

A Rules Primer

The technical rules of swimming are designed to provide fair and equitable conditions of competition and to promote uniformity in the sport. Each swimming stroke has specific rules designed to ensure that no swimmer gets an unfair competitive advantage over another swimmer.

Trained officials observe the swimmers during each event to ensure compliance with these technical rules. If a swimmer commits an infraction of the rules that is observed by an official, a disqualification (DQ) will result. This means that the swimmer will not receive an official time and will not be eligible for an award in that event. A disqualification may result from actions such as not getting to the starting blocks on time, false starting, performing strokes in an illegal manner, or unsportsmanlike conduct.

DQs are also a result of technical rules violations. They include but are not limited to:

Freestyle: Walking on the bottom, pulling on the lane rope, not touching the wall on a turn, or not completing the distance.

Backstroke: Pulling or kicking into the wall once a swimmer has turned passed the vertical onto the breast. Turning onto the breast before touching the wall with the hand at the finish of the race.

Breaststroke: An illegal kick such as flutter (freestyle), dolphin (butterfly - except for one during the pullout), or scissors (side stroke); not on the breast; alternating movements of the arms; taking two arm strokes or two leg kicks while the head is underwater; touching with only one hand at the turns or finish.

Butterfly: Alternating movements of the arms or legs; pushing the arms forward under instead of over the water surface (underwater recovery); a breaststroke style of kick; touching with only one hand at the turns or finish.

For specific language on any technical rules consult the USA Swimming Rules and Regulations book. Violations of the rules are reported to the Referee. The rules require that every reasonable effort be made to notify the swimmer or his coach of the reason for the disqualification. If your child is disqualified in an event, be supportive rather than critical. For beginning swimmers, a disqualification should be treated as a learning experience, not as a punishment. A disqualification alerts the swimmer and coach to what portions of the swimmer's stroke need to be corrected. They should be considered in the same light as an incorrect answer in schoolwork-they point out areas that need further practice. Disqualifications are necessary to keep the competition fair and equitable for all competitors. A supportive attitude on the part of the official, coach, and parent can make a positive situation out of the disqualification.

Parent & Athlete

Competitive swimming programs provide many benefits to young athletes including self-discipline, good sportsmanship, and time management skills. Competition allows the swimmer to experience success and to learn how to treat success and failure as two sides of the same coin, 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, by coming to swimming meets and volunteering for your club at swim meets, or by participating in fundraising, etc.

Parents contribute to the success experienced by the child and the team. Parents serve as role models and their children emulate their attitudes. Be aware of this and strive to be positive role models. Most importantly, show good sportsmanship at all times toward coaches, officials, opponents and teammates. Remember that you are teaching your child at all times.

Be Enthusiastic and Supportive!

Remember that your child is the swimmer. Children need to establish their own goals, and make their own progress towards them. Be careful not to impose your own standards and goals. Do not overburden your child with winning or achieving best times. Let them know that first they are the child you love, and second, a swimmer. Tell them you will love them whether they swim well or not, and ask only that they give their best effort. Learning about oneself while enjoying the sport is the most important part of the swimming experience. The swimming environment encourages learning and fun, which will help your child develop a positive self-image.

Positive Parenting Tips

1. Your child needs your emotional, physical, and financial support. Be liberal in providing this support.
2. Support but do not push your child.
3. Understand development – long-term development as an athlete, and growth and development as it impacts performance.
4. Be realistic in terms of expectations; factor in age and skill level; be aware of your child's perception of your expectations.
5. Emphasize performance and effort, not just outcome. The athlete only has control over his/her performance. Define and measure success as giving maximal effort and as personal improvement.
6. Keep winning in perspective.
7. Do not bribe.
8. Give plenty of encouraging and rewarding statements. Criticize sparingly.
9. View swimming as an arena in which to teach your child about commitment, hard work, and coping with adversity.
10. Work to form an effective Coach-Athlete-Parent Triangle.

Let the Coach Coach!

The best way to help your child achieve goals and reduce the natural fear of failure is through positive reinforcement. No one likes to make a mistake. If your child does make one, remember that this is a learning experience. You and your child should learn to treat success and failure as learning experiences and not life changing situations. Encourage your child's efforts and point out the positive things. The coach is the one you have assigned to judge a swimmer's performance and technique. Your role is to provide love and support regardless of outcome.

Parent and Coach...The Other Stuff

Coaching is about more than athletes, practices, and competition. As Mike Krzyzewski, Duke's hugely successful basketball coach said, it's also about "the other stuff." For coaches of club teams, that means parents.

By Tom Slear, Splash Magazine special correspondent

"All that craziness," is how Monica Teuscher describes the rituals of other parents who nervously follow their children's swimming development. Teuscher, mother of Cristina, a 1996 and 2000 Olympian, never owned a stopwatch and rarely bought a meet program. She didn't track her daughter's times, yell during her races, or seek out her coach after practices for private chats. During swim meets, she went off by herself to read or knit, only to be amused when other parents gave her a rundown on Cristina's swims, complete with split times.

"I thought it was important that I was there, but for support, not for coaching or to add pressure," Teuscher explains. "My job was to take my daughters (older daughter Carolina also swam) out for a good meal after they raced. The last thing we talked about was swimming."

Most coaches would agree that the best team to coach is one filled with parents such as Teuscher, who recognize the line between parenting and coaching and avoid it as if it were radioactive. They somehow manage to counterbalance their staunch support with a refreshing cluelessness. Years ago Debbie Phelps, mother of Michael, the world record-holder in the 200-meter butterfly, relocated the family so that her children would be closer to North Baltimore Aquatic Club's practice facility. Yet when asked about Michael's world record time, she can do no better than to say, "I'm not sure – 1:50 something?" (Actually, 1:54.58)

"The swimmers I've had who have had the most success were unencumbered by parents calling the shots behind the scenes," says John Collins, who has coached Olympians Rick Carey and Lea Loveless as well as Cristina Teuscher at the Badger Swim Club in Larchmont, N.Y. "These parents are very good about backing up their kids, but they are hands off when it comes to swimming business."

