

Welcome To



Swimming!!

<http://www.swimblast.com>

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Swim Parent's Survival Guide

Why Swimming?

Sports should be good for kids. A sport should build strong bodies physically and mentally; promote good sportsmanship, self-discipline, and perseverance.

According to many sports writers' swimming is the "ideal" sport for children. Swimming develops an efficient cardiovascular system while running little risk of personal injury. However swimming is by no means the easiest sport in which to excel. Each swimmer needs to establish their own goals and work toward achieving these goals. Parents cannot impose their own standards or goals on their children and expect success. There will be many times when winning or achieving best times will not happen. The most important part of each swimmer's swim experience will be learning and enjoying the sport. Swimmers learn early that there is a definite correlation between hard work and results.

Ten Commandments for Parents with Swimmers

1. Make sure your swimmer knows, win or lose/scared or fearless, you love them and appreciate their efforts. Be the person in their life they can look to for constant positive reinforcement.
2. Try your best to be honest about your swimmer's athletic ability, competitive attitude/sportsmanship, and their actual skill level.
3. Be helpful, but DON'T COACH. It is much tougher for your swimmer to excel if inundated with advice, pep talks, and critical instruction.
4. Teach your swimmer to enjoy the thrill of competition; being out there working to improve their skills/attitude, and developing a feel for competing, trying hard, and having fun.
5. Try not to re-live your athletic life through your swimmer in a way to create pressure. Remember you also made mistakes, lost and won, and were sometimes frightened. Don't pressure them to do something because of your past regrets.
6. Don't compete with the coach. If the coach becomes an authority figure it will make it much easier for your swimmer to "trust" decisions and relieve pressures associated with competing off you.
7. Don't compare your swimmer's skills, courage, or attitudes with that of other teammates (at least not in their presence).
8. Get to know the coach so you can be assured their philosophy, attitudes, ethics, and knowledge meet your expectations and you are happy to have your swimmer under their leadership. **Keep the coach informed if your swimmer is out for an extended time due to illness or academic reasons. The coaches will understand and support you!**
9. Remember children tend to exaggerate, when praised and criticized. Temper your reaction and investigate before reacting.
10. Make a point to understand COURAGE and the fact it is relative. Excelling quickly in swimming is not easy. Everyone is frightened in certain circumstances. Courage is not the absence of fear, but accomplishing a task in the face of fear or discomfort. Being the parent of a swimmer is not easy either. It takes a lot of time and effort to do it well.

I. Introduction to USA Swimming:



A. Organization: USA Swimming is the national swimming organization that governs competitive swimming (<http://usaswimming.org>).

1. USA swim teams are divided into regions, called LSC's (Local Swim Committees), in which most meets are sanctioned.
 - a. Most LSC's are individual states, however due to the geographic distribution of some areas the LSC may include more than one state.
 - b. BLAST swims in the Southeastern Swimming LSC which includes Tennessee, Northern Alabama, and parts of Northern Florida (<http://www.seswim.org>).
2. Annually swimmers and officials are required to pay a registration fee to USA Swimming. This fee registers the swimmers and officials with USA Swimming, and also provides insurance in case they sustain an injury during practice or a sanctioned swim meet.

B. Fees: Visit the **BLAST** website <http://swimblast.topcities.com> for more info.

The cost of swimming on a competitive swim team, such as BLAST, is broken down into components:

