

Columbia Swim Club
Swim Meets: Some Information for First-Timers (and Others)

Swim meets are a great family experience! They're a place where the whole family can spend time together. Listed below are some very in-depth guidelines geared to help you through your first couple of swim meets. It may seem a little overwhelming, but we have tried to be as specific and as detailed as possible.

Before the Meet Starts

1. Arrive at the pool at least 15 minutes before the scheduled warm-up time begins. This time will be listed in the meet information handed out to all CSC swimmers and also in the team newsletter.
2. Upon arrival, find a place to put your swimmer's blankets, swim bags and/or sleeping bags. The team usually sits in one place together, so look for some familiar faces.
3. Find the check-in place and either you or your swimmer will need to check themselves in. This is usually around the area marked "Clerk of Course," but it can vary from meet to meet. Look for one of the coaches if you aren't sure.
4. Once "checked in", write each event-number on your swimmer's hand in "permanent" (i.e., waterproof) marker. This helps your swimmer remember what events he or she is swimming and what event number to listen for.
5. Your swimmer now gets his/her cap and goggles and reports to the pool and/or coach for warm-up instructions. It is very important for all swimmers to warm-up with the team. Swimmers' bodies are just like cars on a cold day; they need to get the engine going and warmed-up before being able to go all out.
6. After warm-up, your swimmer will go back to the area where his/her towels are and sit there until the next event is called. This is a good time to make sure he/she goes to the bathroom if necessary, gets a drink, or just gets settled in.
7. The meet will usually start about 10-15 minutes after warm-ups are over.
8. According to USA Swimming rules (because of insurance purposes), parents are not allowed on deck unless they are serving in an official capacity. Similarly, all questions concerning meet results, an officiating call, or the conduct of a meet, should be referred to the coaching staff. They, in turn, will pursue the matter through the proper channels.
9. *Heat Sheets.* A heat sheet is usually available for sale in the lobby or concession area of the pool. Heat sheets generally sell for \$5 or \$6. It lists all swimmers in each event in order of "seed time". When the team entry is sent in, each swimmer and his/her previous best time in that event is listed. If the swimmer is swimming an event for the first time, he/she will be entered as a "no-time" or "NT". A "no-time" swimmer will most likely swim in one of the first heats of the event.

The Meet Starts

1. It is important for any swimmer to know what event numbers he/she is swimming (again, why they should have the numbers on their hand). He/she may swim right away after warm-up or they may have to wait awhile.

2. A swimmer's event number will be called, usually over the loudspeaker, and he/she will be asked to report to the "bullpen" or the starting blocks. Swimmers should report with his/her cap and goggle. Generally, girls events are odd-numbered and boys events are even-numbered. Example: "Event #26, 10-Under Boys, 50 freestyle, report to the bullpen."

3. The people running the bullpen or the area behind the starting blocks will give a card to each of the swimmers swimming that event. This card will tell each swimmer his/her heat and lane number. If a bullpen is used, someone in the bullpen will usually line up all the swimmers and take them down to the pool in correct order. Depending on the meet, either the person running the bullpen or starting area will give the card to the timers at the end of each lane, or the people at the clerk will instruct the swimmers to hand their cards to the timers when it is their turn to swim. These cards are important because they tell the people running the meet who actually swam each event.

4. You can expect at least 4-8 heats of each event.

5. The swimmer swims their race.

6. After each swim, the swimmer should ask the timers (the people behind the blocks at each lane) his/her time. He/she should go immediately to their coach. The coach will ask him/her their time and discuss the swim with each swimmer. Generally, the coach follows these guidelines when discussing swims: a. Positive comments or praise; b. Suggestions for improvement.

7. Things you, as a parent, can do after each swim: a) Tell him/her how great they did! The coaching staff will be sure to discuss stroke technique with them. You need to tell him/her how proud you are and what a great job he/she did. b) Take him/her back to the towel area and relax. c) This is another good time to check out the bathrooms, get a drink or something light to eat. d) The swimmer now waits until his/her next event is called and starts the procedure over again.

8. When a swimmer has completed all of his/her events he/she and their parents get to go home. Make sure, however, you, as a parent, check with the coach before leaving to make sure your swimmer is not included on a relay. It is not fair to other swimmers who may have stayed to swim on a relay where your swimmer is expected to be a member and he/she is not there.

