

How to survive a swim meet

Your role as a parent: Cheer, congratulate, and console (if necessary) your swimmer(s). 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. After their event, make sure they check back in with their coach for tips to improve their next race.

RELAX! Swim meets are not known for their brevity. You will be at the meet for 4-6 hours, but your child will swim for about 4 minutes (other than warm-ups) per meet. That only leaves 4-6 hours to kill. If you've done your duty as a Volunteer, bring something to occupy your time while you wait for your swimmer to swim again. Sit with other Bridgeland Barracudas and get to know each other. Some of the best relationships are cultivated at swim meets!

Here are some important things for parents to keep in mind at meets:

- Always be respectful of Officials and Meet Volunteers who are volunteering their time on your swimmers behalf. If you have a question regarding an Official's judgment, that question should go to our Parent Liaison, Lou Waters, then the coaches.
- Leave coaching to the coaches. This includes pre-race psyching, motivation, after race critiquing, setting goals, etc.
- Support your swimmers' coaches. They are the experts. Find a time away from the pool deck to discuss any concerns you have directly with them.
- Be your swimmer's best fan. Support your child unconditionally. Do not withdraw when your child performs poorly. Not every race will be a best time.
- If your swimmer comes out of the pool with a personal best time and a last place finish, help him/her to understand that this is a "win".
- Don't bribe or offer incentives for best times. Every race should be a learning experience.
- Make sure your swimmer gets enough rest and is eating properly throughout the meet. Swimming takes a lot of energy.
- Help your child maintain a focus on schoolwork, relationships and the other important things in life besides swimming. Help him/her keep things in their proper perspective including losses, disappointments and failures.
- Remember to **have fun**.

As a "Swimming Parent", you will not only have responsibilities, you will have opportunities: opportunities to really "get to know" your child in pressure situations; opportunities to praise and applaud his/her achievements; and even more importantly; opportunities to help him/her deal with his/her non-achievements. In today's fast-paced society, there are too few chances for parents to interact with their children on this kind of basic level. Just these opportunities alone will make their career in swimming worthwhile.

Volunteer positions

Remember that all parents have a responsibility to help out at any meet at which their child is swimming by volunteering for a few hours. There are a variety of different jobs to

do, so try out a few! If you are unsure about how to perform a job, see the Volunteer Coordinator: Keith Benton.

1. Each family is asked to provide volunteer help at every meet that your child swims. Remember, you get to be close to the action and take the focus off of your own child!
2. Most jobs will be divided into 2 shifts so you should indicate whether you prefer 1st shift, 2nd shift, either shift (or for the really dedicated or easily bored) both shifts.
3. A Volunteer Sheet for each meet will be posted in the coach's notebook a few days before the meet so you can check your assignment. We will also try to e-mail the volunteer list a day or two before the meet.
4. We will be counting on your help to make our meets run efficiently.
5. Thank you in advance for all your help this season.

Swim parents are beautiful when...

- ☺ You work a full day at a swim meet, then want to know where the team party is!
- ☺ You cheer for athletes who are not your own children.
- ☺ You drive car pools that would make a NYC cab driver dizzy in order to get people to practice or meets on time!
- ☺ You ask your swimmer after each race "what did your coach say?"
- ☺ You say "what did you learn?" to your ten year old who just got disqualified for an illegal turn.
- ☺ You understand that your child might not be picked for a relay team.
- ☺ You understand that only the four fastest swimmers can be on the "A" relay team.
- ☺ You help new parents "learn the ropes" in a positive way.
- ☺ You promote team unity.
- ☺ You applaud everyone's efforts and comfort those who need it.
- ☺ You realize that coaches are human, just like you, and feel terrible when they make a mistake - just like you.
- ☺ You overhear a disgruntled parent and you suggest that they speak to their child's coach not to other parents.
- ☺ You realize that one single swim is not all that is important. *IT'S THE PROCESS THAT COUNTS.*
- ☺ You congratulate your child's friend for doing a best time because recognition by another adult, besides a parent, is very important.
- ☺ You realize that every swimmer is a winner as long as they do their best.
- ☺ You support your child's swimming by helping support the organization that brings your child the opportunity.
- ☺ You emphasize the importance of the "team" and cheering for teammates.
- ☺ You help handle paperwork so that the coach can do the coaching.
- ☺ You officiate a swim meet, even though you may have to DQ your own child.
- ☺ You appreciate your Coach and other Parent Volunteers by bringing coffee, doughnuts, etc. to the 8:00 am meet and/or practice.

