in the first couple of heats.

4. How do I know when to swim?

There are announcements throughout the meet, advising swimmers when their events are coming up. It is important to keep an ear open to the announcements and to track the heat sheet so that you can see when events are scheduled. You will hear something like:

"First call - Event # 89, Girls 8 & under 25 yard freestyle Heat 3, Second call - Event # 89, Girls 8 & under 25 yard freestyle Heat 2, Final call - Event # 89, Girls 8 & under 25 yard freestyle Heat 1."

A **final call** means that the heat is the next one up.

5. When should I get ready?

A swimmer should be in their lane, ready to go, at least three heats before theirs. Some heats run very fast, especially the 25 yard events, so it is important to be there early. Coaches will help. Please check with the lane timer that you are in the right place.

6. What if I forget my suit or goggles?

There is usually a Swim Shop present at meets, where you can purchase all sorts of goodies at very reasonable prices. It is often a great place to pick up a cheap practice suit.

7. What if I am hungry?

The host team usually has a concession stand selling breakfast, lunch, snacks, hot and cold beverages.

8. How do I know where to go?

Finding the Locker rooms can be a challenge at a new pool. It is often a good idea to pair up with a more experienced family, so that they can show you around. Swimmers always go to the locker rooms and bathrooms in pairs, for safety - and must let the coach know if they are leaving the deck.

9. How can I help?

Parents are not allowed on deck with the coaches - they need to watch from the spectator area. As some pools have limited space, the deck and spectator area is sometimes blurred. The Head Coach will set up an area for the swimmers, and will contact parents as help is needed. The best help parents can give is to mark their swimmer's arms with their events - and stop them disappearing!

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