

An Informal Guide to Swim Meets for Parents

Helping Out – Your swim club depends on the volunteer efforts of family members and friends to run each meet. When everyone pitches in, it gives all of us an opportunity to watch our swimmers compete. There are lots of ways for new families to help. We need help ahead of each meet with setting up and we need some parents to stay late to assist with breaking down the equipment for each meet. During the meet, we usually need 18 volunteers to time. As you get more experienced about the world of competitive swimming, you might consider becoming a Stroke and Turn Judge, Starter, or Clerk of the Course.

Usually, swim club officials will send out email requests for help prior to each meet. Please take the time to respond to those requests so that we can be ready for each meet. If you are unsure about how to get involved, just ask someone who looks like they know what they are doing. We are a pretty friendly bunch.

Pre-Meet Activities

Stretches - The coaches will let your swimmer know when they need to show up to the meet for stretches. This will take place outside of the pool area as kids are not allowed in the pool area during meet set-up. At home meets, the stretch area is on the lawn north of the pool area. At away meets, listen and look for the coaches to tell you where stretches will take place. Try to be on time, so your swimmers don't miss out. It will be to your swimmers advantage to already be suited up when they arrive at the swim park.

Warm-Ups – Each team will each get a chance to get in the pool before the events to warm up. The warm-up session for each team will be announced over the loud speaker system. Since all the swimmers for our team are in the pool at the same time, it can be quite chaotic. Don't worry, the coaches will keep it organized.

Setting up “Family Base Camp” – While your swimmers are stretching and warming up, you can set up “family base camp.” Poolside seating is limited and often non-existent at some pools. Instead, most families choose an area away from all the hub-bub to set up a rest and recuperate area for their swimmers. Since every swim park is different, there are no general rules for where you can set up. If you do chose to camp-out poolside, be aware that you will not be allowed access to the pool until about an hour before the meet.

Essential supplies for your base camp would include lawn chairs, picnic blanket, towels, and ice coolers. Some families set up tents and pop-ups. If you do use a tent or pop-up, be considerate of nearby families and don't block their view of the pool area. The “camping” areas can get a bit crowded, so be sure to leave room for people to walk through.

Although your swimmer will often want to run around like a lunatic with their friends when they are not swimming in an event, their performance will suffer if they expend all their energy horsing around. A base camp with refreshments and more sedentary activities can help keep your swimmers out of trouble.

Food and Drink – Swimmers are going to want to eat and drink throughout the meet. Water, juice and healthy sports drinks are good choices for beverages. Make sure that all of your containers are unbreakable to ensure pool safety. For food choices, it's better to stick with small, high energy snacks than big, heavy meals. We go with string cheese, grapes, cherries, jerky, nuts, crackers, and granola bars. Avoid chocolate and caffeine. Note that some of the options available at the pool snack bar are not great choices for someone about to swim the 400 meter freestyle.

Small Children – Swim meets can often be long, tedious evenings for non-competing children. Being poolside and not being able to swim can often be frustrating. In addition, the swimming areas for little kids are often closed during a swim meet. If you bring non-swimming kids along to swim meets, be sure to keep an eye on them and keep them out of trouble.

Away Meets – Maps to the locations of all away meets can be found on Winfield Swim Club web site along with the meet schedule - <http://winfieldswimclub.com/schedule/>

Heat Sheets – An essential piece of equipment is the heat sheet, which is a printout that shows all the participating swimmers and their events as well as their heats and lane numbers. Usually, they are available for purchase about 30 minutes before the start of the meet for a couple of dollars. At home meets, they are sold at a table just inside the main pool entrance. Often there are last minute changes to the placement of swimmers in events that may differ from the information given out at practice. This is particularly true for relays. The heat sheet will reflect those changes.