1. Dues – This is the primary cost which covers coaching and pool rental for practice times.
 - a. Dues are determined by a swimmer's group.
 - b. BLAST swimmers are assigned to one of 5 groups:
 - **Marlins I & II** - The entry level swimmers (generally age 10 and under) new to competitive swimming.
 - Swimmers practice 2-3 times weekly for 45 minutes to 1 hour; Mon/Wed/**Only** Late Friday.
 - Teaches beginning swimmers individual stroke techniques.
 - **Blue** – For swimmers that need stroke development and are ready for more conditioning.
 - Swimmers practice average of 2-3 times per week for up to 1½ hours; Mon/Wed/**Only** Late Friday
 - **Silver** – For swimmers who have mastered strokes and need more work on conditioning.
 - Emphasis on aerobic conditioning and fine-tuning of strokes
 - Swimmers practice average of 3-4 times per week for 1½ hours; Mon/Wed/Early Fri/Sat.
 - **Junior** – For swimmers who are training for Southeastern qualifying times and are ready for a higher level of interval training.
 - Swimmers practice an average of 4-6 times per week for 1½ to 2 hours
 - **Senior** – For junior and senior high swimmers that have made the highest commitment to their training and competition.
 - Swimmers practice an average of 6-9 times a week for 1½ to 2 hours.
 - Admittance into this demanding group requires dedication, desire, and a high level of training ability.
 - These athlete's goals include achieving Sectionals, U.S. Open, and National qualifying times.
 - c. The more advanced the group the more practices they are expected to attend, therefore dues increase accordingly.
 - Discounts are given for multi-swimmer families.

- d. There are 3 methods of payment; monthly, tri-annually, and annually.
 - A discount is given to those paying tri-annually and annually
 - e. Payments can be made directly to Coach Matson or you can mail them to: BLAST, PO Box 1023 Louisville, TN 37777. Please write "Dues" in the memo line of your check.
2. Fundraising Fee – The fundraising fee is an additional cost per family that may be paid by buying grocery certificates or paying outright. This helps cover ancillary equipment purchases needed for the team.
 - Jamie McKinney is currently in charge of the BLAST grocery certificates. See her or talk to Coach John Matson for more information on ordering.
 3. Meet Fees – Host teams charge swimmers to compete in their meets. This is the primary fundraiser for most teams to keep dues down. BLAST does not currently host regularly scheduled meets due to lack of pool deck space and time availability. ANYONE experienced and/or interested in working with Coach Matson on pool procurement is WELCOMED and appreciated.
 - a. Swimmers are normally charged \$40.00 per meet attended. This pays the swimmer's entry fee, event charges, and relay entries. On rare occasions, meets out of our LSC have extra charges and a slightly larger meet fee must be charged. This is VERY rare and usually a nominal amount.
 - b. Once meet entries are submitted, entry fees must be paid even if the swimmer becomes ill or is a no show at the meet.

C. Season: Competitive swimming is broken down into 2 swim seasons; Long Course and Short Course:

1. Long Course – Runs from late March to early August.
 - Swim meets are held in pool 50 meters in length.
 - ** Olympic Trials and Olympic Games are held in long course only.
2. Short Course – Runs from mid August to late March.
 - Swim meets are held in 25 yard or 25 meter length pools.

*** Each team's actual practice sessions and vacation breaks are determined by the Head Coach. It will be in your swimmer's best interest to check with the coach to find out when the seasonal breaks for your team are before planning extended vacations. Long gaps in practice at the wrong time of the season can impact a swimmer's improvement.

D. Meets: Meets are where swimmers can see the results of all their hard work in practice.

1. Swimmers must sign up to attend each meet. Sign up sheets are posted on the team bulletin board at the pool.
2. Competitive swim meets generally run 2 to 3 days.
 - 2 day meet schedule: Saturday and Sunday
 - 3 day meet schedule: Friday evening, Saturday, and Sunday
 - Championship Meets: Thursday Evening, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday
3. Each day is broken down into sessions, each session lasting approximately 4 hours. Friday night is usually one session (consisting of longer events for all age groups). Sat and Sun will each have 2 sessions. Each session has specified age groups and events. Usually 8-under, 9-10, and 11-12 are grouped in one session and the 13-14, 15-16, and seniors in the second session.

