

Getting ready for a swim meet

What things should I bring to a swim meet?

In your swim bag you should pack several towels, your swim suit and an extra swim suit, your swim cap and goggles (have 2 pairs - straps can break). Sun screen will be needed for outdoor meets. In addition, depending on the weather you will want to bring t-shirt, shorts, shoes or flip flops to protect young feet. Be sure that your name is on all clothing. Parents, you probably will want to bring a lawn chair (bag chair) since seating is limited and the bleachers will be HOT!

How long do swim meets usually last?

You should plan to be at the meet for 4+ hours, but keep in mind that most of the time you won't be racing. Bring things to help you pass the time such as homework, cards, Gameboys, books etc. You may want to pack a snack as well, but most meets have a Snack Bar where bagels, fruit, water and other snacks are sold, so consider bringing some spending money. Bring water or sports drinks to stay hydrated. Bring snacks (goldfish, Ritz bits, cheese, fruit, cereal, power bars, etc.)

When should I arrive at the meet?

Most Age Group meets except Championship meets are what is called split session meets, with each session (morning and afternoon) running approximately 4 hours. Check with your coach to be clear in what session (morning or afternoon) you are entered in. You will also need to bring a pen and a Sharpie to mark your swimmer as to what event/heat/lane they are entered in. Your coach will give you special instructions regarding what time he/she wants you there for warm-up.

What should I do when I arrive at the meet?

The first thing all swimmers should do when they arrive at a meet is find the coach and check in. **All swimmers must check themselves in at the meet at least 30 minutes before team warm ups.** Find the bathrooms. A swimmer needs to be ready at least 2 -3 events before they are scheduled to swim.

How will I know when my race is?

All events have an event number (e.g. Event #7, Girls 7/8 - 25 Yard Freestyle). Know what events you are competing in. **Heat sheets** are sold at the events. Many swimmers write their event numbers on their leg or arm with a Sharpie. Pay attention to the announcer as he/she announces what event is in the water or what event is coming up. When your race is 2 events away, (e.g. you are swimming in event #6 and the event currently being swum is event #4), stay in the bull pen area. A coordinator will place you in the correct order for your swim. Know your event/heat lane assignment.

Where do I go when I'm not in the water?

Stay near the team area at the meet venue. Play games with your friends, read or listen to music. Relax.

It is not a good idea to leave valuables unattended or out in the open.

Information for Parents and Spectators

Typically, a meet will run roughly 4+ hours. During most of the time spent at the meet, your swimmer will not be swimming. When you are not watching your swimmer compete, you may want to read a book, socialize with other Tiger Shark parents or consider supporting the meet by

being a Timer.

Roughly 15 minutes before the start of the competition the announcer will call for timers. Please consider being a Timer for the team. Timers will be needed. If you have never timed before, consider volunteering at the beginning of the meet. At this time, meet officials will give a briefing to all timers and conduct several practice “races” to familiarize new timers with the process.

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

- **Leave coaching to the coaches.** This includes pre-race psyching, motivation, after race critiquing, setting goals, etc
- **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.
- **Support your swimmers’ coach(es).** They are the experts. Find a time away from the pool deck to discuss any concerns you have directly with them. Not at the meet. Make sure your swimmer gets enough rest and is eating properly throughout the meet. Swimming takes a lot of energy.
- **Make friends.** Some of the best relationships are made at swim meets.