



Preparation for Competition – A Parents/Carers Guide

The aim of the swimming competition experience is to be a happy one for your son/daughter and in this respect parents/carers play a very valuable part in helping to meet this aim. The most successful swimmers are often the ones who have very supportive parents/carers, who have the desire to see their children do their best and enjoy the competition experience. Your son/daughter will really appreciate you being there to cheer them (and their friends!) so please remember that their positive experiences will last them a lifetime.

This guide is to help parents with a few helpful hints when preparing their son/daughter for a swimming competition. The list is not exhaustive so please consult the club coach for any additional help that you may require. Please remember that you will play a very important role in helping to get the best out of your son/daughter on the day of the competition. Young swimmers and parents alike can be apprehensive beforehand (it's very normal!) but here are a few tried and tested tips to assist with the competition preparation process:

Pre-competition:

1. Turn up to regular training sessions. The groundwork has to be completed first and coaches need to prepare each swimmer for each race to the best of the swimmer's ability.
2. Parents to know where, when and at what time the event is being held.
3. Parents/Swimmers to know what events they are entered for.
4. Swimmers - get a few good nights' sleep before the event.
5. Follow a sensible well balanced diet with plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables. Swimming competitions use up a lot of the body's stored energy so high carbohydrate foods such as pasta, potatoes, rice and bread (brown) are very good to have a few days before the swim meet.

On race day

1. **Parents/carers - please make sure:**

- a. Swimmer is on time for their warm-up at least 20 mins before being asked to be there, and signs-in at the check-in desk if necessary and that swimmers they have all their swimming kit with spares if possible!
- b. Swimmer has had a good breakfast before the competition (cereal, toast, fruit, juices – please avoid fatty foods!). Snacks and drinks (water NOT fizzy!) can be taken to the competition. Eat and drink ‘little and often’ is the best advice.
- c. Swimmer takes poolside clothing, swim suits, club swim hat, two pairs of goggles, and two towels, and training shoes (no flip-flops!)
- d. Swimmer takes appropriate snacks, food and water. AVOID fizzy drinks and expensive sports drinks. **Water** is best! Also avoid chocolate and sweets! These will make swimmers more thirsty. Good foods are sandwiches, pasta, fruit, energy bars, rice cakes.
- e. You don't coach! The best approach is to encourage your son/daughter to swim the best they can and to enjoy the competition! The club coach will decide how best to race each event. Let the coach, coach during the competition. Please ask questions after the competition. The Coach is INCREDIBLY busy at the competition....and is emotional about the “good things and bad things” just like you are. On competition day is not a good time for a reasonable conversation. (Usually.)
- f. You avoid taking it out on the officials. They are volunteers, nice people and the coach will question anything that needs questioning.
- g. You avoid taking it out on the coaches! They are only trying to do their very best on the day. The coach has a passion to see your son/daughter do the best they can and feels every swimmer's disappointment as if it were their own child.
- h. You let your son/daughter have the experience. Don't hold their hand. If they need help they can ask their coach or a teammate, (not you) to help them. That's what coaches/teammates are for.
- i. For your own comfort – bring an additional chair if you need to sit outside (subject to the weather!)and something to read or do. Swim competitions are a great test for our boredom threshold all the time your child isn't swimming. Keep yourself hydrated – swimming pools are notoriously hot places!
- j. You are an encourager! Your child will really appreciate this, particularly if they feel that they have not performed to the best of their ability. Children who are encouraged and not criticised develop into more successful and confident people.
- k. That winning is not the ‘be-all and end-all’ and not everyone can be awarded first place. Coaches (and you) should encourage swimmers to swim the best they can on the day and more often than not, a personal best time is a fantastic personal achievement and can mean so much to a swimmer.
- l. If your son/daughter swims well e.g. by swimming a personal best time– treat them to something special (small) after the competition (it doesn't have to be a holiday to Disneyworld!) This places value on their effort and re-enforces positive feedback on their achievements.

- m. Generate positive conversation at the end of the competition about the racing/event/venue/funny things that have happened etc or on the way home (unless your son/daughter is fast asleep from the day's efforts!). **Please resist the temptation to coach your son/daughter and also avoid 'post-race' phrases such as 'you could have', 'you should have' 'why didn't you do this?' etc. Above all, young swimmers need heaps of encouragement and experience happy competitions. In this way they are more likely to stay participating in the sport of swimming.**

Thank you Parents/Carers – your support is VERY much appreciated!!

Marcus Branson
Head Coach