4. Deviations are not uncommon! Always check the meet information before making travel plans. Meet information can usually be found on the Blast bulletin board at the pool, our team website or the hosting team's website.
5. The events at each meet may vary in distance and stroke depending on age:
 - a. Swimmers are grouped by age and sex. The most common age groupings are:
 - 8 – Under
 - 9 – 10
 - 11 – 12
 - 13 – 14
 - 15 – 16
 - Senior (over 16)
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*****NOTE: Most meets will not have bullpens to get swimmers to events.**
 - b. Swimmers change age groups whenever their birthday takes place, NOT between seasons. However, if a swimmer's birthday is during a swim meet they will complete the meet competing as the age they are on the first day of competition.
 - c. Most of the time 15 – 16 and senior age groups will swim simultaneously and be scored separately. Occasionally other age groups will be combined. ALWAYS check meet information (either on BLAST board, BLAST website or Southeastern Swimming Website) for any deviations to meet layout.
6. Butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, freestyle, and individual medley are the individual stroke events
 - a. Distances range in yards or meters; 50, 100, 200 for breaststroke, backstroke, and butterfly
 - b. Freestyle 50, 100, 200, 400 meters, 500 yards, 800 meters, 1000 yards, 1500 meters, and 1650 yards
 - c. Individual Medley 100, 200, 400
7. There are 2 relay formats, freestyle and individual medley, the order and stroke assignment by swimmer is determined by the coach at each meet.
8. Cards are not used for event assignments. A Heat Sheet is printed by the host team listing events and each swimmer's Events/Heat/Lane assignments.
 - Each coach is given copy prior to beginning of meet or they can be purchased from host team during meet.

*****Each swimmer is expected to keep up with the events that they are swimming and be in place ready to swim!**

9. There are 5 or 6 different types of meets:
 - a. **Dual and Tri-Meets** – 2 or 3 specific teams.
 - b. **Invitational** – Limited to swimmers or teams by special invitation only.
 - c. **Open Invitational** – Open to anyone, attending athletes limited
 - d. **Preliminary/Finals** – Preliminary sessions run in AM with Finals in PM
 - e. **Districts** – Championship Meet for swimmers not qualifying for Southeasterns or Sectionals.
 - f. **Southeasterns/Sectionals/Nationals** – Regional championship meets with specified qualifying times for participation.
10. There are national and state time standards that are established every 1 – 2 years. These are established by averaging the times of a subset of each age group swimmer's yearly. These times are used to set qualifying times for regional and national qualifying meets. Every one or two years the mean is adjusted to maintain a fair standard for meet qualifications.

II. PRACTICE:

A. Equipment Needs:

Swimsuit

Towel

Goggles - if used

Water bottle

Swim Cap - if used

Shower items - if showering in locker room after practice

Gear - These are training aids frequently used during practice to enhance drills and develop strokes.

These items can be purchased at Jaws Swim Shop in Knoxville, from swim catalogs, or on-line.

(Don't be afraid to ask any experienced BLAST parent for assistance. They will be glad to help).

** A mesh bag is advised to transport gear. They breathe allowing equipment to dry.

8 – Under: Kickboard and Pull buoy

9 – Older: Kickboard, Pull buoy, and Paddles.

*****Remember to mark your equipment with permanent marker! Many look alike and will be set down and intermingled frequently during practices. The coaches cannot be responsible for personal equipment.**

B. Schedule:

The days of the week, number of days, and times of practice depend on a swimmer's group assignment (Marlin, Blue, Silver, Junior or Senior). The swimmer's group assignment should be determined by a discussion between Coach Matson, the swimmer, and their parents. The amount of practice time will vary depending on the swimmer's age, skill level, and goals.

C. Swim Practice:

1. Make every effort to arrive at practice early enough to be suited and ready when its time for warm-ups to begin. Pool time is very limited and we like to make the best possible use of our time for all swimmers.
2. Remove all jewelry before coming to practice. This will avoid injury or loss.
3. Do not leave belongings in the locker room. We share the facility with the college and other organizations and unsecured items can walk off. Bring your bag on the pool deck. The coaches and parents can keep an eye on them.
4. Bring a marked drink/water bottle to practice and sip during practice.
5. Before leaving dry off. If it is cold outside dress warm (including hat and gloves) it lessens the chance of getting sick.
6. Carry spare equipment (goggles, straps, caps, etc). These frequently break or tear at inopportune times and having spares will prevent workout interruptions.
7. If for some reason you are delayed picking up your swimmer call Head Coach John Matson on cell (865) 379-7689.



