

How to survive a swim meet

Plan on arriving at least 15 minutes BEFORE warm up starts: to check in, find the coach's tent, to stake a claim on a piece of real estate (usually WCAN gathers in one area - look for the purple pop up) and check out the concessions.

Your athlete's Swim Bag should contain: (label everything: bags, goggles, towels, etc. as most swimmer's gear look alike)

- **TEAM SUIT:** Bring your swimmer's competition suit and, if possible, a spare.
- **TEAM CAP:** Bring a competition swim cap plus an extra (they tear easy and are easily misplaced!) The coaches also usually have caps on deck to purchase. If you do not have a team cap, contact the coach ahead of time to make sure she has one.
- **GOGGLES:** Bring two pairs! Have your child "break in" a new pair of goggles in the warm-up pool prior to an event to make sure they are adjusted properly! Prior to an event, make sure the goggles fit snugly or they may end up around your swimmer's neck!
- **DECK SHOES:** Make sure your swimmer wears deck sandals or crocks for protection. UGG/Emu boots are great solutions for cold feet during the fall and winter.
- **TOWELS:** Bring multiple towels (for event, warm-up and showers after the meet).
- **WARM CLOTHING:** Pack your swimmer's bags with at least a couple pairs of sweat pants/shirts, socks. Meets will get definitely get chilly sometimes!
- **SUNSCREEN:** Apply waterproof sunscreen BEFORE your child suits up. Sunscreen needs time to penetrate and get to work.
- **WATER:** Especially when the weather is hot, make sure your swimmer has plenty of water bottles and/or Gatorade. Even though they are immersed in water, swimmers dehydrate easily!
- **FOOD:** Bring plenty of nutritious snacks. Bagels, fruit, and granola bars are always good options!
- **MISCELLANEOUS:** A black sharpie (for marking events, heat and lane numbers on your swimmer's arm or hand, swim shampoo/conditioner, hairbrush, comb, deck of cards, board games, electronic handheld games, etc.
- **INHALERS:** If your child is asthmatic, this is the most important thing they own. Different environments have different triggers that can set off an attack. Be sure to tell the coach(es) if your child has asthma!

Other necessary items:

- Blankets and tarps (especially if you're setting up camp on a damp lawn)
- Tents and/or an EZ-up (during the summer, it's very important to keep swimmers out of the sun; in the winter, tents/EZ-ups keep out the chill and rain)
- Sleeping bags are a good way to keep bodies warm in-between events.

- Lawn chairs (parents need to be comfortable, too!)

What to do when you arrive at the meet?

1. Positively check-in! Look for a few tables staffed by weary looking parents with sheets of paper taped down. These sheets are usually divided by ages and by girls and boys. During most meets, the swimmer must be present to check in not the parent alone. So it is a good idea to get your child in the habit of checking in by themselves (or with your help).
2. Find your coach! As soon as your swimmer has checked in, have them find their coach to tell them they are there and ready to swim. Depending on the meet venue, they will either begin warm-ups immediately or wait until a designated time. Have your swimmer ready to go with cap, goggles and towel.
3. Try to find fellow team parents on deck, in the stands or on the grass. Sitting together not only builds team camaraderie but is fun for the kids and easier on the parents. Parents tend to watch out for one another, especially when there are several kids in the same age brackets.

Your role as a parent

- Be ready for each event – events can come up quickly during the meet! Help your child to check in with his/her coach before each event and be behind the blocks at least three heats prior to your heat (perhaps earlier).
- Cheer them on, congratulate, and console if necessary. Remind your child that their behavior reflects on their team: they must behave like a champion with grace and humility and a smile on their face no matter the outcome of any one race.
- Keep them warm, hydrated and fed (but not overfed). Water is essential throughout the day. Food, however, should be planned based on the timing of your child's events. Healthy snacks are good in-between some events if there is only a small amount of time. Many times, there will be a more ideal time for a larger lunch based on your child's events.
- After their event, make sure they check back in with their coach for tips to improve their next race and to receive warm-down instructions.

Your role with the team

- VOLUNTEER! Meets go much better when every family can help out the group as a whole. There are a variety of different ways to help with the most common being timing for events. If WCAN has a designated chair or chairs to fill timers, a sign-up sheet will likely be going around prior to the meet starting. Please sign up during a time slot. Not only does this help the team, but it's a great way to learn more about your fellow WCAN families and learn more about how meets run.
- Help with setup and take down. During meets, help is needed to set up the coaches table and tent as well as the tents used by swimmers and families. If you do not have a pop-up, try to arrive early enough to help the parents that bring them (or bring the team pop-ups). It's amazing how fast the tents can go up and be brought down with just a few additional bodies helping out.
- RELAX! Swim meets are not known for their brevity. If you've done your duty as a timer, bring something to occupy your time while you wait for your swimmer to swim again. Sit with other WCAN parents and get to know each other. Some of the best relationships are cultivated at swim meets!