

## LRW Swim Meet Survival Tips

Swim meets are an exciting part of the swim season and are great place for you swimmer to gain confidence, experience, and enjoyment from the sport. Swim meets can also be a source of nervousness and confusion especially for the new and younger swimmers. Here are a few tips to help you through the early meet jitters

**Preparation** - In general it is important have your swimmer on deck ready to go a few minutes before the assigned warm up time. Plan ahead as weather, directions, parking, and warm up times for each event are different. Make sure you and your swimmer have water and healthy snacks along to maintain energy levels throughout the meet.

**Event and Officials** - Each event is broken up into heats and swimmers will be matched up with swimmers with similar times to make the competition run smoothly. The coaches, older swimmers, and parents can help transfer the meet information onto your swimmers arm with a marker to help them keep track of event, heat and lane they are assigned to swim. Officials will be on deck to help the meet run smoothly. If you see an official with their arm in the air, watching your child swim, it may be a disqualification. A disqualification (DQ) is not the end of the world and happens to every swimmer at one time or another. It is another chance for your swimmer to learn more about the particular stroke. The official will turn an instruction slip over to the coach who can review the infraction with the swimmer so that they understand the changes that need to be made.

**Departure** - Make sure your swimmer lets the coach know when they are leaving. This is really important as relays at the end of events depend on swimmers being there to participate. If your swimmer leaves unannounced then three other swimmers might not be able to compete in a relay. Lost and found is not the easiest thing to control at an away swim meet, especially larger ones. So please take an inventory of suits, goggles, towels etc. before you leave to make sure you are not missing anything important.

As with anything practice and experience will make swim meets “old cap” to everyone who participates. As this list is certainly not all inclusive please make sure to seek out coaches, parents, or older swimmers at the meet who will be happy to answer any questions to the best of their ability. You can find us by looking for brightly colored LRW shirts in blue, green, and soon to be tie-dyed. See you around the pool.

## Swim Meet Topics / Tips / Definitions

**Arrival Time:** Meets are held all over the state and sometimes in MA or VT so travel time can be considerable especially with the weather factor in the winter season. Make sure to allow plenty of time to make it to the meet site, find parking, and get your swimmer situated and ready for warm ups on time. Thirty minutes early for warm ups is a good rule of thumb but as you get accustomed to the venues you can adjust your time to your own comfort and experience level.

**Bull Pens/Waiting Area:** At most meets there is a holding area for the swimmers to wait for their events and usually it is in a gym just outside the pool or locker room area. The meet officials have someone posting the event and heat that is in the pool so the swimmers know when to get ready and move to the pool area to prepare for their events. The team usually puts a parent in there to help police the team

and help make sure kids don't forget to look for their events. The coaches usually send out search parties a few minutes ahead of schedule if the swimmer is not on deck early enough.

**Check In:** Swimmers need to check in with the coach and or meet officials prior to warm ups to make sure they are included in the meet. If you are running late or have to miss the meet at the last minute please contact the coaches so they are aware of the late arrival or can scratch your swimmer if they will not be there.

**Disqualification (DQ):** A DQ is signaled by an official raising their hand while a swimmer is in the water. The time achieved will not count and a blank or DQ will be listed on the results sheet (see Results) for the event that day. This is not the end of the world and it happens to all swimmers at one time or another (or many times as they learn). It is part of the learning process and helps the swimmer evaluate and develop their technique. The official will fill out a form and give it to the coach so the swimmer can be instructed on the nature of the error so it can be worked on in practice. Some of the more common infractions are not touching the wall with two hands on butterfly and breast, not staying on your back all the way on back stroke, arms that don't move in unison on the breast and butterfly, and using the wrong kick on butterfly and breast.

**Entertainment:** Meet sessions/days can be long especially if you have two swimmers in different age groups. It is a good idea to bring things to keep the kids and you entertained for the day. Books, games, music, etc. can be helpful in making the day more enjoyable for the family. Electronics are OK but keep in mind that power outlets are few and while the sessions are supervised damage and disappearance while uncommon it is not out of the possibility.

**Event Tracking:** The coaches, older swimmers, and parents help the swimmers track their events by writing them on the swimmers arms. Usually it gets listed as a code with event number, heat number, lane number, and stroke (something like E1, H2, L3, Back). Don't be alarmed it will wear or wash off with a little persistence and it does really help. The coaches will also do their very best to usher the swimmer to the correct lane at the correct time but the arm code system is there as back up.

**Food and Drink:** Most meets have concession stands where food and drinks can be purchased by swimmers and spectators alike (but not taken on deck). Small coolers with snacks and drinks are encouraged for the swimmers and parents to keep their energy up during the meet. Water is essential for the swimmer to keep hydrated during the meet as it is in practice sessions as well.

**Heat sheets:** Some of the larger meets have heat sheets for sale that list all the events, heats, and times with swimmers names included. These can be helpful in tracking where your swimmer is for the day so you don't miss an event.

**Locker Rooms:** Locker rooms are available at each event some small and some cavernous mazes (Phillips Exeter, UNH etc). It is best to accompany your swimmer to the locker room or make sure they have a buddy who has been at the event before to pair up with to minimize confusion and make the pre-meet process as anxiety free as possible.