III. Competition:



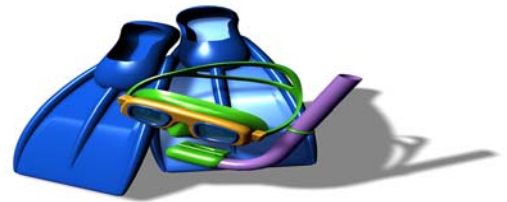
Getting ready for meets seems very complicated at first; after you have done it once or twice it is very easy 😊! Do not be afraid to ask other more experienced BLAST parents questions. BLAST families take pride welcoming to new swimmers and their families!

A. Things to Bring:

1. **Swimmer:** Basically start with a normal practice swim bag (excluding gear) and double it
 - **Swimsuits** - Always carry at least one backup!
 - **Team Cap** – Team cap preferred, see coach if you need to purchase
 - **Towels** – 2 per day (or your swimmer will dry off at end of meet w/ wet towel).
 - **Snacks and Drinks** – Nutritious snacks; fruit, bagels, granola. For drinks water or sports drink; avoid carbonated beverages!
 - **Entertainment** – Since there can be up to an hour between events, it often helps to have something to do; walkman, CD Player, cards, book, game boys, etc.
 - **“Camping Gear”** – Chair, blanket, sleeping bag, etc to set on/stretch out on between swim events.

2. **Parent/Guardian:**
 - a. **Highlighter/Pen/Sharpie**
 - Highlighter to mark swimmers events in heat sheet
 - Pen to write down swimmers times
 - Sharpie to write swimmers events/heats/lanes on arm/leg
 - b. **Money (Cash)**
 - Host teams generally sell heat sheets (these contain swimmers events seedings) the price generally runs from 10.00 to 20.00 depending on the level and size of the meet. You are not required to buy a heat sheet, but for beginning swimmers/families it is recommended. The coach(s) is given a copy the swimmers can also use.
 - There is usually a concession stand and frequently a swim shop to buy snacks and equipment.
 - c. **Comforts**
 - Chair/blanket etc to sit on. Each venue is different.
 - Remember pool areas are often very warm!
 - You may want to dress in layers or bring a change of clothes with you.
 - d. **Map/Directions**
 - Know where you are going **AHEAD** of time.
 - Directions can be found on the BLAST website, or you can find driving directions and maps at <http://www.randmcnally.com>.
 - Leave in time to get to the meet and find a seat **prior** to warm-up.
 - e. **Smiles/Patience/Encouragement**
 - Especially in the beginning, transitioning from a meet that spans a couple hours (such as summer swim meets) to a meet spread over couple days can be exhausting for swimmers and parents. Pleasant and patient attitudes are very important to the success of your swimmer!

B. Prepare Your Swimmer:



1. **Pre-Meet Preparation:** Know warm-up times and meet start times **ahead of time**. Also know what events your swimmer has been entered in and what session/sessions in which they will be swimming.
2. **Arrival:** Leave on time, swimmers should generally arrive to meet 30 mins **before** warm-up!!! This allows swimmers time to find a seat, change, and stretch before getting in water.
 - a. **Sign in** – Some of the longer events are called “deck seeded events”
 - These longer events require the swimmer to sign in at the clerk of course prior to a specified time (if swimmer intends to swim specific events)
 - During a 3 day meet these events are usually held on Friday night.** Check meet entries or ask coach if entered in these events.
 - b. After the sign in period is “closed”, these events are seeded by Event/Heat/Lane according to the swimmers who have signed in. These assignments are given to the coaches and posted at clerk of course.

3. **Competition:**

*****NOTE: Competitive swim meets DO NOT run a clerk of course to assist swimmers to the blocks. They will usually announce events on loud speaker and it is the responsibility of the swimmer to be at their assigned lane when it's time to swim.**

- a. Write events/heat/lane for swimmer on arm or leg so swimmers know when to be at the blocks.
- b. Have light snack and nutritious drink (usually water or sports drink) ready for after warm-ups.
 - It is advised to drink water between events throughout meet. This maintains your swimmer's hydration level and allows for maximum energy when swimming
- c. Have dry towel and sweats/clothes to wear between events to stay warm and maintain body heat.
- d. Swimmers need to see the coach **BEFORE** and **AFTER** each event's swim to discuss race strategy and techniques.
- e. Check with coach to find out next morning arrival times, if on relay, or in a swim-off before preparing to leave the deck area.
- f. Go out with group and have a good meal and relax. You deserve it! Ribbons & awards are usually given out at next the practice.