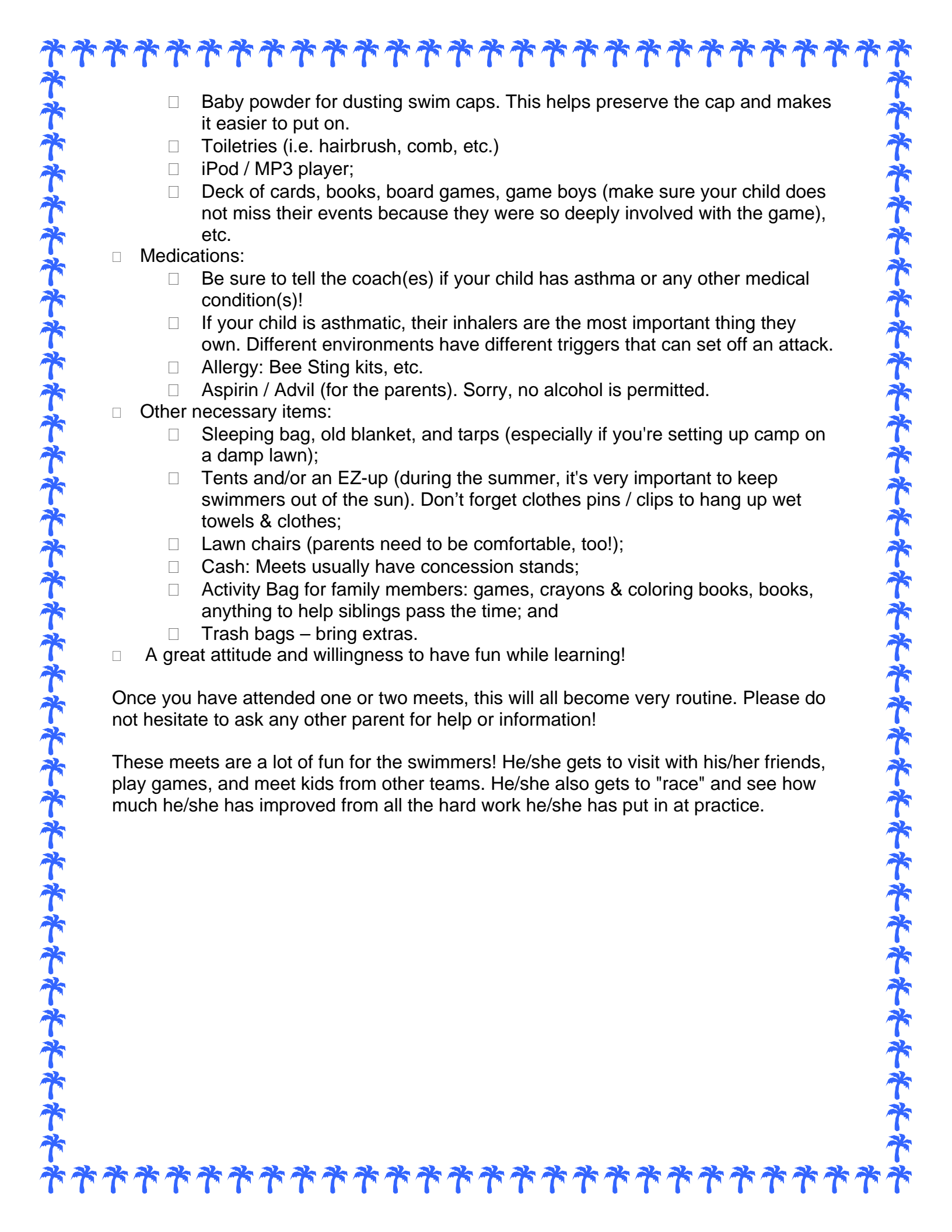
Swim meets are a great family experience! They're a place where the whole family can spend time together. Listed below are some general guidelines geared to help you through your first couple of swim meets. It may seem a little overwhelming, but we tried to be as specific and as detailed as we possibly could. If you have any questions that are not covered here, please ask your Coach or any Board Member.