The Growing Intrusion of Parents

Most coaches will tell you that Teuscher and Phelps are hardly exceptions. The overwhelming

majority of parents instinctively, or with gentle guidance, find their place in the background. A few, however, can't resist meddling, such as the mother who wrote Collins a five- or six-page letter every week for a year and a half. Rare is the swim coach who doesn't have a similar story to tell. "So many," says Chuck Warner, the head coach at Rutgers University who coached club teams for years before entering the college ranks. "All filed away in a painful spot."

The effect of such parents is all out of proportion to their numbers. A survey by Dan Doyle, which will be published in his forthcoming book, *The Encyclopedia of Sports Parenting*, found that high school coaches across different sports are convinced that the biggest change in their profession over the last 15 years has been the growing intrusion of parents.

"No other factor they mentioned even came close," says Doyle, the executive director of the Institute for International Sport.

The top issues raised when the development coordinators for USA Swimming solicit opinions from club coaches are "parent education" and "club governance," euphemisms for the difficulty of dealing with parents, whether individually or as members of the club's board of directors. (The coach-board relationship will be covered in a future issue of *Splash*.)

An Oasis

But a bit of perspective is in order here. While all coaches labor to properly shape the parent-athletecoach triangle, some suffer more than others. Rick Wolff, chairman of the Center for Sports Parenting (www.internationalsport.com/csp), calls swimming "an oasis." Coaches of team sports have only subjective means to evaluate talent. Even at its best, the process is imprecise and open to question. How does a coach fix with any certainty which offensive lineman blocks better, or which outfielder offers the best combination of hitting and fielding?

Yet these judgements determine playing time, which is at the root of nearly all parental complaints. Coaches are forced to defend themselves armed with nothing stronger than an arbitrary standard. Who's to say a guard with a deft shooting touch should play more than a tenacious defender?

With swimming the only standard is time, so performance is entirely quantifiable, measured precisely by a stopwatch. And playing time is rarely an issue. The only barrier to entry at most age-group meets is the entry fee. Everyone who wants to swim can compete.

"When you compare what coaches of team sports have to put up with when they make decisions about who makes the team and who plays, coaches of individual sports like swimming and track are not even in deep water as far as their problems with parents," says Doyle. "They are barely in three feet of water."

Swimming's preciseness, however, comes with a price. In sports such as soccer and

basketball, parents can judge their children's potential only against the players they compete against, which typically stretches no farther than adjacent counties. Not until the last two or three years of high school do they step onto a stage that provides statewide or national exposure.

Swimming, on the other hand, allows comparison between a 10-year-old breaststroker in Pennsylvania to one in California right down to the hundredth of a second. The temptation for parents to extrapolate is irresistible. If a son or daughter is among the Top 16 when they are 10, shouldn't they be in the running for a national championship when they turn 18?

In fact, quite the opposite is the case. Improvement is not a steady, positive slope, especially for prodigies. A study by USA Swimming using the All-Time Top 100 swims in each age group through 1996 found that only 10 percent of the Top 100 10-and-Unders maintained their status through age 18.

Only half of the swimmers among the Top 100 in the 17-18 age group had made any top-100 list when they were younger.

"Those winning races at 10 probably won't be winning races when they are 20," says John Leonard, the executive director of the American Swimming Coaches Association. "This is one of those things that is obvious to coaches but is a mystery to parents. Coaches understand the long-term nature of the sport, parents often don't."

This misunderstanding creates swimming's equivalent of playing-time disputes. As swimmers begin to slip in national, regional, and even local rankings, their parents scramble for solutions. Sue Anderson, a former world record-holder and one of USA Swimming's development coordinators, saw the pattern repeat itself many times when she was head coach of the Scarlet Aquatic Club in New Jersey during the 1990s. These "pressure parents," as she calls them, begin to micromanage their children's swimming by arranging for extra practices and seeking out meets not on the team's schedule. When expectations still aren't met, they invariably blame the coach, who is mostly defenseless because no one can say for sure why young, talented swimmers stop improving. Maybe it is the coach's fault, though the problem just as likely could stem from the swimmer's early physical maturation or a mindset that has become mis-wired because of parental pressure, or a host of other reasons. Regardless, the conflict heats up until the swimmer jumps to another club, which is often the first of several such moves.

"What the parents think is helping their kids is only putting them under a lot of pressure," says Anderson. "Many of these kids do very well when they are 10-and-under and 11-12, but eventually a lot of them they stop living up to expectations, and they fall apart."

The Other Stuff

Of course, not all disputes fall under the category of domineering parents and underachieving swimmers (though they tend to be the most intractable). A coach's personal style can cause

problems, particularly if he focuses almost exclusively on the senior swimmers. There is also the matter of different outlooks. Parents see only their sons and daughters and the next few weeks and months. Coaches see the entire team and the upcoming years. Then there's the issue of how coaches are viewed. Many parents don't see a professional, but a former jock slumming between real jobs. "It was amazing how differently parents acted when I started coaching at the college level," says

Warner. "I knew nothing more than when I was coaching a club team, but the parents assumed that I did."

Mike Krzyzewski, who, over the last 20 years at Duke has established himself as one of the most successful college basketball coaches ever, once said, "The coaching I love. The kids I love. It's the other stuff you have to watch out for."

What often matters to parents is the other stuff, whether coaches are returning their phone calls promptly or thanking them for their volunteer work on behalf of the club. These small courtesies seem insignificant by themselves, but when taken together they acknowledge that the coach is meeting the parents halfway. They also keep disputes to a minimum. A meticulous plan handed out in March for the summer season will inhibit parents from overlapping family vacations with major competitions. Regular parent meetings run by the coaches and board members that both inform and educate will minimize rumors and alleviate concerns over the cyclic nature of competitive swimming. Set office hours for the coach will discourage interruptions from parents during practice.

The biggest courtesy of all, Leonard believes, is listening. A handful of parents are unreasonable. Others simply have healthy concerns about what's best for their children. Separating the two requires more than a five-minute conversation.

To make his point, Leonard refers back to his first coaching job, which was in Illinois during the 1970s. The father of a talented girl initially gave off all the signs of trouble.

"The classic horror story of a parent," Leonard recalls. "He was a trial attorney. Very pushy. His style of conversation was confrontational."