What Happens If Your Child has a Disappointing Swim

If your child has a poor race and comes out of it feeling bad, talk about the good things. Never talk about the negative things.

If your child comes up to you and says, "That was a bad race, don't tell me it wasn't," there is nothing wrong with a swimmer negatively evaluating a race. The important thing is for the child not to dwell on it. You should move the swimmer on to something good. "All right, you have had a bad race. How do you think you can do better next time?" Immediately start talking about the positive things.

What To Take To The Meet

1. Most important: Swim Suit and CSC cap --and goggles (if your swimmer uses them).
2. Baby or talcum powder--To “dust” the inside of swim cap. This helps preserve the cap and makes it easier to put on.
3. Towels-Realize your swimmer will be there awhile, so pack at least two.
4. Something to sit on. Example: sleeping bag, old blanket, or anything that will be comfortable to sit on. The swimmers will be spending a lot of time on it.
5. Sweat suits: bring one. Each swimmer may want to bring two because they can get wet and soggy.
6. T-shirts: Two or three. Same reason as above.
7. Games: travel games, coloring books, books, anything to pass the time.
8. Food: Each swimmer is usually allowed to bring a small cooler. It is better to bring snacks. Suggestions for items to bring: Drinks: Hi-C, Fruit juice, Gatorade; Snacks: Granola bars, Fun fruits, yogurt, cereal, jello cubes, sandwiches

Once you have attended one or two meets this will all become very routine. Please do not hesitate to ask any other CSC parent for help or information!

These meets are a lot of fun for the swimmers! He/she gets to visit with his/her friends, play games, and meet kids from other teams. He/she also gets to “race” and see how much he/she has improved from all the hard work he/she has put in at practice.

Special Parent’s Note

The pool area is usually very warm. Therefore, you need to make sure you dress appropriately. Nothing is worse than being hot at a swim meet. It makes the time pass very slowly! At some of the meets, the parents are allowed to sit with the swimmers at the blanket area (those are most of the meets not held at the natatorium). If you don’t think that a gym floor is comfortable, feel free to bring folding chairs to sit on.

Championship Meets

One of our team goals is to qualify as many swimmers as possible for the Championship meet(s). The Championship meet is a special experience and extremely important in the athletes development.

As an Age Group swimmer, our swimmers learn they swim faster at the Championship meet than at any other time during the season. They are prepared for this; they are taught this; we practice this. If a young swimmer goes to the Championship meet and is not properly prepared, the experience is negative and can affect other championships later in his/her swimming career.

We believe that the honor of competing in a Championship meet is earned through consistent practice habits and competitive experience at USA Swimming swim meets. There’s a big difference between “wanting”

to go to the championships and “deserving” to be at the championships. Talent plays a supporting role to commitment.

To insure that all of our swimmers are properly prepared for their championships:

1. Meet attendance and participation through out the entire season is important. USA Swimming meets offer the experience necessary for the championships.
2. Practice habits must be within our recommendations for the group the swimmer trains with. “Consistency” is the key word.

Swimmers are special people and deserve to have positive experiences as rewards for their dedication and commitment. Let’s make sure that parents, swimmers, and coaches, are laying the foundation for the best possible experience at the Championship meet.

Prelims & Finals

Meet Format: In a preliminaries and finals meet format, the object of the preliminary swim is to qualify for the evening finals session. If a swimmer places among the top 8 (in an 8 lane pool) after his/her morning swim they then qualify to swim in the Championship finals in the evening session. Some meets also swim a Consolation final. If a swimmer places from 9th - 16th place from preliminaries, he/she qualifies to participate in the Consolation finals in the evening session. In the evening finals session, the Consolation heat is swam first followed immediately by the Championship heat. During the prelims, the results are usually posted within 1/2 hour of the conclusion of the event. If a swimmer does not wish to swim in a final swim he or she may “scratch” the event and not be penalized. This must take place within a half hour of the posting of the preliminary results. Therefore, within approximately 1 hour of the end of an event, a swimmer should know if they have made finals. A swimmer should never leave the meet without making sure if they are a finalist or an alternate. USA Swimming rules dictate that if a swimmer makes a finals event and fails to show up they are bared from participating in the remainder of the meet (individual events and relays). Alternates (the 17th & 18th place swimmers) should check with his/her coach about attending finals.