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 ?? vs Wells Branch - 5/22/2010
 Meet Program - RWB 2010

Event Number	Event Name	Age	Team	Seed Time
#1 Mixed 6 & Under 100 Yard Freestyle Relay				
	Lane Team Relay Seed Time			
Heat 1 of 1 Finals				
1 WB-ZZ	E NT			
	Stephan, Karla G W5 Scott, Daeni E W5			
	Shane, Kyla A W6 Simpson, Abs B W6			
2 WB-ZZ	C NT			
	Wadhwa, Beek R M5 Zayas, Riley S M5			
	Brigger, Mara E W6 Cardwell, Aubrey G W6			
3 WB-ZZ	A NT			
	Larimore, Faith M W6 Yang, Hailoo I W5			
	Sahnke, Abby K W6 Koester, Riley H W6			
4 WB-ZZ	B NT			
	Uribe, Isa G W5 Uribe, Max N M4			
	Mendez, Mario R M6 Waworuntu, Darren M6			
5 WB-ZZ	D NT			
	Herold, Mari P W5 Harris, Arwen M W4			
	Christian, Annabelle E V Freeman, Ephraim S M6			
6 WB-ZZ	F NT			
	Young, Marie E W6 Nguyen, Carolyn R W6			
#12 Girls 6 & Under 25 Yard Freestyle				
	Lane Name Age Team Seed Time			
Heat 1 of 4 Finals				
1 Chambers, Joy C	4 WB-ZZ NT			
2 Walker, Mia T	4 WB-ZZ NT			
3 Harper, Sophia N	5 WB-ZZ NT			
4 Harris, Arwen M	4 WB-ZZ NT			
5 Nguyen, Elisabeth	4 WB-ZZ NT			
Heat 2 of 4 Finals				
1 Scott, Daeni E	5 WB-ZZ NT			
2 Yang, Hailoo I	5 WB-ZZ NT			
3 Stephan, Karla G	5 WB-ZZ NT			
Heat 2 of 2 Finals				
1 Zayas, Riley S	5 WB-ZZ NT			
2 Freeman, Ephraim S	6 WB-ZZ NT			
3 Waworuntu, Darren	6 WB-ZZ NT			
4 Mendez, Mario R	6 WB-ZZ NT			
5 Prendeville, Ryan	5 WB-ZZ NT			
6 Wright, Jackson H	5 WB-ZZ NT			
#14 Girls 7-8 25 Yard Freestyle				
	Lane Name Age Team Seed Time			
Heat 1 of 3 Finals				
1 Tran, Kimberly T	8 WB-ZZ NT			
2 Kane, Jennifer T	7 WB-ZZ NT			
3 Finch, Chloe E	8 WB-ZZ NT			
4 Schulze, Rachel B	8 WB-ZZ NT			
5 Prosper, Anne-Marie J	8 WB-ZZ NT			
6 Adams, Fifi J	7 WB-ZZ NT			
Heat 2 of 3 Finals				
1 Mehta, Anaya	8 WB-ZZ NT			
2 Wadhwa, Serena J	8 WB-ZZ NT			
3 Carter, Anaya J	8 WB-ZZ NT			
4 Waworuntu, Demi K	8 WB-ZZ NT			
5 Miles, Prynton P	8 WB-ZZ NT			
6 Harper, Shelby N	8 WB-ZZ NT			
Heat 3 of 3 Finals				
1 Verdiochio, Abbie H	7 WB-ZZ NT			
2 Jamalabud, Hanna	7 WB-ZZ NT			
3 Buckley, Emma R	8 WB-ZZ NT			
4 Ulsak, Caren R	7 WB-ZZ NT			
5 Yang, Syd A	7 WB-ZZ NT			
6 Kumar, Riya A	8 WB-ZZ NT			

Event Number – There are 48 events in a normal meet based on stroke, distance, type (individual or relay), age and gender. There are two exceptions: the Blue & White Meet is only 40 events as it consists of 50 meter individual events for all ages and strokes and League Finals which has 88 events because the age groups are more narrowly defined.

Heat Number – Because each event usually has quite a few swimmers, they are broken into heats. Each heat has 5-8 swimmers, depending on the number of lanes in the pool.

Lane Number – This will tell you which lane your swimmer is scheduled to be in.

Seed Time - This is the fastest legal time recorded for your swimmer in this event at a formal meet. If "NT" is listed, then there is no official seed time for your swimmer.