Yet Leonard endured and gradually came to realize that despite the father's bluster, he had a lot to offer. After two years, they were running together. Leonard would talk about his new ideas and the father would poke holes in all of the right spots.

"He'd question me on everything I was doing, which gave me a lot to think about," Leonard says. "Our relationship lasted for eight years and the daughter represented the United States on national teams. The mother and the father were the most active parents in helping to run the club. They were the best swimming parents I have ever known. It took me awhile, but I discovered they were only interested in the best possible experiences for their daughter – both in life and in swimming – and they wanted to

learn all they could about the sport.

"It just took a little bit of willingness to understand what they were after, and a little bit of patience to give them the opportunity to do the right thing."

Good advice, both for coaches and parents.

Physical Growth & Maturation

During childhood kids grow on average 2.5 inches in a year and gain five pounds per year. Athletes of the same chronological age can vary by as much as five years in biological maturation! So, with two 13 year old swimmers, biologically one may be 10 years and the other 16 years - - what a huge difference.

Girls generally reach peak growth around 11-13 years old, and boys generally reach peak growth around 13-15 years old. Hormonal changes in males and females cause different and often drastic changes in body composition.

Once a child reaches puberty, scientists and coaches feel more serious training can begin. This can be a particularly frustrating time for swimmers. During this transition from age group to senior swimming and from childhood to young adulthood, an athlete may experience a plateau in performance. Best times can be few and far between, while training commitments increase, requiring more time and dedication. Hopefully the coaches have prepared swimmers for this change, but many parents may begin to question whether a child's swimming career is over at this point. These factors, coupled with the other normal difficulties of puberty, can sometimes lead a swimmer to leave the sport prematurely. It is critical that parents and coaches be cooperative and very supportive during this period of adjustment, realizing that it will pass and the rewards will be even better.

Below are common discussion topics dealing with growth and development. You should schedule an appointment with your child's coach if you have other questions or concerns.

Growth & Development FAQs for Age Group Parents

Q: When is my child ready for competition?

A: That is a difficult question, as research on athlete development provides no clear-cut answer. In an article by Passer (1988) addressing this question, he reviewed several areas of development in attempting to provide guidelines on determining readiness for competition:

- Motivational readiness: Because competition is a social comparison process, the young athlete is motivated to compete when he or she possesses a social comparison orientation. Research suggests that around the age of 5-7 kids have the desire for and ability to use social comparison information.
- Cognitive readiness: Competition requires numerous cognitive and reasoning skills (i.e., perspective taking, differentiating between effort and ability) that take some time to

develop in youngsters. Researchers suggest that kids do not develop the cognitive abilities to have an understanding of the competitive process until approximately age 12.

- Physical growth, physiological capacity, and development: These factors must also be considered when trying to decide readiness for competition.

Q: What should I tell my child when he or she says it's not fair that I have to swim against Suzy, she is so much bigger than I am?

A: Look at a classroom full of school children. The diversity in size and shape is remarkable. Even though these children are similar in chronological age (calendar age) they may be very different in biological age (physical/sexual maturity). Puberty is a critical point in the developmental process. It is well known that girls mature more rapidly than boys do. In fact, the average girl matures 2-2.5 years earlier than the average boy (see sidebar on next page). However, these values are merely averages and the range can be several years within each gender.

It is important to remember that “early bloomers”-children who move through biological maturation more rapidly than average- tend to be more physically developed. This can sometimes be an advantage for them in the swimming pool. “Late bloomers” tend to catch-up over time and will often become even more proficient at the sport. Regardless of the maturational pace of your child, she needs to focus on her personal improvements over time.

Q: Should boys and girls be trained differently?

A: During the early years of competitive swimming, children of both genders are predominantly prepubescent. This stage allows for some flexibility in grouping the young athletes. At this point, young boys and girls can train together with relative ease.

Girls tend to move through biological development more rapidly than boys of similar chronological age (approximately 2-2.5 years earlier). This may cause initial differences within the training groups. Further, elements such as aerobic capacity (ability to use oxygen to make energy) and muscle mass are different between genders throughout the later developmental period. Aerobic capacity reaches its peak between the ages of 12-15 in girls and 16-20 in boys. Ideally, training programs should be specifically tailored for the individual.

Q: Are there some exercises that prevent injuries to growing muscles and bones?

A: Physical activities like swimming are considered repetitive movements. Training for swimming will enhance the ability of the muscle to work over and over in the same movement pattern. These types of activities do not typically place large strains on the bones and joints. However, to prevent injury, it is important to develop and maintain strength and flexibility in the joints, as well as to use proper stroke technique.

The use of certain training aids, or swimming with poor technique, may place excessive force on the shoulder during training that may be harmful. Be sure to have your child check with

his coach for more information. It is important to develop muscular strength, endurance and flexibility to reduce the risks of both shoulder and knee problems. Your child should check with the coach before participating in any exercises designed to increase strength.

Q: Why does it seem so many kids have inhalers? Should my child be on one?

A: Exercise-induced asthma (EIA) and exercise-induced bronchoconstriction (EIB) are common diseases in children. Various agents (such as humidity and temperature of the air) cause an irritation of the bronchioles in the lungs resulting in bronchoconstriction. Due to these facts, the warm moist (humid) environment of the swimming pool is helpful in reducing the onset of asthmatic attacks. Therefore, many children with asthma are advised to swim if they are interested in sport participation.

Typical treatments for EIB or EIA are inhaled medications that aid in reducing the bronchoconstriction and opening the airways (McArdle, Katch, Katch 1991). The inhalers are prescribed by a licensed doctor for the youngster following medical testing to determine both the presence of and severity of either EIA or EIB. As with any prescribed drug, sharing inhalers is not a safe practice.

Although many swimmers may be seen using inhalers, the sport of swimming does not cause asthma in children. The warm moist environment of the swimming pool is often one of the only places that children suffering from EIB or EIA can be physically active without severe problems. Advances in the diagnosis and treatment of asthma have allowed more children and adults to participate in organized sport throughout their lifetime.