IV. Officiating

A. Judging

1. USA Swimming publishes book of standards, updated annually, with technical stroke criteria, pool/timing equipment specifications, and officiating rules and regulations.
2. USA Certified Officials are present at all USA Swimming sanctioned competitions.
 - a. Officials are trained volunteers present to implement technical rules and ensure fair and equitable competition.
 - b. Each official working USA meets must be trained by specific guidelines:
 - Pass written test
 - Attend sanctioned swim clinic (annually)
 - Work designated number of sessions as apprentice
 - c. Officials are swim parents with a background and/or interest in technical aspects of competitive swimming.
 - d. Specific officiating positions must be filled for any swim meets times to be eligible for entry for championship qualifying standards.
 - e. The best thing about the judging for USA Swimming and any other sanctioned competitive swim meets is “The Benefit Always Goes to the Swimmer.” After a little experience you get to be comfortable recognizing “illegal” activities and feel comfortable that your contribution to the meet brings the most standardized officiating possible.
3. There are a number of certified officials that contribute in different ways to the smooth running of a competitive swim meet.
 - a. **Referee** – Two different types administrative and deck.
 - Administrative referee is responsible for smooth transition of times and documentation of meet recordings.
 - Deck referee is responsible for the smooth running of pool deck and events.
 - The deck referee has the final responsibility to accept/deny calls made by other officials on the pool deck.
 - The deck referee in USA swimming uses “whistle starts” to call swimmers to the block, with a series of multiple whistles, brings them onto the block, with one sustained whistle, into the ready position to be turned over to starter for their race initiation.
 - The host team’s top referee will act as the “Meet Referee” and is responsible for assignment of volunteer officials to specific duties and a jurisdiction to make sure judging of the swimmers is equitable.
 - **Depending on the availability of trained officials, and the size of the meet, many times the deck ref and admin ref will be the same person.
 - b. **Starter** – Is responsible for initiating the race events with an electronic starting system, starters’ pistol, or bullhorn.
 - The starter is also responsible to help the referee maintain smooth running of meets events as well as taking order of finish for each race.
 - Frequently the starter will be assigned to watch the 15 meter mark during starts and turns to ensure that applicable rules are followed.



- c. **Stroke and Turn Judges** – Responsible for ensuring swimmers compliance to published stroke and turn rules once racing is initiated.
 - If a swimmer is not in compliance during a race the Stroke and Turn Judge will disqualify (DQ) the swimmer for that particular race. The Stroke and Turn Judge initiates “calls” by raising one hand overhead for short period of time. Depending on staffing, the judge will then either write up the DQ slip according to published standards or relay information to “Chief Judge” who will confirm and write up the DQ. Once written the DQ will be forwarded to the referee for processing. All DQ slips are then turned over to the coach at the end of the meet.
 - Depending on size of the pool, the number of lanes being utilized, and the availability of officials, these judges will be distributed to cover specific lanes of the pool.
 - Larger meets will often assign an experienced Stroke and Turn Judge as a “Chief Judge.” This person confirms calls (and sometimes writes up called DQ’s) to be turned over to referee for final judgment.

4. Anyone interested in becoming a certified official see Coach Matson, Terri Miller, or Michele Brown.

B. Communication

1. The only person that can question a ruling made by any certified official is the coach!!
 - Parents and/or Swimmers are not allowed to initiate any investigative process applying to a judgment call made.

2. USA Swimming has specific time limitations for establishing or investigating judgments called during swim competition. Once this time has expired, unless there are mitigating circumstances, no other action will be taken toward the judgment.

3. USA swimming does not discriminate calls for age specifications. Younger swimmers are judged by the same standards as other age categories.
 - A swimmer’s first disqualification is frequently traumatic. Help them understand these calls are made to help their future in competitive swimming, not to punish them. The standards set are established for all levels of swimmers and will be used throughout their swimming career.