Heats – Because there are usually more swimmers than lanes to swim in, not everyone can swim in the same event at the same time. Heats are groups of swimmers within their events. Each heat will contain 5-8 swimmers, depending upon the number of lanes in the pool. In some cases, such as the 50 meter freestyle, there can be over a dozen heats. Generally, the first heat is the slowest group and the last heat is the fastest. Heat placement is determined by swimmers' best official times. If a swimmer has not swam an event before at a meet, they will be seeded in the slowest heat with NT, or "No Time." Specific information on heat placement is available in the **Heat Sheets** (see below).

For younger swimmers, the key events will be the 50 meter freestyle and the 200 meter freestyle relay.

Relays – It is likely that your swimmer will be teamed up with other swimmers as part of one of our relay teams. There are two types of relays: freestyle relays and medley relays. In freestyle relays, each swimmer is only swimming freestyle. In medley relays, each swimmer is swimming a different stroke in the following order: back, breast, butterfly and freestyle. You can determine the stroke for your swimmer by consulting the heat sheet (See below).

Large teams, such as Winfield Swim Club, will often have multiple relay teams for each event. These will be labeled A, B, C, etc. with the A designation being reserved for the fastest group of swimmers and so on.

Medley Relay/Heat Sheet Explained

Heat 2 (#5 Boys 9-10 100 Yard Medley Relay)			
1	BHC-ZZ	D	1:42.10
	Koenig, Quinton 10	Harshaw, Dane 9	
	Blake, Jack 9	Blake, Henry 10	
2	SRB-ZZ	C	1:28.01
	Mills, Matthew 9	Boynton, Jack 10	
	Lang, Justin 9	Wokoek, Kurt 9	
3	BHC-ZZ	B	1:23.87
	Holmgreen, Brock 9	Leslie, Jack 9	
	Stebbins, Trevor 10	Morley, Ethan 10	
4	SRB-ZZ	A	1:12.00
	Wong, Mason 10	Pickard, Andrew 10	
	Kitlowski, Kale 10	Lee, Hunter 10	
5	BHC-ZZ	A	1:14.95
	E Saul, Bailey 10	F Helbert, Riley 10	
	G Reed, Lance 10	H Hoff, Benjamin 10	
6	SRB-ZZ	B	1:22.97
	Beck, Carson 9	Sabuda, Kyle 10	
	McArthur, Jared 9	Gross, Ethan 10	
7	BHC-ZZ	C	1:29.59
	Smola, Levi 10	Weber, MaKaya 10	
		Tomberlin, Sean 10	
8	SRB-ZZ	D	1:39.97
	Hildner, Mike 10	Arnold, Logan 9	
	Arnold, Landry 9	Bennett, Brendan 10	

A. Heat Number	E. 1st leg -Backstroke swimmer
B. Event Number and Event Name	F. 2nd leg - Breast Stroke swimmer
C. Lane Number	G. 3rd leg - Fly swimmer
D. Relay team (A is contains the fastest swimmer in each stroke)	H. 4th leg - Free swimmer

Kickboard Races – In order to get our younger swimmers involved in the meets as soon as possible, the Winfield Swim Club includes a Kickboard race at the beginning of all of our home meets. Participation in the Kickboard race is usually limited to beginner swimmers who are not yet able to compete in the other events. It is unlikely that away meets will include a Kickboard race.

Combined Events – In order to allow the meet to move along more efficiently, events or heats with small numbers of swimmers may be combined together into a single heat. This can be a bit confusing when you see boys and girls or kids of different ages all in the pool at the same time. Combined events are clearly listed in the heat sheet and the Clerk of the Course will make sure the swimmers are organized into their proper lanes.

Halves – For the purpose of organizing the work of officials and other volunteers, the meet is divided into two halves based on event number. In a regular meet, the first half consists of events 1-24 and the second half consists of events 25-48.

Clerk of the Course – A key person at any swim meet is the Clerk of the Course. This is an individual from the home team who is responsible for organizing the swimmers prior to each event. This individual will announce when the swimmers for each event need to get ready. When you hear your swimmers' event announced, please get them to the Clerk of the Course promptly. The staging area will usually be bleachers or benches near the pool. It is a good idea to walk around the pool area with your swimmers and find the Clerk of the Course staging area before the meet starts.

