



PARENT GUIDELINES

GUIDELINES FOR SWIMMING PARENTS

Swimming parents all have one thing in common – they want the best for their children. Your child's swimming experience should be an enjoyable one, which builds confidence and self-esteem. Your involvement is vital to this experience, and can be enhanced by observing the following guidelines:

THE PARENT – THE ATHLETE – THE COACH

Each person within this 'team' has a specific role to play. Overlapping the roles becomes confusing and often detrimental to the swimmer.

- The parent provides emotional and practical support for the athlete.
- The coach provides technical expertise, and motivation in the form of structure, vision and challenge.
- The athlete brings the raw material and the desire to succeed.
- Allow the coach to do their job. Realise what is being done with your child is part of a plan for the long-term development of your child's swimming career.

SWIMMING IS SOMETHING YOUR CHILD CHOOSES TO DO!

- 'There is nothing heavier than great potential' – avoid putting expectations on your children (even in the form of 'motivation').
- Separate your child's achievements from their value as a person (and your value as a parent) – love the person, not the swimmer.
- Measure performances against your child's personal goals not other swimmers and their times.
- Allow your child to take responsibility for their swimming involvement, their 'successes' and their 'failures'.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- You are a role model for your children – your behaviour in the swimming environment never goes unnoticed. Deal with outcomes and experiences in a mature, controlled manner.
- Show your support for your children's choice of sport by becoming involved in the running of the club and of competitions you attend.
- Allow motivation to come from the enjoyment – extrinsic rewards (e.g. payment) are always detrimental in the long run.

PARENT-COACH LIAISON

It is important for coaches and parents to be in regular contact regarding the swimmers progress. All coaches are available to talk with parents – this could be an informal chat following training or you may prefer to contact the coach by phone or arrange a suitable meeting time.

If you have concerns regarding your child's progress or the manner in which your child is being coached, then initially you should take up the matter with your child's coach at a mutually convenient time. Please allow a few weeks and dialogue between the two of you to assist the coach to address your concern.



OBSERVATION OF TRAINING



We request that parents wishing to remain at or observe their children training are seated in the spectator area. It is important that parents are seated beyond eye contact with their children while they are training to avoid distraction by the parent's presence.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS WITH RELATION TO PERFORMANCE

For many reasons performances of individuals will vary over a career and within a season. Swimmers may stagnate, regress or improve. It is common to observe stagnation or regression in female athletes post puberty because, for many, the natural hormonal activity dictates major changes to their body shape and metabolism and may no longer be as streamlined as they were prior to this period. Weight can sometimes become a problem for girls at this stage requiring them to be vigilant with respect to their diet.

Normal growth spurts can have a detrimental effect on training and performance; often swimmers need to have their workload reduced or be completely rested at these times. Illness also has obvious effects on swimmers, although they can train with many medical problems, constant observation must be maintained.

Lack of interest and enthusiasm will also result in waning performances. Often swimmers in this state will not want to take on the responsibility of making the decision to withdraw from training and will develop many reasons as to why they are not swimming well. It is difficult to admit that your heart is no longer in it, or that, you may not be able to swim any faster.

WHILST AWAY AT COMPETITION

- Whilst away at competitions the coach is very busy and should not be approached to discuss issues. If there is an issue, then contact the coach after the competition and either discuss the issue on the phone or organize a suitable meeting.
- If swimmers become injured at a competition, then they must withdraw from all events then return home and rest the injury. Swimming on will only compound the situation and make it worse, swimmers will not be allowed to withdraw from one event in the hope that the injury will be better for the next event.
- If a swimmer becomes ill at a swimming competition, then they must withdraw from all events for that day and return home or to the hotel and then assess the situation the day after. If they have recovered they will be expected to compete in all events entered the day after.
- Ensure that swimmers have the correct nutrition and hydration at swim meets, this is crucial if they are to perform over the full weekend.
- Hopefully the information contained in these guidelines will help with your understanding of swimming as a sport, both training and competition, and some responses your child may display in certain situations.