Athlete's Swim Bag The swimmer's bag should be packed the night before so that all the essentials make it to the meet. Place by the front/garage door. This will reduce the stress level and free you up in the morning. Label everything: bags, goggles, towels, etc. – they all look alike.

- Team Suit: Bring your swimmer's competition suit and, if possible, a spare suit.
- Team Cap: Bring a competition swim cap plus an extra (they tear easy and are easily misplaced!)
- 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 will end up around your swimmer's neck!
- Deck Sandals: Make sure your swimmer wears deck sandals for protection.
- Towels: Bring one towel plus one or two extra. Realize your swimmer will be there awhile and will be getting in and out of the pool several times after the meet.
- Clothing: Bring Team T-shirt and shorts. Also pack at least one pairs of sweat pants/shirts, socks for those cool mornings. These are wet kids, so oversized sweats and a hooded sweatshirt or a warm-up suit is a good idea.
- Sunscreen: Apply waterproof sunscreen BEFORE your child suits up. Sunscreen needs time to penetrate and get to work.

Athlete's Parents This is what swimmer's parents get to bring to the meet the make it more enjoyable. Should be packed the night before:

- Water: Especially when the weather is hot, make sure your swimmer has plenty of water bottles, sports drinks (e.g. Gatorade), fruit drinks (e.g. Hi-C, fruit juice, Capri Sun), etc. Frozen water bottles (not all) are good to keep in cooler.
 - Even though they are immersed in water, swimmers dehydrate easily! Carbonated and sugary drinks could upset the swimmers stomachs.
 - Even slight dehydration can cause cramping, fatigue, and result in an overall bad swim meet. Encourage your swimmer to sip, sip, and sip all day long. Don't let them "slam" a box of juice and think they are all set. This can cause cramping too.
 - Please limit Gatorade and other sports drinks. For every bottle of Gatorade, your swimmer should drink 5-6 bottles of water.
- Food (NO Junk Food): Generally, light and easily digested foods (nothing salty, or greasy as this will upset the swimmers stomachs). Bring plenty of **nutritious** snacks - fatty and sugary foods that will leave them weak and sluggish (you know the ones we mean!).
 - Dry (in Ziploc bags): Snack food such as Ritz bits w/ peanut butter, goldfish, jerky, power bars, granola bars, dry cereal, fruits, snacks, etc.
 - Ice chest: Cheese sticks, yogurt (in moderation), carrot & celery sticks, fruit (bananas, grapes, apples, orange slices), Jell-O cubes (in moderation), bagels, sandwiches, etc.
 - Bad Swim Meet food: Chocolate or heavy sugar stuff (quick high and bad energy "crash") or other food that takes a long time to digest.
- Miscellaneous:
 - Sharpie's - black (for marking events, heat and lane numbers on your swimmer's arm) and various other colors (for body art);

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- Baby powder for dusting swim caps. This helps preserve the cap and makes it easier to put on.
 - Toiletries (i.e. hairbrush, comb, etc.)
 - iPod / MP3 player;
 - Deck of cards, books, board games, game boys (make sure your child does not miss their events because they were so deeply involved with the game), etc.
 - Medications:
 - Be sure to tell the coach(es) if your child has asthma or any other medical condition(s)!
 - If your child is asthmatic, their inhalers are the most important thing they own. Different environments have different triggers that can set off an attack.
 - Allergy: Bee Sting kits, etc.
 - Aspirin / Advil (for the parents). Sorry, no alcohol is permitted.
 - Other necessary items:
 - Sleeping bag, old blanket, 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). Don't forget clothes pins / clips to hang up wet towels & clothes;
 - Lawn chairs (parents need to be comfortable, too!);
 - Cash: Meets usually have concession stands;
 - Activity Bag for family members: games, crayons & coloring books, books, anything to help siblings pass the time; and
 - Trash bags – bring extras.
 - A great attitude and willingness to have fun while learning!

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.