Occasionally, swimmers will miss the announcement of their event. On those occasions, their name may be announced over the loudspeaker system. It is your goal not to be the parent of one of those swimmers. Get your swimmers to pay close attention to the announcements of the Clerk of the Course and listen for their events.

Keeping Track of Events for your Swimmer – Many families help their swimmers keep track of their events by writing them on the swimmer's arm or leg with a sharpie marker. For example:

#2 – 50 Free
#12 – Free Relay
#22 – Medley Relay (Back)

I write the event number, the event and for the medley relay, I will also write the stroke to avoid any confusion. The Clerk of the Course will take care of organizing the swimmers into their heats and lanes, so you don't need to worry about giving the swimmers that information. Just keep it simple and informative.

I've learned by experience that giving your kids a set of sharpies to record their own information can be a mistake. You'll see a couple of swimmers covered head to toe in sharpie tattoos (Eat my Bubbles, Go Seahorses, WIN) who have been allowed free use of markers from someone's swim bag. I'll leave it up to you to decide how best to handle your markers.

Event Viewing – The ends of the pool can get quite crowded during events. Each lane will have two official timers as well stroke and turn judges and coaches as well as swimmers for subsequent events. Be considerate of those individuals that need to be there for the running of the meet. You might be better off viewing your swimmer's event from the side of the pool.

Finding out your Swimmers' Time - After your swimmer completes their event, you might be eager to know their time. There are timers in each lane that are responsible for recording each swimmers' time. They will often tell the swimmer their time when they exit the pool. If your swimmer did not receive (or remember) their time, you can check in with the timers in your swimmers' lane to get their time. Be polite and wait for a lull in the activity before consulting with the timers. During short distance events, the timers can get busy and might not be able to respond immediately.

Another timing resource at some pools is an electronic scoreboard displaying the finishing time of each swimmer as they finish. Many of these scoreboards will cycle through the times in each lane before the next event begins.

The coaches will probably not have recorded the time for your individual swimmer, so they probably don't have timing information to share with you.

As the meet proceeds, official times for each event will be posted in an area near the pool. These times are often based on electronic touch pads and will be more accurate than the times recorded by the poolside timers.

DQ – Swimmers, especially those new to competitive swimming, can often receive the dreaded “DQ” for their event. In the case of a DQ, the swimmer has made some mistake in the specifics of their stroke, leaving the blocks early, or not touching the side of the pool appropriately during a turn. When a swimmer is disqualified they will usually be informed by a “Stroke and Turn Judge” who will usually take them aside and explain the reasons for the disqualification. This can be disheartening for many swimmers, but it is all a part of learning and improving. Most of the judges work hard to be kind during this teaching moment, but it can still lead to tears. Try to get your swimmer to focus on the next event or the next meet and how they can avoid the mistake that resulted in the DQ. Even the older, more experienced swimmers get a DQ every once in a while.

Bad Weather – The unpredictable nature of Kansas weather can make evening swim meets even more exciting. In the event of nearby lightning/thunder or other dangerous weather, pool officials will immediately request everyone to leave the pool area. At this point, everyone should pick up their items as fast as possible and proceed to indoor areas or outside of the fenced pool area. This should be done within 5 minutes. For safety reasons, no one will be able to return to the pool area for at least 30 minutes after the observance of the last lightning strike or hearing the last thunder. In the event of continued storms, officials may decide to end the meet early in the interest of safety.

After Party at Gambino's – After home meets, many swim families meet up at Gambino's for pizza. They offer a special discount for the swim team. Please come if you have the time and inclination. It is a great time to get to know the other parents while the swimmers ignore us.

One Last Note – The individual nature of swimming competition can put a lot of pressure on children. Unfortunately, only a couple of kids out of each race will receive ribbons, which can be discouraging for those that don't place in the top six. To avoid too much frustration from your swimmers about not getting a ribbon, try to emphasize smaller, more realistic goals. For my kids, we started with things like don't drown, finish the race, and avoid a DQ while also celebrating every time they bested their personal times or won their individual heat. Also, encourage your swimmers to cheer for their teammates, particularly their relay partners. Although each swimmer may be alone in their lane, it is great to know you have the full team behind you from start to finish.