*If an inhaler is prescribed for your child, you might want to double-check the USADA (United States Anti-Doping Agency) drug hotline for which drugs are acceptable and which are banned. (800) 233-0393

Q: My daughter can beat several girls in the senior training group, but her coach won't move her up. Why not?

A: While your child may have the physical skills or times to move to the next group, move criteria may also be based on emotional, social and cognitive skills. Additionally, having performance times does not necessarily equate to being able to train in that group. Progression from group to group is set by the coaching staff to ensure long-term development. This allows proper training to be introduced at the appropriate level for each individual child. Obviously your coach believes it is in the best interest of your daughter to remain in that group. Express your concerns to the coach in private, and value the opinion and decision made by your coach.

Q: My son comes home every night and says, "Tommy doesn't help cover the pool or pick-up boards." What do I say to him?

A: First of all, be sure to commend your son for helping out and explain why that's important. Praise him for helping without being asked. In this case you might encourage him to talk to

Tommy and ask him to help the coach and the group by pitching in. This will begin to teach your son to deal directly with a problem and the person he has the problem with. Obviously, your son has a respect for others and a good team concept or he wouldn't be asking this question.

Q: My daughter is influenced by the senior athletes. How do I encourage her to have the appropriate role models?

A: That's a tough one. We suggest you begin by complimenting or simply pointing out the behavior of athletes you want her to emulate. Focus on such things as a good work ethic, sportsmanship, a good attitude, and other values held by your family. There have been many heroes and role models throughout the history of swimming, e.g. Tracy Caulkins, Mary T. Meagher, Pablo Morales, Jeff Rouse, etc. Encourage your daughter to do some homework on these heroes. The "Swimmers" section of the USA Swimming web site has profiles of many great role models.

Q: I worry that my child is overwhelmed by all of his commitments. What can I do?

A: Talk to your son. Is this your perception or is it really happening? If your son is overwhelmed, it's time to work together in establishing priorities. Be sure to make any observations of "wasted" time in his day. After helping him establish his priorities, help your son determine whether it is necessary to drop some activities. Then, some decisions have to be made by you and your child to relieve this pressure and allow your child to be better balanced and enjoy his activities. This experience will teach your son how to better manage his time and balance his schoolwork, family, training, and activities.

Psychological Development for Age Group Parents

The mental side of athletic competition is just as challenging as the physical side. Parents want to help their children set appropriate goals and handle nervousness before competition. Coaches work with athletes on the "mental side" as part of their training, but there are things parents can do also. Below are some frequently asked questions and discussion topics that can guide you to help guide your swimmer.

Psychological Development Discussion Topics

Q: What are "Process" goals?

A: There are two types of goals that swimmers can set:

- Outcome Goals: focus on the end result of performance. "Win, make finals."
- Process Goals: relate to process of performance. "Breathe every 3rd stroke, streamline."

Swimmers have much more control over Process Goals. Outcome Goals are uncontrollable since they also involve the performance of other competitors. Swimmers and coaches, especially at the Age Group level, should concentrate on Process Goals.

Q: Should my child begin setting goals?

A: Of course! Everyone should set goals. In fact, most kids have already set goals. As adults,

however, we must remember that kids are not simply little versions of us and are not going to set the same types of goals as adults. One developmental difference is that children lack the cognitive ability to distinguish time and are also very concrete thinkers. Therefore, setting long-term goals often doesn't provide the motivation for kids that it does for adults. Kids want results today. With younger swimmers, it is appropriate to talk about short-term goals - - what they need to work on today. Most coaches will emphasize goals that reinforce skill development and the process of swim performance. Additionally, based on cognitive development research, we know that around the age of 6 or 7, kids enter the stage of social comparison. In this stage, they begin to evaluate their own performance by comparing it to others. So as the parent, reinforce what the coach has emphasized and help her focus on individual improvement.

Q: My son has set some great goals but I am not sure if the coach is aware of them.

A: Ask your son if he developed the goals with his coach. You might find that the coach actually helped your son set these goals. This is the beginning of your son learning to take risks and responsibility for his swimming. Encourage his goal to be "SMART".

- **Specific:** tells the athlete what to do
- **Measurable:** able to measure and record progress
- **Attainable:** athlete can experience success
- **Realistic:** challenging but "do-able"
- **Trackable:** short-term goals build into long-term goals 38

Q: All my swimmer talks about is being an Olympic swimmer. Should I discourage this since it may not be realistic?

A: Most kids will have long-term or "dream" goals of making the Olympic team or winning Nationals. Dream goals can be beneficial by helping motivate your athlete to go to practice and to train hard (and there is no way of knowing if it is realistic or not). While it is okay to have dream goals, there are several problems with athletes **only** having dream goals. These problems include not knowing if they are making progress towards their goal, not experiencing little "successes" along the way, and losing motivation when the goal seems so distant. To combat this, it is important to also talk to your child about setting short-term or even daily goals. Ask him what he is working on in practice this week (just as you ask him what is going on in school), get him to identify skills he needs to improve on, and follow up with him to help him recognize successes along the way. Be sure to ask your son to speak to his coach if he needs help seeking some practice or short-term goals.

Q: I know the mental aspect of swimming is important. Should my child be using mental skills, or is she too young?

A: If we equate mental skills with physical skills, as we should, this question becomes easier to answer. Just as there are certain physical skills that a young swimmer is not physically, developmentally, or cognitively ready for, there are also mental skills he is not ready to learn. But, on the flip side, there are basic mental skills young athletes can be taught at this level. It is

great to begin laying a foundation of mental skills (just as it is great to introduce basic physical skills at a young age). Some basic skills that can be introduced include setting goals, imagery, concentration, and relaxation. We often tell athletes to "concentrate" or "relax," but fail to teach athletes what it means or what they need to do to concentrate or relax. These are skills that coaches can work on with young athletes.

Q: My child gets so nervous before a competition. Is this natural? What can I do to help her to reduce this competitive pressure/stress?

