

THE SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR THE SWIMMING PARENT

Congratulations! You just joined a swim team. The following are some observations from a former new Swimming parent. With luck, some of these musings might make some sense.

NECESSARY STUFF: SUIT & GOGGLES

The basic items needed are a **racing suit** and a pair of **competition goggles**.

- Going to your local sporting goods store or paying the equivalent per inch of fabric as Tokyo real estate for a First suit is not the way to start. Your team usually will sell you a team suit at cost, or you can check out swim meets where vendors are set up with reasonable prices. Also, don't be afraid to ask a returning parent - they are a source of good tips.
- It's best to have two suits. One to wear at practice and one to wear at meets. The practice suit will get worn out and become slow, but the meet suit will stay snug and fast. When the meet suit wears out, it can be used as the practice suit.
- You must have goggles for practice and meets! Two or three pairs are important because they tend to break at the wrong time. Extra bungee straps are recommended too.
 - Goggles protect the eyes from chlorine and help your child see underwater.
 - There are many types and styles. It tends to be a matter of personal choice.
 - The longest lasting goggles are those with rubber-like gaskets. A good pair has soft gaskets that conform around the eye sockets. "Swedish" style goggles (a hard plastic goggle that sits inside the eye socket) are not recommended for beginners.
 - For first time swimmers who have difficulty with rubber gaskets, a pair with foam gaskets might work. Anti-Fog goggles have a coating that reduces fogging. The coating degrades with time, but your child will have lost his goggles way before then. For those goggles without the coating try dipping them in water or applying a little saliva before putting them on.

OTHER STUFF: SWIM CAPS, SWIM BAG, & SHAMPOO

Get a **swim cap** for long hair, a **swim bag** and **chlorine shampoo**.

- A latex **swim cap** is the cheapest though the most difficult to put on for the new swimmer. A lycra cap is softer and easier to use. A silicon cap is easy to pull on and gives more protection than a latex cap, but is much more expensive than either the latex or the lycra caps.
- **Swim bags** have lots of mesh compartments to separate the wet from the dry items.
- **Chlorine shampoo** helps to remove the chlorine from your swimmer when their hair starts to look like Tina Turner's and they begin to smell like a swamp creature. Using it on suits also helps.
- **Suit Solution** helps to remove the chlorine from your swimwear and extends the life of your swimwear.

THE FIRST MEET

Start with a swim bag the size of your child, stuff it with everything you normally would take to practice and then double this. Also include extra clothing for your child. Pack light snacks and drinks for your swimmer. Your coach will probably have more to say about eating on the day of a meet. Arrive 15 minutes before warm-up to allow time to change and find a home base. Give yourself plenty of time and take a map. If you have non-swimming brothers and sisters going, pack some creative fun things for them. Remember a pool can be a dangerous place, so keep an eye on them at all times. Don't forget snacks. Otherwise, after numerous trips to the snack bar for candy, you will have to detox your child after the meet. Most teams provide healthy alternative for purchase.

STILL THERE?

Can't stop without a positive message. Good sportsmanship starts with you; cheer your child and your team. Remember that improvement and personal accomplishments are more important than winning.

Parents' Role

Competitive swimming programs provide many benefits to young athletes. They develop 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 meets.

Ten Commandments for Parents with Athletic Children

1. Make sure your child knows that, win or lose, scared or heroic, you love him/her, appreciate his/her efforts, and are not disappointed in him/her. This will allow him to do his best without fear of failure.
2. Try your best to be completely honest about your child's athletic ability, his competitive attitude, his/her sportsmanship and his/her actual skill level.

3. Be helpful but don't coach your child on the way to the pool or on the way back, or at breakfast, and so on. It's tough not to, but it's a lot tougher for the child to be inundated with advice, pep talks, and often critical instruction.
4. Teach your child to enjoy the thrill of competition, to be "out there trying," to be working to improve his/her skills and attitude. Help your child to develop the feel of competing, for trying hard, for having fun.
5. Try not to re-live your athletic life through your child in a way that creates pressure; you fumbled, too, you lost as well as won. You were frightened, you backed off at times, and you were not always heroic. Don't pressure him/her because of your lost pride.
6. Don't compare the skill, courage, or attitudes of your child with other members of the team, at least not within his/her hearing.
7. Get to know the coach so that you can be assured that his/her philosophy, attitudes, ethics and knowledge are such that you are happy to have your child under his/her leadership.
8. Always remember that children tend to exaggerate, both when praised and when criticized. Temper your reaction and investigate before overreacting.
9. Make a point of understanding courage, and the fact that it is relative. Some of us can climb mountains, and are afraid to fight. Some of us will fight, but turn to jelly if a bee approaches. Everyone is frightened in certain areas. Explain that courage is not the absence of fear, but a means of doing something in spite of fear or discomfort. The job of a parent of an athletic child is a tough one, and it takes a lot of effort to do it well. It is worth all the effort when you hear your youngster say, "My parents really helped."
10. Have Fun!

THE OFFICIALS additional information on www.vbsl.net

Officials are present at all competitions to implement the technical rule of swimming and to ensure that the competition is fair and equitable. Officials attend clinics, pass a written test and work meets before being certified. All parents are encouraged to get involved with some form of officiating.