Circle Seeding Used only in the prelims of Championship meets with events that have “prelims & finals”. This affects only the top 24 seeded swimmers (8 lane pool) which compete in the last 3 heats. All other heats are regular seeding. Circle seeding goes like this: The fastest seeded swimmer will be in the last heat in lane 4. The second fastest swimmer will be in the second to last heat lane 4. The third fastest swimmer will be in the third to last heat lane 4. The fourth fastest swimmer will be in the last heat lane 5 and so on. For an event with 60 swimmers, the seeding would look like this: #=swimmers seed in prelims

(Lanes 1 - 8)

| | Lane | Lane | Lane | Lane | Lane | Lane | Lane | Lane |
|--------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Heat 1 | | #59 | #57 | #58 | #60 | | | |
| Heat 2 | #55 | #53 | #51 | #49 | #50 | #52 | #54 | #56 |
| Heat 3 | #47 | #45 | #43 | #41 | #42 | #44 | #46 | #48 |
| Heat 4 | #39 | #37 | #35 | #33 | #34 | #36 | #38 | #40 |
| Heat 5 | #31 | #29 | #27 | #25 | #26 | #28 | #30 | #32 |
| Heat 6 | #21 | #15 | #9 | #3 | #6 | #12 | #18 | #24 |
| Heat 7 | #20 | #14 | #8 | #2 | #5 | #11 | #17 | #23 |
| Heat 8 | #19 | #13 | #7 | #1 | #4 | #10 | #16 | #22 |

The finals are seeded like a regular meet as are any events that are swam as timed finals such as relays, distance freestyles and other events most often held on Friday evening as a timed finals session.

Awards & Placings

The swimmers who participate in the championship finals receive awards as listed in the meet information. The swimmers who participate in the consolation finals often do not receive awards, but do score points for the team. One very important thing: Once a swimmer has made the championship final, the worst they can place is 8th, regardless of how slow they may swim in finals. The swimmers who participate in the consolation finals may place no better than 9th (the winner of the heat) regardless how fast they swim. It has been known to happen that the winner of the consolation finals swims a time that would have placed him/her 2nd or 3rd in the championship finals, but the highest he/she can score is 9th. That is why it is important to swim very fast in the morning prelims session to make the championship finals. If a swimmer is disqualified in finals, they do not score points or get awards, however, a non-finals swimmer can not be moved up to score. The place simply is not awarded. Alternates occasionally get to swim and can score the same as any other swimmer.

Receiving Awards in Public

Whenever there is a system of presenting awards at a meet, it is customary for swimmers to be prompt and to cooperate fully with dignity and respect at the presentations. A club uniform is to be worn when accepting the award. It is also customary for CSC swimmers to be polite and modestly thankful for any awards they receive. It is appropriate to congratulate other swimmers and receive the same with poise and a "thank you". Good sportsmanship is essential. If photos are being taken, we ask the swimmer to remain until the shooting is complete, being sure to cooperate with the photographer. Do not ham it up! The picture may be special to someone else. The image a swimmer presents is a direct reflection of the team.

Out of Town Meets

Trips to meets in other cities become an important aspect of a swimmer's career while advancing through the age group ranks. CSC has established the following policies for the safety of the swimmer and peace-of-mind of parents:

1. Parents are to be responsible for arranging transportation and lodging to away meets, with the exception of Nationals and those competitions so designated. **DO NOT ASK YOUR SWIMMER(S) TO HANDLE THIS JOB.**
2. Parents are encouraged to attend out-of-town meets with their swimmers and to chaperone other youngsters. These trips can be great fun for parents and swimmers alike. They also are a rare opportunity to participate in a special way in each young swimmer's career.
3. A coach has too many responsibilities to the entire team to accept responsibility for an individual swimmer. Therefore, do not ask a coach to provide transportation.
4. Any swimmer riding in a car is responsible to the parent/driver for his/her behavior.
5. A medical release and emergency telephone number should be given to the parent/driver with whom your swimmer is riding in case emergency medical treatment is required.
6. An appropriate contribution is expected from each passenger in a car to the driver/owner to help defray gasoline and related expenses.

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