

ORIENTATION TO SWIM MEETS

Do not be overwhelmed! There is a lot of information here but you will soon find that everything on these pages will become habit after the first couple of meets. Swim meets are fun and they offer great opportunities to meet people from other teams, make friends and build confidence. Each swim meet is only one small step in the overall developmental process—successes will be used for encouragement while failures will be used as motivation to keep moving forward. Remember to stay positive and relaxed, have fun and talk to your coach if you have any questions or concerns.

How do I learn where, when and what I am swimming?

The website has all that information on the Meets & Events page. For each meet, the facility's address and warm-up times are listed, and you can link to the meet packet, entries, host team's website, and more. After the meet, results will be posted on the website and you can access all of your child's past meet results from your account as well. If you have questions, ask a coach or an experienced parent.

How long will the meet last?

Most invitational meets (two to three day swim meets) are divided up into two sessions per day (morning and afternoon); each session lasts approximately four hours. Swimmers only compete in one session per day. Be sure to find out which session your gender and age group will be swimming in by looking in the meet packet or on the Meets & Events page of the website *for every meet*, because meets vary (e.g. sometimes 8 & Unders swim in the morning, other times in the afternoon).

Most dual meets (single-day competitions between two teams) last about two to four hours.

What should I bring?

- Swimsuit
- Goggles
- Team swim cap
- Towels – Bring a couple! You will be getting in and out of the water several times throughout the meet.
- Warm clothes to wear over your swimsuit, such as sweatpants/sweatshirt, t-shirts, parka, etc.
- Shoes, sandals or other footwear – As a safety precaution, and to minimize the loss of body heat, please do not walk around barefoot.
- Sleeping bag, blanket, or chair to sit on if the team area is off the pool deck
- Games, books, things to do with your teammates between events
- Food – There is a concession stand at most meets, however, it is better to bring your own nutritious, carbohydrate-rich snacks. During the meet, stay away from "heavy" foods, i.e. high-fat or high-protein. Rather than eating a single large meal, have several smaller high-carbohydrate snacks throughout the meet. Some good ideas include cereal, granola bars, bagels, pasta salad, fruit, veggies, and crackers.
- Drinks – It is essential to stay hydrated at swim meets, especially outdoor meets under the sun. Water is the best choice, but other good choices include Gatorade, Powerade or other sports drinks, as well as fruit juices. Stay away from soda and other carbonated/cafeinated drinks.
- For outdoor meets, additional items should include sunscreen and a source of shade.
- When in doubt of what else you should bring, ask an experienced parent or coach.

Before the Meet Weekend...

There are a few things you should take note of before the meet weekend, all of which can be found on the website. First of all, find out where the meet will take place and how to get there. Secondly, find out when warm-ups start for your gender and age group. *Plan to be there at least 20 minutes beforehand* so you have time to check in, set up, and get on deck for warmups 10 minutes early, as expected. Finally, look to see what events your child will be swimming in the meet. If you have any concerns regarding the events you are entered in, talk to your coach as soon as possible.

When You Arrive...

Positive Check-In – The first thing you should do when you arrive at the swim meet is check in. There should be a table set up somewhere with sheets of paper listing all of the swimmers who are entered in the meet as well as what events they will be swimming. Find your name and use the highlighter to highlight your name and events. This is to declare that you are there, ready to swim. It is a good idea, especially for young swimmers, to write your event numbers down on the back of your hand so you don't forget which events you are swimming. Some meets, such as most championship meets, do not have positive check-in. In this case, you only need to check in with your coach to let him/her know you are there.

The Team Area – Usually, there is a designated area for swimmers to stay between events (e.g. cafeteria, gymnasium, some portion of the deck, etc.). After you check in, find the area where all of your JETS teammates are staying.

Warm-ups – You have arrived at the meet, highlighted your name at the positive check-in table, and set up your stuff near your teammates. Now it is time to head down on deck. Swimmers are expected to be ready on deck 10 minutes before the scheduled start of warm-ups. Think of warm-ups as a short practice session that allows swimmers to get accustomed to the pool and prepare their bodies for racing. It is important that swimmers do not miss warm-ups. Also, the coaches determine relays according to who is at warm-ups. Swimmers who are late or do not show up for warm-ups are generally last to be considered for placement in a relay. You can read more about relays below.

Throughout the Duration of the Meet...

Bullpen – A bullpen is offered at most meets to help swimmers get to their events. A bullpen is most often only offered for 10&Under swimmers. Announcements are made in the team area throughout the meet for each event. Swimmers should know what event numbers they are swimming (the easiest way is to write it on the back of their hand with a marker). When a swimmer's event number is called, he/she should go to the bullpen area (the exact area depends on the venue). In the bullpen, swimmers are lined up and told what heat and lane they will be swimming in. They are then directed to the pool area to swim their event. Swimmers who are 11 or older usually do not have a bullpen. They are responsible for getting behind the block, in the correct heat and lane, on their own. Therefore, older swimmers must pay attention to what event is in the water so as not to miss their own event. Heat and lane assignments for each event are posted on the walls in the team area and on the pool deck. These sheets are straightforward but, if you are confused about anything, ask an experienced teammate for help.

Down Time - During the down time between your events, be sure to stay warm and keep hydrated. You can eat snacks, but avoid eating anything "heavy" that will sit in your stomach. Have fun with your teammates and, if you want to, find time to chat with swimmers from other teams—they are not the enemy; they are in the sport for the same reasons you are.

When You Swim...