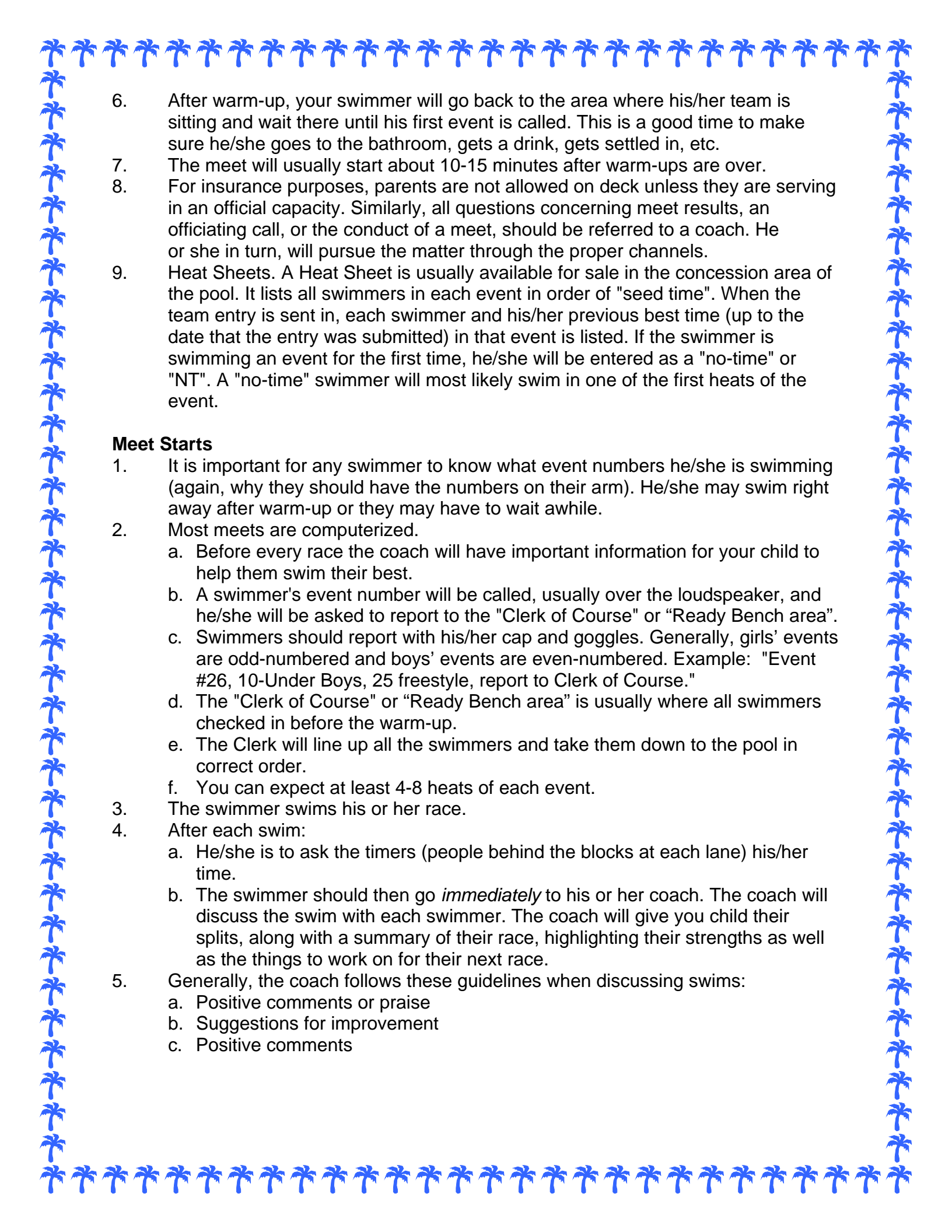
The Night before the Meet

1. The night before a meet should be handled as if it were a regular school night. Put your child to bed at about the same time you would on a school night. The evening meal need not be anything special, just some favorite dish.
2. Breakfast the morning of the meet should be on the light side, but do not send your swimmer away from the table hungry. The meal should be high in starches – yes, starches – and extremely low in processed sugars. Please, no sugary breakfast foods. Also do the coach a favor and do not let your child load up on sugary foods before coming to practice. Just allow him/her enough food to satisfy his/her hunger.