1. **REFEREE** - has full authority over all officials and shall assign and instruct them on the governing Rules of the VBSL and pertinent USA Swimming rules where they apply.
 - a. The Referee must be thoroughly familiar with the duties, responsibilities and limitations of his/her position as stated in the current USA Swimming rulebook and the VBSL Handbook prior to assuming the role of Referee.
 - b. The Referee shall have in his/her possession at all meets a copy of the both the current USA Swimming rulebook and VBSL Handbook.
 - c. The Referee shall brief Coaches and officials prior to the start of the meet concerning all Rules, and specifically reasons for disqualifications.
 - d. The Referee shall enforce all Rules, and can overrule any meet official on a judgment decision.
 - e. The Referee shall receive and initial DQ slips to acknowledge concurrence prior to the Runner delivering them to the Time Scorer.
 - f. Upon seeing that a lane is empty, the Referee must query the respective Coach before starting the event. In no case shall an event be delayed more than a minute.
2. **STARTER** - upon signal from the Referee, begins each event by notifying swimmers of the distance and event and firing or initiating the starting signal. The Starter will be familiar with starting rules contained in the current USA Swimming rulebook.
3. **STROKE JUDGE** - reports any violation of swimming style or turns for each event to the Referee.
 - a. In a five-lane pool, one Stroke Judge will be responsible for lanes 1 and 2, and the other Judge will be responsible for lanes 3, 4, and 5. Each Judge will be on opposite sides of the pool and be responsible for disqualification only in their respective lanes.
 - b. In a six-lane pool, each Stroke Judge will be responsible for the three lanes closest to the side of the pool he/she is judging from and be responsible for disqualifications only in his/her lanes.
 - c. Stroke Judges will switch sides of the pool following the ten-minute intermission or at the halfway point of the meet.
 - d. Stroke and Turn Judges will be responsible for infractions and disqualifications for all parts of a turn in their respective lanes (i.e. wall-to-wall).
4. **TURN JUDGE** - reports any violations of turning, finishing, or false starts on relay take-offs to the Referee.
 - a. One Turn Judge from each team will be placed at each end of the pool. They will switch ends of the pool and lanes observed following the intermission.
 - b. The Turn Judge shall act as a Relay Take-off Judge. The two Turn Judges at each end of the pool shall work together (from opposite sides) to provide for dual verification for all lanes at their respective ends of the pool.
5. **CHIEF TIMER** - instructs and assigns (1) Timers to lanes and (2) Head Lane Timers. Serves as an alternative Timer.
6. **TIMER** - acts as a Timer or Head Lane Timer as assigned. Head Lane Timer verifies the swimmer's name on the time card or lane sheet before each event and measures and records the times of each swimmer.

7. **CLERK-OF-COURSE** - assembles swimmers for each event three (3) events in advance. It is recommended that both teams provide a Clerk-of-Course in order to assure smooth operation of the meet. He/she ensures that Runners deliver time cards or lane sheets to the appropriate Head Lane Timer in 25-meter events.
8. **RUNNER** - delivers time cards to the appropriate Head Lane Timer for 25-meter events and delivers time cards or lane sheets, and DQ slips (with Referee approval) to the Time Scorer at the conclusion of each event.
9. **TIME SCORER** - determines the official time and will record it on each time card, then place the cards in heat, and lane order.
10. **TEAM SCORER/MEET MANAGER OPERATOR** - Enters the time for each swimmer into the meet manager software. Upon completion of each event, the Team Scorer/Meet Manager Operator will give time cards and printed event sheet to the Team Scorer/Meet Manager Operator from the other team. This scorer will verify that the times are correct for each swimmer.
11. **TIMING SYSTEM OPERATOR** – Operates, and verifies proper operation of the electronic timing system (If used).

SWIM MEETS F.A.Q

What is a swim meet?

Swim Meets are a great opportunity for your swimmer to compete in events against swimmers from our team and from teams around the area. They also serve as a precursor to the divisional and all start swim meets. Swimmers need to have swum in 3 meets before competing at the sectional meet. If a swimmer swims under a qualifying time at the divisional meet they qualify for the all star swim meet at the end of the season.

How do I know if my swimmer is ready to enter a swim meet?

Most swimmers are ready to swim at a swim meet. If they are unsure about whether they should sign up for a meet just ask your coach. We don't want to force anyone to compete at the meets but they are a great learning experience and lots of fun!

Where do I find out about swim meets?

- Meet Schedule: The meet schedule is on our website at www.ilstingrays.com and we always have the upcoming schedule in our weekly email.
- Meet Sheet: A Meet Sheet contains all of the information on the swim meet; the dates, location, directions, warm-up times, schedule of events, and more. Meet Sheets can be viewed at www.ILStingrays.com

What do I need to do to prepare for the swim meet?

Make sure you bring all of your swim gear; team suit, team cap, goggles, and more than one towel. Make sure you prepare for the weather by bringing proper clothing; parkas, sweaters, extra pants if cold. Bring nutritional foods to the meet too. Also, bring a cooler or food so your will child eating properly to maintain energy. (This is very important!) The home team usually provides a concessions stand with health, and some fun, food for purchase.

What do I do when I arrive at the meet?

- Make sure you arrive 10-15 minutes prior to the beginning of warm-ups or when the coaches tell you to be there.
- Check in with your coach - After you check in to your events, check in with your coach to see when they want you to get ready for warm-ups.
- Sit with the team - We like to have everyone on the team sit in the "team area". Talk to the coaches if you can't find the team area.

How do I know when I am supposed to swim?

The clerk-of-course will have a board with the event numbers they are calling through. If your event # falls in between the 2 numbers, please report to the clerk-of-course to get in order. Officials will be there to organize and monitor the swimmers before each event. If you can't find where they are posting the numbers please talk to a coach. Many swimmers write down there event numbers on their hands or arms to help them remember the event number.

EVENT	HEAT	LANE
2	1	4
42	2	6

PLEASE NOTE: If you have any questions about any of the above please don't hesitate to talk to a coach or team reps.