**Lost and found:** Each swimmer brings stuff to the meet towels, suits, goggles, books, games, etc. It is very important to take inventory before you leave the meet as lost and found at an away meet is pretty difficult unless it is a team suit then it might get returned to the team for distribution. Usually it is a

towel or suit left in the locker room or in the bullpen by a tired or distracted swimmer who has had a great day until mom and dad find out when they get home that something important is still at the pool.

**Meet duration:** The time required to complete a meet varies by the number of swimmers and events planned. Typically a session at a meet lasts between 4 and 5 hours sometimes more and sometimes less. The same goes for single session meets so plan on being there a while and come prepared.

#### **Meet Sessions / Events / Heats / Lanes:**

**Session:** Each meet is broken into segments. A session is a group of events planned for a particular time segment (Fri. PM, Sat. AM or PM, Sun. AM PM). Smaller meets are one session. Events are broken up by swim stroke, distance, age group, and sex.

**Heats** are subsets of events as usually there are only four to eight lanes at the pool so swimmers are group together in heats. If your swimmer does not have a time for that event they will be listed as NT and swim in the earlier heats. Heats are typically set up slowest to fastest times except for the very long distance events which are set up fastest to slowest. Either way your swimmer will be swimming against swimmers with similar times.

**Lanes:** Lanes are numbered either on the starting block or on the wall so you fairly easily determine which is which. The swimmers with the fastest times are assigned the middle lanes in each heat. However, it is not uncommon for an outside lane swimmer to win the heat if they have a good swim.

**Officials:** Each meet has a group of officials dress in white and blue with official tags around their necks. These folks control the meet on deck and judge whether the swimmer is performing the stroke correctly in the water. On occasion these individuals can be seen with an arm raised in the air while they are watching your swimmer in their lane. They are not waiting to ask a question they are signaling a disqualification (DQ) for improper swim technique (see DQ).

**Parking:** Depending on your arrival time, session, weather, etc. parking can be “interesting”. Give your self plenty of time and follow signs or instructions from parking officials/police. Some of the larger meets have satellite parking and shuttles can involve extra time but are usually well coordinated by meet volunteers. **IMPORTANT:** Follow parking rules as cars do get towed if parked illegally.

**Relays:** At the end of most sessions relay events are conducted where four swimmers from each team by age group compete in an event together. Depending on the number of swimmers in each age group at that session there may be more than one team entered or no team at all. It is very important that you and your swimmer check with the coach if you plan to leave a session early as you may be impacting the relay teams for that session. If you child leaves early that may leave three swimmers out of the water as they do not have a fourth to make a team. Also don't be upset if your swimmer is the fifth person and not scheduled for a relay. The coaches do a good job of getting people in to relays and if they miss one meet they will be put in next time around. Relays are fun ways to end the meet and build team enthusiasm, so don't miss out.

**Results:** The time results for your swimmer are recorded and posted in a couple of different ways. Some of the larger events have very nice scoreboards with each lane and times (fancy and impressive)

or a scrolling list of lane and times (more typical), or no scoreboard at all (small meets). At the end of each event the times for each lane are displayed very briefly so don't blink or you will miss it. Also there is usually an area where the times are posted on paper sheets after each event or every couple events so you can always look for the results wall if you miss the scoreboard time.

**Seating:** Most of the winter indoor events have seating areas with bleachers for spectators to watch the event. These areas can get crowded, warm, and noisy so early arrival helps improve your viewing options. Larger events have areas where camp chairs can be set up outside the viewing area where you can sit between events if you choose and move in to the stands for those critical times when your swimmer or our team is in the water.

**Session Times:** Most of the smaller meets are a single session but the larger meets have multiple sessions on multiple days broken down by age group and event. Make sure you verify which session you are signed up (on LRW website) for before heading out to the event so you don't miss the session or arrive at the wrong one.

**Team Unity:** Sitting together with other team parents is optional and a personal choice. Usually you will find other parents at meets by personal knowledge, face recognition, or spotting the flashy team shirts (bright blue, bright green, and soon to be tie-dyed in the stands or around the venue. Some parents use the event for social interaction while others use the time catching up on work, correspondence, reading etc. Either way the choice is yours just don't lose track of time and miss your swimmers event.

**Timers:** Timers are a very important part of each meet and parent volunteers fill these spots from each team. The role of the timer is to record the time duration of each swim using a stopwatch. At smaller meets the timer's time (usually an average of two or three people) is the official record for the swim. At larger meets there are timing systems which include touch pads underwater on the wall for the swimmers to touch when they finish the race. At these events the stop watch times are back ups in case the timing system malfunctions or the swimmer misses the touch pad. The timing role is important and a nice way to participate in the meet. You can be on deck in the middle of the action, but watch out for the splashes you will get wet.

**Warm Up Times:** Each session has an assigned warm up start times. At the larger meets there may be several warm up groups so the warm up start times may be staggered in 20 to 30 minute intervals. Each team is assigned warm up times for each session which is when your swimmer should be on deck (not the meet start time). Make sure your swimmer is dressed, on deck, and locates the coach before the designated warm up start time.