Day of the Meet

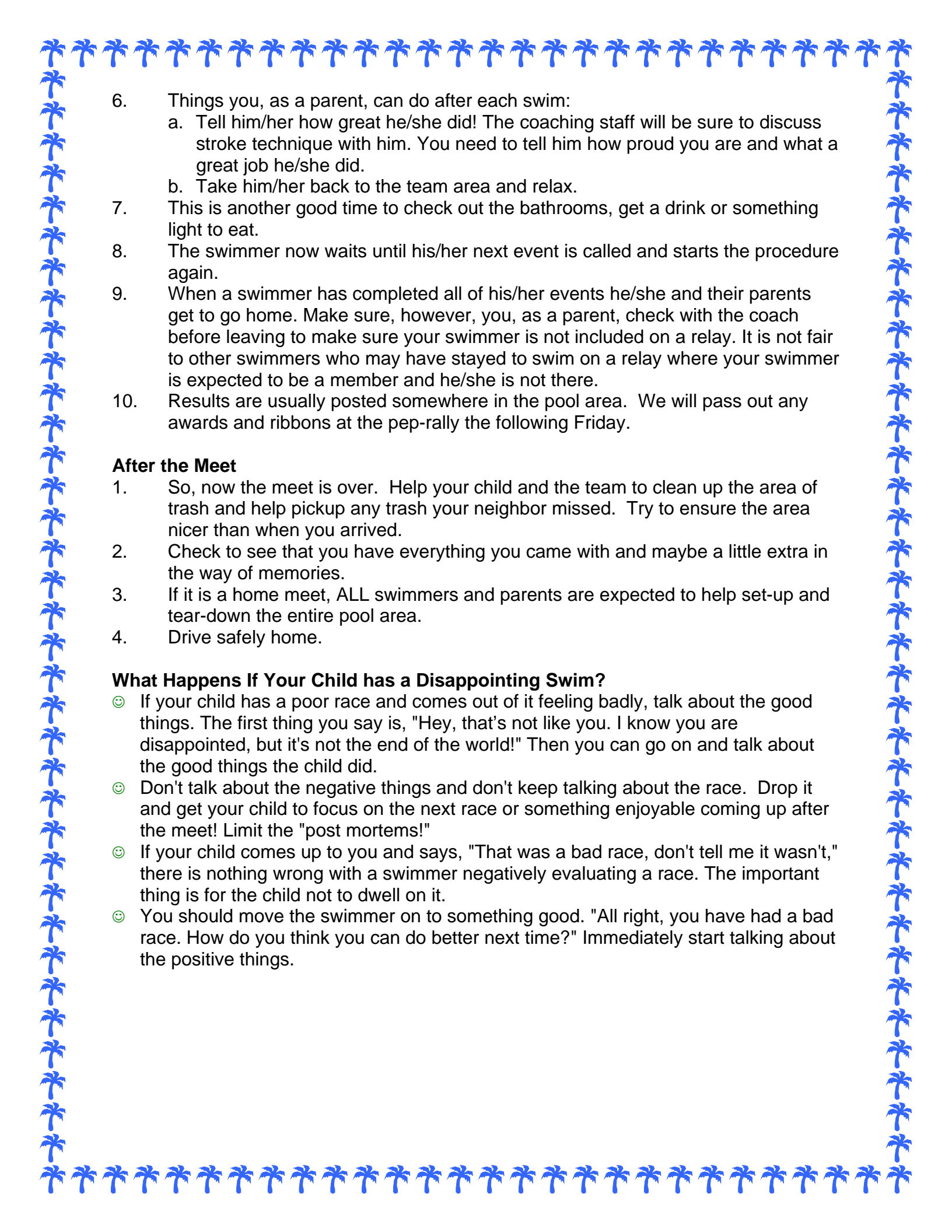
Plan on arriving at least 15 minutes BEFORE warm up starts: to check in, find the team, to stake a claim on a piece of real estate, check the line ups and write them on your child's arm, check out the concessions, etc.

