



WASHINGTON AQUATICS SWIMMING CLUB

TOP TIPS FOR THOSE NEW TO COMPETITION SWIMMING, ADVICE FOR SWIMMERS AND PARENTS.

Dealing with nerves: If you are new to competing, it's very likely that you'll be nervous. All swimmers get nervous – from the youngest up to internationally experienced senior elite swimmers. Nerves are not a bad thing, and often help swimmers prepare for a race. The really important thing is not to let the nerves take over, and turn into fear. Keep busy and active, and don't spend time thinking about your race until the very last few minutes. Enjoy the competition, and just try to do the best you can be.

Preparation – equipment, food and drink Swimmers should be encouraged to pack their own equipment for meets, including a costume (and a spare), racing costume (if required), Washington hat, two pairs of goggles, pool shoes, two towels, Club t-shirt, a pair of shorts/tracksuit bottoms. a change of clothes for after the competition, plenty of drinks (normally water or dilute), and healthy snacks (cereal/energy bars, rice cakes, fruit and raw vegetables etc).

Arrival: Swimmers should know what races they are competing in. As parents should have checked the draft programme to make sure the swimmer appears in the events entered, this should be straightforward. Meets start early, so if you are due at the first session set two alarm clocks then you won't oversleep. If the meet is not held at a local pool then make sure that you know the route, leave plenty of time for the journey and arrive at the time set by the coach – this will normally be at least 30 minutes before the start of the pool warm-up session. This may seem early, but this time is important for the poolside team to confirm the Washington entry for events and inform the meet officials of any last minute withdrawals.

Warm-up: Proper warm-ups are essential and are intended to protect from injury and improve the swimmer's performance at the meet by increasing body temperature, heart rate, blood pressure and energy producing enzyme activity. They also give swimmers the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the diving blocks, water temperature and depths, position of the turn flags and feel of the end walls. Warm-ups are strictly organised and swimmers must follow the instructions of the coaches and the meet officials. When instructed to leave the pool, swimmers should immediately dry off, take a loo break if necessary, change into their racing costume, t-shirt and track pants, and keep warm. Swimmers should not warm up in a racing suit, as it defeats the purpose of the fabric and will reduce their life. Swimmers should remain on poolside with their team mates throughout the meet session, which build team building and team spirit. If a swimmer should need to leave the poolside they should always seek the permission of their coach or poolside manager. Due to child welfare regulations, under no circumstances are parents to come onto poolside, unless sanctioned to do so.

Prior to racing, swimmers should listen carefully to any instruction from their coach. The Swimmers must also listen out for instructions to report to poolside stewards, the officials responsible for gathering swimmers together and organising them into the correct heats and lanes. The stewards will check you off and tell you which heat and lane you are swimming in. It is the swimmer's responsibility to report to the steward for their event. As meets are run to very tight schedules, the stewards and Referees are not obliged to wait for a swimmer to arrive for their heat or to fit them into a later heat if they miss their designated heat.

After the swimmers race they will need to collect their clothes and return to the coach for feed back on the race. Swimmers will then be required to swim down, this is normally done in a separate pool and is important for a swimmer as it prepares their bodies for the next race.

Swimmers should make sure they are kept hydrated throughout the event to stop dehydration.

Advice for parents: Preparation is everything. Get everything possible ready the night before. Most take a cool bag with a large supply of drinks, snacks and healthy high carbohydrate lunch items. Don't rely on suitable food being available at the venue – very few pools, if any, have facilities! If there is food available, there'll often be a huge queue and then you'll have difficulty finding a seat. Watching your child compete is exciting but it can also be nerve-wracking, and everyone reacts to the situation differently. Once the race is underway some parents shout hysterically, much to the amusement of other parents, officials and swimmers! Enthusiasm is great, but your child won't be able to hear you and is likely to thank you more if you stay calm. Enjoy yourself and help them to appreciate the highs (and occasional lows) of the sport, and that sometimes losing, is the best way to learn how to win.