A: To a degree, nervousness is part of the competitive experience and can be used as an opportunity to teach the young athlete specific strategies or skills to help her manage this arousal or nervousness. A simple skill that young athletes can learn to help manage the "butterflies in their stomachs" is belly breathing. The athlete is taught to take slow, deep breaths into her belly, hold it briefly, and then exhale slowly. Words can be included to help the athlete focus her thoughts on something besides worry. This is a quick strategy that helps calm the body and mind and only takes a few seconds to do. Another skill to help the athlete deal with muscular tightness brought on by nervousness is progressive muscle relaxation. In this procedure, the athlete goes through the major muscles in her body and first tenses and then relaxes each muscle. This teaches athletes to learn the difference between a tense and relaxed muscle, to learn where different muscles are located, and to eventually be able to relax specific muscles as necessary. Remember that these skills must be taught and practiced before the athlete will be able to use them effectively.

We also know that excessive anxiety can be damaging to both performance and to the athlete's desire to enter such situations in the future. Two factors which have been found to play a role in the level of anxiety experienced are the importance of the event and the uncertainty of the outcome. Greater importance and greater uncertainty lead to increased anxiety. Parents, this suggests that you can play an active role in reducing competition anxiety by devaluing the outcome of the event and by focusing on the individual performance over which the swimmers have control.

Symptoms of Anxiety:

- increased heart rate
- rapid breathing
- sweating
- negativity
- jittery
- frequent 'pit stops'
- excessive worry
- doubts
- talk of failure
- low confidence

Strategies to Manage:

- Deep belly breathing
- positive self-talk
- relaxation exercises
- think of successes
- stretching
- visualize race
- focus on goals
- light massage
- distract by talking with friends, family

Are You A Pressure Parent?

The following survey has been taken from the Amateur Swimming Association of Great Britain. If you answer yes to one or more of these questions, you may be in danger of pressuring your child. It is important to remember that the parents' role is critical and should be supportive at all times to ensure a positive experience for your child.

- Is winning more important to you than it is to your child?
- When your child has a poor swim, is your disappointment, such as through body language or vocal tones, obvious?
- Do you feel that you are the one to have to "psyche" your child up before competition?
- Do you feel that winning is the only way your child can enjoy the sport?
- Do you conduct "post mortems" immediately after competition or practice?
- Do you feel that you have to force your child to go to practice?
- Do you find yourself wanting to interfere with coaching and instructions during practice or competition thinking that you could do better?
- Do you find yourself disliking your child's opponents?
- Are your child's goals more important to you than they are to your child?
- Do you provide material rewards for performance?

Training for Age Group Swimmers

Many parents have lots of questions about swim practice, especially when their children are new to the sport. It is sometimes difficult to know what to expect of your child. Your child may talk about swim practice, but you may not even understand the new "swimming

vocabulary" your child is using!

Many children improve rapidly during the developmental stages due to growth and improved technique. It is difficult to resist the tendency to push young athletes at this stage! However, the emphasis should be placed on technique and not intense training. The training schedule for developmental swimmers should be flexible enough to provide them with enough time to participate in other activities. Since swimmers' careers can extend well into adulthood, swimming at the youngest levels needs to be fun, pressure free, and filled with learning experiences. This will ensure that swimming remains fun throughout their lives.

You should certainly ask questions at swim team parents' meetings or schedule an appointment with your child's coach to clarify things. However there are many common questions that might be answered below. Read through the FAQs and see if you have found yourself asking these same questions!

Q: Some days he likes to just play with his friends. Should I force him to go to practice?

A: You should not force your child; you want his participation to be his decision. Reinforce the choices and decisions he has made to start swimming. For example, your son chose to go to practice on Tuesday and Thursdays, on other days he has the freedom to do other activities. As a parent, explain your expectation that he fulfill the commitment he made by joining the team. You don't want to force your child into a sport that he does not enjoy, yet you want your child to be involved in a 'lifetime sport', to learn about making and keeping a commitment and to interact with peers So, what are you to do?

Instead of allowing your child to make a daily decision about going to practice, allow him to decide whether or not he wants to swim for the season. Once the decision is made to swim, he is making a commitment to the team and needs to follow through on it by attending practice on a regular basis. A haphazard schedule is detrimental to the swimmer's overall development.

Interestingly, when asked to reflect on the role of their parents in their swimming, athletes from the World Championship team talked about being pushed to swim by their parents on a weekly basis but knowing they could quit if they stopped having fun with swimming.

Q: What will happen to my child's meet results if he only makes half of the offered workouts because he is participating in other sports?

A: Children involved in other activities can benefit in the areas of coordination and balance, as well as improved social and intellectual development. Specialized training in one activity does not necessarily need to take place at this stage of development. Will your son's teammate who makes all practices have better results? Probably, because his teammate is working solely on developing swimming skills. It is up to you to explain to your child that making the choice to

participate in other activities can have its consequences. Tell your son that he should not compare his results to that of his teammate, but to focus on the fact that he is benefiting from and enjoying both sports.

Q: It looks like my child has too much fun, shouldn't she be working harder?

A: Be happy that your child is having fun! According to a recent study conducted by USA Swimming children who experience fun while participating stay in sports longer (Tuffey, Gould, & Medbery, 1998). At this stage of the game, the most important aspect of development is the mastery of skills, which means learning to swim the strokes with proper technique. Fundamentals must be established prior to true "training" taking place. And, if she is having fun in the process of learning, she is more likely to continue to swim.

Q: Shouldn't my child be swimming more laps instead of doing all those drills?

A: Your child needs to develop a solid foundation in stroke mechanics. Drills and drill sets serve the specific purpose of teaching skills and fundamentals. Drills develop motor coordination, motor skills, and balance. In fact, your child's coach may prescribe a particular drill, just for your child, in order to improve a part of her stroke. In addition, she may actually be experiencing a "training" benefit from drills. Drills require concentration and aerobic energy to do them correctly.

Q: My daughter's coach makes her sit on the side of the pool. What's that teaching her?

A: The coach has set up expectations of proper behavior both in and out of the water. Hopefully, your child is aware of the consequences of testing these boundaries. Obviously the coach is reinforcing what is expected of the children at practice. We encourage you to reinforce the coach's practice expectations by discussing your child's behavior and the consequences of that behavior. Hopefully, this "time out" begins to reinforce self-discipline, accountability and respect for others.

Q: My son came home and said he had his best result on a test set of 100s on 1:45, what does that mean?