1. **Definitely check-in!** Look for a few weary looking parents with sheets of colored paper. These sheets are usually divided by ages and by girls and boys. Some teams only allow the swimmer to check in not the parents so it is a good idea to get your child in the habit of checking in by themselves.
 - a. Check for special posted instructions in the check-in area. Usually one will need to circle the swimmer's name or number before each swimmer's name, in each event he or she is swimming, that day.
 - b. Check-in is required so that the people running the meet know who is actually at the meet.
 - c. After check-in, the meet administrators "seed" the swimmers into heats. Heat and lane assignments will be posted, so be sure your swimmer knows where to look!
 - d. Once "checked-in", write or have the swimmers write each event-number on his/her arm with the black Sharpie. This helps him/her remember what events he/she is swimming and what event number to listen or watch for.
 - e. Next, make sure your swimmer checks in with his her coach!
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. Find a place to set up camp. Put up your tent / shade, your blankets, swim bags and/or sleeping bags, etc. The team usually sits in one place together, so look for some familiar faces.
4. 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.
5. While the swimmers are warming-up, meet with the Volunteer Coordinator to check job assignment. Each family is expected to share in volunteer responsibilities.

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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, gets a drink, gets settled in, etc.
 7. The meet will usually start about 10-15 minutes after warm-ups are over.
 8. For 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. Heat Sheets. A Heat Sheet is usually available for sale in the 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.

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 arm). He/she may swim right away after warm-up or they may have to wait awhile.
2. Most meets are computerized.
 - a. Before every race the coach will have important information for your child to help them swim their best.
 - b. 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 "Ready Bench area".
 - c. Swimmers should report with his/her cap and goggles. Generally, girls' events are odd-numbered and boys' events are even-numbered. Example: "Event #26, 10-Under Boys, 25 freestyle, report to Clerk of Course."
 - d. The "Clerk of Course" or "Ready Bench area" is usually where all swimmers checked in before the warm-up.
 - e. The Clerk will line up all the swimmers and take them down to the pool in correct order.
 - f. You can expect at least 4-8 heats of each event.
3. The swimmer swims his or her race.
4. After each swim:
 - a. He/she is to ask the timers (people behind the blocks at each lane) his/her time.
 - b. The swimmer should then go *immediately* to his or her coach. The coach will discuss the swim with each swimmer. The coach will give you child their splits, along with a summary of their race, highlighting their strengths as well as the things to work on for their next race.
5. Generally, the coach follows these guidelines when discussing swims:
 - a. Positive comments or praise
 - b. Suggestions for improvement
 - c. Positive comments

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6. Things you, as a parent, can do after each swim:
 - a. Tell him/her how great he/she 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/she did.
 - b. Take him/her back to the team area and relax.
 7. This is another good time to check out the bathrooms, get a drink or something light to eat.
 8. The swimmer now waits until his/her next event is called and starts the procedure again.
 9. When a swimmer has completed all of his/her events he/she and their 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 he/she is not there.
 10. Results are usually posted somewhere in the pool area. We will pass out any awards and ribbons at the pep-rally the following Friday.

After the Meet

1. So, now the meet is over. Help your child and the team to clean up the area of trash and help pickup any trash your neighbor missed. Try to ensure the area nicer than when you arrived.
2. Check to see that you have everything you came with and maybe a little extra in the way of memories.
3. If it is a home meet, ALL swimmers and parents are expected to help set-up and tear-down the entire pool area.
4. Drive safely home.

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's 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.



Swim Meet Do's and Don'ts

Do conserve your energy. Stay off your legs (save them for the pool); wear shoes for warmth and protection; wear shirt and hat to reduce exposure; stay out of the sun.

Do be on time (or early) for everything including: stretching, meet warm-up, and team meetings.

Do cheer for you teammates. Everyone performs better when they see supporters at the end of their lane.

Don't become dehydrated. Drink plenty of water or other liquids (but not soda).

Don't get sunburned. Apply waterproof sun block repeatedly throughout the day.

Do eat healthy food and snacks. Fruit, bagels and sports drinks make good between-race snacks. In general, avoid items with a lot of fat, fiber and refined sugar.

Do bring activities like games and puzzles. The meet may last several hours.

Don't leave swimmers unattended at swim meets. Parents are responsible for their children at all times.

Do have fun!!

The Bridgeland Barracudas Swim Team Board Members

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