

A Guide For Competitors And Parents Attending Their First Swim Meet

This information is provided as a guide but be aware that there will be lots of people helping you on the day and telling you what to do so you don't have to remember everything. The key is to enjoy yourself.

Entries You will be given/emailed a swim meet flyer and an entry form. Simply check off the events you wish to try on the form, then check your races with your coach. Your coach will make sure they are the right strokes and distances for you. If you have not raced an event before you will need to do a time trial - arrange this with your coach. This means your coach or a registered timekeeper will time you during training for the event. Save the flyer so you know which events you will be competing in and what order they are in. You will then be told whether you need to enter on the database or if the Recorder will do that for you.

Race Day Preparation Make a checklist of items that will be required on race day, these may include - Togs (include spare pair), Goggles (include a spare pair), Towels (allow one towel for every two races plus one more), A bag to put the gear in, Swim cap, warm clothes for between races including gym shoes, some healthy snacks and a sandwich to maintain the 'fuel in the tank'. High glycaemic Index foods are best but need to be eaten within 30 minutes of the completion of each event. Try to eat white or wholemeal bread; water crackers, rice crackers, potato, pumpkin or even jellybeans. Something to drink is important - sports drinks and water are best. Avoid smart drinks, V drinks or power drinks that can have adverse effects. It is useful for spectators to bring fold up chairs - there is often limited seating inside and over summer we tend to sit on the grassed area by the 50m pool and a chair or rug comes in handy. We prefer the parents to sit separately to the swimmers during the competition - usually we are only allocated enough seats for swimmers anyway but also this means that the swimmers get the real team experience and make friends with their team-mates.

Race Day Swim Rotorua will send an email a few days before the swimming meet with information for competitors. This will include a time to be at the pool (usually 20 mins before warm up starts). This will give you time to find a seat and then do team dryland exercises before warm up. All swimmers will sit together as a club group. Look for the club banner and team uniforms. When you arrive find the team manager and introduce yourself. They are the person you can ask any questions you have and you should also let them know if you are going to the toilet or if you want to go and see your parents/family. This means they know where you are at all times and especially when your races are coming up. Warm Up at the allotted time with the other swimmers in your squad. We do some easy swimming, some faster swimming, some starts and some turns in preparation for the meet. Your coach will tell you what to do. Swimmers are encouraged to wear old costumes and not necessarily the costumes they will compete in, but if you only have one pair of togs that is fine. At the completion of the warm up swimmers change into their race costumes, put some clothes on and something on their feet and (if outside) something on their heads, the two areas that lose heat the quickest. Everytime you take something off put it straight in your bag and have a pocket where you keep your goggles and cap.

Pre Race At most swimming competitions we race heats from the slowest to fastest in each event. Swimmers race boys and girls of any age who have times similar to theirs, but the results will come up in age groups for boys and girls separately. When it is close to your heat the team manager will send you to see the coach for some advice. Make sure you keep your warm clothes on. The team manager will then tell you which heat and lane you are in. You will go up and stand behind the timekeepers until it is time for your race. Don't take any of your clothes off just yet. The announcer says what heat is racing at the start of each race so listen carefully. The first few times there will be someone there to make sure you are in the right place. When it is the race before yours take your clothes off and put them in a neat pile on the seat or in the boxes provided. Put your goggles on.
(At some competitions there is marshalling and the team manager will explain this to you.)

The Race. Move forward behind the starting blocks and when the whistle goes climb up on the block or if it is backstroke jump in the water. When the starter says, "take your marks" get into the starting position and KEEP STILL. When the hooter sounds, it is over to you! We emphasise setting a personal best that means you race against your previous best time. The other people in your race are doing the same thing - if you win anything it's a bonus. At the completion of your swim you will usually stay in the water at the side of the lane, but not touching the time-pads, while the next race starts - this is called 'over the top starts'. Once the race has started make your way to the side of the pool to get out and not over the end, as this will bump the timepad. Go straight back to the timekeepers in your lane, stand behind them and ask them your time. Ask them nicely, say please and thank you. Grab all your clothes and shoes and go back and see the coach. He or she will make some comments on your race and may tell you to do a swim down which is just easy swimming in a different pool, so you don't get sore muscles.

After Race. Once you have finished your swim down, dry off and get your warm gear back on again don't forget something on your feet. Snack on some of your energy food and make sure you have something to drink. If you want to see your parents then and they are not busy helping, ask your team manager. Sit down and rest up - don't run around like a headless chook. You need to save your energy for racing, not playing. This means staying out of the water unless you are warming up, racing or swimming down. When it's over you can play as much as you like! Start thinking about your next race while you watch and learn from the other competitors especially the older ones who have had plenty of experience and who race fast. Follow the same pattern for the rest of the competition. If there are relays you will be told whether or not you are in a team and what number you will be swimming.

Congratulations, if you have done all this, and you have had fun you have done a great job. If you have achieved a personal best even better! Find out when the next meet is on and decide whether you are going to enter. Before you enter talk to your coach, s/he might want to see you swim some different events. After a few competitions you can aim at qualifying times for Bay of Plenty Junior Champs, the Bay of Plenty Championships and eventually even the National Championships. Swim Rotorua has athletes and all these levels as well as some who race internationally. If you have any questions at all don't hesitate to talk to your coach at the pool.