A: Some coaches use test sets to measure improvement. This particular challenge set consists of swimming a certain number of 100s on every 1 minute and 45 seconds, which is the send off. Praise your child for this accomplishment. In addition to achieving the physical goal, your child is also learning to swim on an interval, read the pace clock, and accomplish practice goals. Congratulate him on his efforts and let him know you are proud of him.

Q: My son complains that some of the kids in the lane skip laps. He doesn't think that's fair. What should I tell him?

A: Praise him first for completing the workout the coach offers. Remind him that he is there to improve his own swimming and he can't control what his teammates do. Tell him however, that his best course of action is to continue to do things right and others may actually be influenced by his good example. By committing to do his best at all times, over the long haul he will reap the benefits of his hard work.

Q: My child seems to be bouncing off the wall during “taper.” What is that?

A: Tapering is a gradual reduction in training workloads in preparation for major competition. Some Age Groupers do not need to taper at all: a little rest and they are ready to go. As training increases, swimmers need more rest and the process of tapering is introduced. Swimmers taper only a couple of times a year, for their major competitions. Taper is not something that occurs for every meet! “Taper time” is an exciting time for a young swimmer and there are two reasons for this:

- Physiologically your child is expending less energy because the workload has been reduced.
- Psychologically there is less mental fatigue as he is doing less physical work. Additionally, the anticipation and nervousness associated with the upcoming competition contributes to your child's bouncing off the wall. Do not worry, it will soon be over.

●

Everything You Wanted to Know About Swim Meets But Were Afraid To Ask

(Excerpt from USA Swimming's Sample Club Handbook) Please be sure to check with your swimmer's coach for specifics that may be different from the examples below.

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 tried to be as specific and as detailed as we possibly could. If you have any questions, please ask your coach.

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 swimmers
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. Usually, parents are not allowed on deck so this may be a responsibility of your swimmer or your swimmer's coach. Make sure your swimmer checks in with his or her coach!
4. Once "checked in", write or have the swimmers write each event-number on his or her hand in ink. This helps him/her remember what events he/she is swimming and what event number to listen or watch 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. A swimmer's body is just like a car on a cold day-he/she needs to get the engine going and warmed-up before he/she can go all out.
6. After warm-up, your swimmer will go back to the area where his/her team is sitting and wait there until his first 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 a coach. He or she in turn, will pursue the matter through the proper channels.

9. Psyche Sheet or Heat Sheets. A psyche sheet is usually available for sale in the lobby or concession area of the pool. 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 (up to the date that the entry was submitted) 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. A Heat sheet may be available close to the start of the meet that lists the actual heat and lane a swimmer will be competing in.

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. Generally, girls events are odd-numbered and boys events are even-numbered. Example: "Event #26, 10-Under Boys, 50 freestyle"
3. Most meets are computerized. There are generally two ways a swimmer gets to his/her lane:
 - a. A swimmer usually reports directly to his/her lane for competition a number of heats before he/she actually swims. Check with your swimmer's coach for specific instructions.
 - b. In some novice meets, a swimmer's event number will be called, usually over the loudspeaker, and he/she will be asked to report to the "clerk of course" or "bullpen". 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 Clerk of Course." The "Clerk of Course" or "bullpen" area is usually where all swimmers checked in before the warm-up.
 - i. The clerk will usually line up all the swimmers and take them down to the pool in correct order.
4. The swimmer swims his or her race.
5. After each swim:
 - . He/she is to ask the timers (people behind the blocks at each lane) his/her time.
 - a. Depending on the coaches instructions, the swimmer may be asked to do some recovery swimming if a "warm down" pool or lanes are available.
 - b. The swimmer should then go immediately to his or her coach. The coach will discuss the swim with each swimmer. Some coaches may wish to talk with the swimmer before her recovery swim.
6. . Generally, the coach follows these guidelines when discussing swims:
 - . Positive comments or praise

- a. Suggestions for improvement
 - b. Positive comments
7. Things you, as a parent, can do after each swim:
 - a. Tell him how great he did! The coaching staff will be sure to discuss stroke technique with him. You need to tell him how proud you are and what a great job he did.
 - b. Take him back to the team 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 next event is called and starts the procedure again.
8. When a swimmer has completed all of her events she and her 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 she is not there
9. Results are usually posted somewhere in the facility. Awards are often gathered for a team and given to the coach at the end of the meet. The coach will give the awards to the swimmers at a later time.

What Happens If Your Child has a Disappointing Swim?

If your child has a poor race and comes out of it feeling badly, talk about the good things. The first thing you say is, "Hey, that is not like you. I know you are disappointed, but it's not the end of the world!" Then you can go on and talk about the good things the child did. Don't talk about the negative things and don't keep talking about the race. Drop it and get your child to focus on the next race or something enjoyable coming up after the meet! Limit the "post mortems!"

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 Bring to the Meet

1. Most important: Swimsuit, Team Cap--and goggles (and extra of each)
2. Towels-Realize your swimmer will be there awhile, so pack at least two
3. Something to sit on. Oftentimes the swimmer area may be located in a gym or cafeteria. 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.

4. Sweat suits: bring one. Each swimmer may want to bring two because they can get wet and soggy
5. Team T-shirts: Two or three. Same reason as above.
6. Games/Activity for siblings: travel games, coloring books, books, anything to pass the time.
7. Something for you to do: Book/magazine/knitting/sudoku
8. Money (for heat sheet, usually \$3-\$10) Highlighter, pen, sharpies
9. Water, Gatorade & Snacks: Granola bars, fruits, yogurt, cereal, nuts
10. Sunscreen/Hat/Canopy if an outdoor meet

Once you have attended one or two meets this will all become very routine. Please do not hesitate to ask any other 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. If you don't think that a gym floor is comfortable, feel free to bring folding chairs to sit on. Better yet, become an official and get involved! You get to be close to the action and take the focus off of your own child!

The Top Ten Questions Every Swimming Parent Wants to Know

By Wayne Goldsmith and Helen Morris

You see them every day. They are everywhere. At every pool. Every swim meet. Every school swimming practice.

There they are. Sitting at the side of the pool. Watching every lap. Counting every breath. Analysing every stroke. Studying every move you make.