Try your best and remember the things you worked on at practice.

Disqualifications (DQ's) - Swimming, like every other sport, has rules. Examples include false starts and specifications about stroke form, turn technique, etc. Practice time is dedicated to learning these techniques, but *every* swimmer in *every* stage of development gets disqualified at times. This is especially true for beginning swimmers because it is part of the developmental process. If you are disqualified (DQ'ed), your coach will get a DQ slip describing what rule was broken. Show sportsmanship and do not get upset or discouraged! If an official talks to you, be sure to thank them; they are volunteers who work at swim meets because they love the sport and because they want to help.

After You Swim...

After every race, before you run off to your parents or head back to the team area, talk to your coach! We are excited about watching you swim, so come see us after every event so we can share our thoughts about your race and give you feedback to improve your next race. Older swimmers will generally be asked to swim a warm-down after each race, if appropriate pool space is available. Once you have talked to your coach, you may return to the team area and wait for your next event to start the whole process over. After your final race, double-check with you coach to see if you are in a relay. If you are not needed for a relay, you are free to go home.

Relays

Relays are generally the first events of each session or the last events of each session (sometimes both). They are lots of fun, because you get to compete with a group of your fellow teammates, and the crowd really gets into them. There are two types of relays: In a Freestyle relay, each member swims Freestyle one-fourth of the given distance, and in a medley relay each member swims a different stroke in the following order: Back, Breast, Fly, Free.

Attendance is taken during warm-ups at every meet and those swimmers who miss warm-ups, or are otherwise late, are typically last to be considered for relay spots. Because relay teams consist of four swimmers, there are times when we do not have even numbers and some kids must be left out. In these cases, we do our very best to place those swimmers in relays the next day or at the next meet they're entered in. I usually tell people to automatically assume you will be in a relay until you are informed otherwise. This generally solves the problem of swimmers leaving early and possibly causing their relay team to scratch. If you will not be able to stay until the end of a session to swim a relay, please inform your coach as soon as possible so we can arrange for an alternate.

Finally, relays are usually the most exciting part of swim meets. I love to see teammates cheering each other on, straining their vocal chords to motivate their peers. It really helps, too! So, just as you would like your teammates cheering you on, make sure you are screaming for them as well, and do not forget to come talk to your coach as a foursome once everybody is done.

Before You Leave...

Check with your coach to see if you are needed in a relay, if you have not done so already. While packing up your things in the team area, double-check that you have everything and clean up the area the best you can, even if it means throwing out garbage that is not yours. Be proactive at keeping the team area clean throughout the meet so less work needs to be done on your way out the door.

GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS AT SWIM MEETS

- Come prepared. Check the website to make sure you know where the meet is, when warm-ups begin, and what events your swimmers are entered in, and then double check that you have everything you need before you leave.
- Come early. The warm-up time listed on the website and in the meet packet is the time the kids will hit the water. You will need to be at the meet about 20 minutes earlier than that to ensure kids have time to check-in, get changed, and be ready on the pool deck before warmups actually begin.
- Make sure your child is
 - Eating healthy: Rather than eating large, infrequent meals during a meet, swimmers should have several smaller snacks throughout the day. Try to bring healthy snacks, rich in simple carbohydrates, such as fruits and veggies, crackers, cereal, granola bars, etc.
 - Staying hydrated: Keep them drinking. Water is the best choice, followed by Gatorade or other sports drink, and then fruit juice. Avoid all "energy" drinks (such as Red Bull, Monster, 5 Hour Energy, etc), as well as soda and other beverages with caffeine or carbonation.
 - Staying warm: Swimmers should wear clothes on top of their suit, plus a sweatshirt or warm-up jacket if needed, to make sure their muscles stay warm. Constant shivering will drain their energy and keep their muscles tight. They should also always wear something on their feet.
 - Getting rest: If swimmers constantly run around and stand on their feet at meets, they will see an impact on their results. Likewise, at outdoor meets, staying out in the sun will drain a swimmer's energy and dehydrate them quickly. We want kids to play and have fun with their teammates at swim meets, however, the main reason they are there is to swim fast. Occasionally, they may have to be reeled in and reminded to settle down a bit and stay off their legs.
- Parents are not allowed on the pool deck unless they are working in some official capacity (such as a timer, official or other meet worker).

- All questions regarding meet results, officiating calls, or overall conduct of the meet should be referred to and handled by a coach. Do not approach the officials or computer room with these issues.
- If your child has a disappointing swim, try to redirect their focus on the positive elements of their race. There is nothing wrong with a swimmer negatively evaluating a race; the important thing is that they don't dwell on it. Say something like, "So you didn't get the result you wanted, how can you make your next race better?" or "This isn't usually like you, what can you learn from this?"
- Swim meets are great opportunities to meet new people and get to know other parents. Enjoy your time at the meet and encourage your swimmer to meet other people and spend time with their teammates.
- Offer to volunteer as a timer if needed. Sometimes when we go to meets and there are not enough timers, an announcement will be made that more timers are needed to get the meet started. Or other times, our team will be assigned to supply timers for a certain lane throughout the meet. In this case, rather than a couple parents timing for the entire time, we usually set up a schedule so that as many parents as possible work in short shifts. Please volunteer to make the meet run smoother for all.
- When your swimmers have completed all of their individual events, remind them to check with their coach to see if they are swimming in a relay. It is important that all swimmers stay for their relay swims, or at least give as much notice as possible if they cannot stay so that a substitute can be arranged.