Coaches?No.

Swimming media?Uh-uh.

Officials?No way.

Who are these people who go to the pool and watch you swim laps day after day after day? Who are these folk sitting there in the wind and rain for hours and hours watching you practice? Who are these strange humans who love nothing more than getting out of bed at 4am just to sit in the

cold and watch you train?

Your Parents!

Ever wondered what they are thinking sitting there at the side of the pool studying every stroke and counting every kick?

They are desperate to find out the answers to these important questions.....

1. How many training sessions should my child do each week?

There is no magic number of training sessions for every swimmer. Even at elite level, some swimmers swim 7 sessions a week, some do nine, others 11...there is no magic number.

It all comes down to the FLAG principle:

- **Fatigue** – if a swimmer is swimming 3 sessions a week and as a result is always tired, irritable and their grades are falling, then doing more swimming does not make sense. So the optimal number of sessions for any individual swimmer is largely based on their ability to adapt to and recover from their training load.
- **Level of performance** – training sessions should also be based on the level of performance being targeted. Chances are swimming two sessions a week will not get you selected on the next Olympic team and similarly 14 sessions a week is a little too much just to achieve a PB time at the under 9 state championships meet. As a broad benchmark, world class swimmers spend one day per week, i.e. 24 hours per week training and the rest of the time eating and sleeping so the higher you want to go, the harder you have to work.
- **Available time** – if your child is in junior high, playing basketball, learning piano, doing special projects on weekends for extra credits, playing tennis and in the school choir...and.....swimming five sessions each week, then it is safe to say, adding more swimming sessions is not going to do anything other than make them tired and fatigued. Keep in mind your child's total commitments across all areas of their life before adding more training time. And – never, ever forget that some days they need to just hang out with their friends, play and enjoy life. They are only kids once!
- **Goals** – if your child sets high swimming goals, then naturally the time, effort and energy to achieve them must also be high. As a general rule, as kids progress through each level of swimming they need to add an extra pool session or gym workout to learn the skills, develop the fitness and build the technical abilities to be successful at the next level. For example (Note: this is a guide only):

Swimmer Level	Sessions per week
Water safety/Learn to swim	1-2
Mini squads/School swimming programs	2-3

District/Country Swimming Championships level	3-4
State Swimming Championships level	4-6
National Swimming Championships level	6-8
International Swimming level	8+

2. My child is 10 and is a great freestyler. What does she have to do to make it to the top?

The first thing to accept is that there is no such thing as a champion ten year old freestyler. Swimmers who experience success pre-teenage years generally do so because of accelerated growth, i.e. they are bigger and stronger than the other kids!

Another common situation is that as kids grow, change and develop, their ability to swim the competitive swimming strokes also changes – this year’s backstroker could be next year’s freestyler and then the following year they are great at swimming fly.

In the long term, the factors which determine success as a senior swimmer are the 5 Ps:

- **Perseverance** – the ability to try and try and try and try – and to never give up;
- **Patience** – it takes time to become a great swimmer – about ten years of consistent hard work;
- **Physical training** – great swimmers are usually the best prepared. It takes a high level of physical fitness, technical development and skills refinement to make it to the top;
- **Personality** – world class swimmers demonstrate some common personality traits – none the least being determination, commitment, the ability to overcome adversity and the capacity for accelerated learning;
- **Passion** – Swimming is like anything else in life: you have to love it to do it well!

3. When should my child specialise in a stroke?

Kids need to grow into their specialist stroke! That is, when swimmers grow and develop physically and mentally, they will be naturally drawn to a particular stroke. It is common for a child’s best stroke to change from year to year but once they hit middle to late teens, the nature of specific events will become more appealing. Real talent in any one stroke is harder to hide than it is to find!

There is no need to encourage kids into one stroke or another – it will just happen!

4. Do swimmers need a special diet?

No. Not unless they have a medical problem or diet related condition that has been diagnosed by a nutrition professional. As a general rule, top swimmers follow a “**4 MORE 4 LESS, 4 ME**” diet:

- **More** – complex carbohydrates like rice, bread, pasta.

- More – lean quality protein like chicken, meat, fish.
- More – water, fresh juices.
- More – fresh fruit, nuts and vegetables.
- Less – takeaway food.
- Less – saturated fats and oils.
- Less – processed and prepackaged foods.
- Less – sodas.

Lots of parents want to know about supplements like vitamins, minerals and special substances like Creatine, Glucose and so on.

The five golden rules about these products are:

1. They may be of some use to some swimmers in some situations and on some occasions but consult a sports nutrition professional to help determine what might work for your child;
2. Nothing takes the place of consistent hard work, good technique and a great attitude;
3. If something sounds too good to be true, “Miracle Sports Performance Powder – Improves Endurance by up to 60%...” it probably is too good to be true!
4. Never introduce a new product – no matter what it is promising – within 7 days of an important meet. Many parents have fallen for the trap of giving kids a “special” breakfast or all new “miracle” supplement on the morning of a big meet only to find their kids spend more time in the toilet than in the pool.
5. Read rule 2 again – no supplement can turn mediocrity into magnificence. Teach kids to believe in themselves and to take responsibility for their own swimming performances rather than to rely on the promises of a supplement advertising campaign.

5. How do I find the best coach for my child?

The best swimming coaches demonstrate the FIVE Cs:

- Calm – they remain calm and composed on and off deck and set a great example for the kids they coach;
- Confident – they display a “humble confidence” – they believe in themselves and coach because they love coaching – not for any ego stroking reason;
- Close –the pool where they coach is close to home or at least on the after school “route” –e.g. Pick up the kids from school, drop them to basketball practice, pick them up and take them to swimming, pick them up and drop them to music lessons.....
- Caring – they are interested in kids becoming great human beings – not just fast swimmers.
- Credible – they have the appropriate experience, qualifications and understanding of swimming.

There is an old saying in coaching...”kids don’t care how much you know, they want to know how much you care!”

In swimming, this means asking the coach four questions:

- Will you inspire a lifelong passion for the sport of swimming in my child?
- Will you engage my child's heart and mind and respect them as an individual?
- Will you teach my child the importance of swimming skills and technique?
- Will you encourage my child to learn, be patient with them when they fail and above all help them to develop a real sense of self confidence and self belief?

Think about your own sporting career. Remember that coach who took a real interest in you as a human being and changed your life – whose lessons you still remember even now 20 years later? That's the type of coach you want to find for your kids!

6. School, swimming, social life.....what's the right balance for my child?

Your child is not a swimmer....they are a child first and foremost: a child who just happens to swim. But they are also a student, a brother or sister, a son or daughter, a member of a youth group, maybe someone who plays another sport – they are a young person who has the potential to be anything they choose to be.

Kids are drawn to the things that:

1. They enjoy;
2. They have friends;
3. They are learning by because their hearts and minds are engaged in the activity.

So if your kids are having fun with their friends and love what they are doing, chances are the balance is right. If your kids start finding excuses not to train, don't want to get out of bed to go to the pool, show poor training habits and want to avoid going to meets, they are telling you, "mom and dad – the balance is not right and I want to change it". Listen to your kids.

7. What should I expect in terms of results at Meets?

You should expect to see:

- Your child enjoying swimming with his / her friends;
- Your child learning to love challenging him / herself and taking pleasure in competition;
- Your child demonstrating all they have learnt in terms of swimming technique, dives, starts, turns, finishes, underwater kicking.
- Your child showing some self responsibility in their warm up, recovery, meet day nutrition and personal management.
- Your child showing a sense of "team" by cheering for team mates and supporting other members of the squad.

In terms of results...expect nothing. Where kids are concerned....**Medals are meaningless and times are tedious** unless they are accompanied by LLL – a **love** of the sport, **learning** new skills and **life** lessons.

8. Does my child need to be doing strength training in the gym?

No. Not unless they have an injury or weakness or imbalance or other physical condition that has been identified by a professional sports physical therapist / medical practitioner.

The three key areas – what we call the “ABILITIES” of non-pool training to focus on are:

- FLEX- ability: Improving their flexibility in important swimming muscles and muscle groups;
- MOB – ability (mobility): Improving their mobility around joints;
- STAR- ability (stability): Developing a strong stable “core” – abs, back muscles and important stabilising muscles in their shoulders and hips

Kids don't need to lift heavy weights – work on the “abilities”, technique, skills, attitude and self confidence and leave the lifting to the Governor of California!

9. What can I do to be the best swimming parent I can be?

Give your child that which only you can give! Unconditional love, total support, compassion and unwavering belief in them as human beings. In the long term, whether your kids become world record holders in swimming, lawyers, doctors, teachers...it is not their talent that defines them or makes them successful – **it is who they are**. And no one helps kids to develop values, virtues and characteristics like their family. 6 feet tall 12 year old kids with large feet and strong muscles are great, but give me intelligent, honest, hard working kids with a real sense of self belief, courage and integrity any day! **Develop the person first – then the swimming power!**

10. My son is 11 years old and wants to play basketball two afternoons a week? Is playing other sports ok?

Yep! Pre teen kids should be out enjoying life, being fit, learning skills and being active. Sure – once they get to mid – late teens and make the commitment to be a great swimmer, then some of their other activities will need to be cut back but at 11 the “more the merrier”. A lot of sports have several cross over effects on swimming including:

- Basketball – leg power, co-ordination, speed, endurance.
- Gymnastics – balance, timing, flexibility, power, coordination.
- Martial arts – balance, timing, flexibility, power, coordination, self confidence.
- Running – aerobic fitness, leg strength.
- Soccer – aerobic fitness, leg strength, co-ordination, speed.

Look at the obesity epidemic in kids in all developed nations. It would be great to have every kid in the world swimming laps, but just having them outside playing sport and moving their bodies instead of seeing them inside eating junk food while watching tv has got to be good!

The coach asked me to “time”...What is that?

At some point you will be asked to time during one or more meets. Depending on the meet, two or three timers will be needed in each lane for the duration of the meet. We usually try to split timing during a given meet so that nobody is standing around for hours upon end. Depending on how many meets your swimmer attends, be prepared to time at least twice during swim season.

- Timers sign in at the beginning of warm-up to ensure that the meet organizer is aware of all the volunteers.
- Prior to the start of the meet, Timers will be asked to attend a meeting. At the meeting, you will be given a stopwatch and shown how to use it. You will then be assigned to a lane and a head timer for that lane will be selected.
- The head timer writes down the times from all the timers for his/her lane and
- submits them to Runners.
- “Runners” collect the written times and deliver them to be recorded.
- If your timer malfunctions, you hit the wrong button, or you forget to hit the stop button, there are backup timers who can be called over to finish timing in your place for that heat.
- When the meet begins, pay close attention to the Starter in order to begin timing. Watch for the flash from the strobe-light (starting-light) to immediately start your watch. If there’s no flash, listen for the starting beep instead.
- Lean over the end wall to stop your timing immediately you see the swimmer touch the wall. Then report that time to the Head Timer.
- If there are touch pads in use, you may also have a separate Button in your other hand that you simultaneously press but only for the finishing touch.
- Again, all this will be explained to you during the Timers Meeting.

Meet Results

Encourage your swimmer to do their best and have fun. Results are usually posted on a wall at the meet as they become available. These will show their official time and place for each event. The coaches also get all results after the meet and the results are available on the BASS Bulletin Board. If your child places in an event, ribbons are given to the coaches and are given out as a team at the next practice. How the meet is scored and awarded is usually on the meet information or the meet program and can vary from meet to meet.

Encourage your child to go out and have fun and not worry about placing or getting ribbons.

Disqualifications:

If your child is disqualified (DQ’ed) in an event the officials will usually talk to them after the race and explain why. The coaches are also notified of the reason and will talk to your child. This helps them learn the rules and helps the coaches know what they need to work on in practice. Try to keep your child from getting discouraged when this happens. The most important thing to

remind your child is to go out and have fun!!

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 team uniform may be worn when accepting the award. It is also customary for the BASS 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. BASS 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.** Oftentimes, a certain hotel will be designated as "team headquarters."
2. Parents are encouraged to attend out-of-town meets with their swimmers and to chaperon 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 their 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.