

AQUA Swim Meet 101

So you have signed your child up for their first swim meet. Now what? What happens at the meet? What are heats, events, controlled vs. open warm up and positive check in? Why do I need to bring a sharpie and how do I read a heat sheet? We know that attending your first swim meet can be scary. It can leave you dazed and confused. We hope this information helps you feel a little more “in the know” when you go to your first meet. As always if you have other questions make sure you ask one of the coaches.

Before the meet:

All swimmers on AQUA must be registered with USA Swimming. We take care of the registration part of that for you. You pay a fee when you register that makes your child a member of USA Swimming.

AQUA coaches will e-mail you important information about the meet, this will include any changes of the meet format, what time you should be there (based on what session you are participating in), and an entry report of what your swimmer(s) are swimming. Parents can find all of the information about a meet (location, event order, session times) in the meet packet. The meet packet can be found on Michigan Swimming’s website (miswim.org-> Events).

Why participate in swim meets? How many should we do?

Meets are an amazing and fun way to showcase the things your swimmer has been learning in practice. We want to challenge them and see how fast they can go!

We have two different types of meets, in season meets and championship meets; championship meets require qualifying times. In season meets are the most important to AQUA! Here are practicing racing and working on the smallest of details to help you go fast!

The commitment of meet participation will vary based on age and ability level. AQUA will typically participate in 2 meets a month. New swimmers should participate in HOME meets, your coach will contact you when we will want your swimmer to participate in additional meets. More experienced and seasoned swimmers will participate in more meets as their schedules allow. Our SR swimmers should participate in 75% of the available meets offered.

What events will my child swim? How many will they swim?

The AQUA coaches will pick events and have the final decisions for your child. We first want them to swim events that we know they can comfortably swim with success so we will pick those. We will also typically pick an event that we know will challenge them- this might be a longer distance event. We however don’t put them in an event we feel they are not ready to swim. You can also let us know when you register if there is an event they really want to swim or if they are going for the IMX Challenge.

The coaches will many times have a swimmer swim the maximum events allowed at a meet. Those maximums are set by the meet host and can be limited if it is a prelims and finals

meet. We want our swimmers to swim a wide variety of strokes and distances. We use meets and a variety of events to gauge our improvement and areas of focus for practice.

How much does a meet cost?

Those costs are set by the host team and are available in the meet packet. Some are more than others depending on location and type of awards. Once you commit to a meet and we have processed payment we are not able to do refunds.

Late Entries: Late entries are accepted if the meet host has availability in the meet. If the meet is full, we are unable to add your swimmer to the meet. Entries received past AQUA's team deadline will be subject to double the registration fee. (IE: if the registration cost \$25.00, a late registration will cost \$50.00) Make sure you pay attention to the deadlines. Our deadlines are sometimes earlier than what might be listed on the host team's website. This is so we can send in our entries to make sure our team has a spot. It is possible for a meet to be full so we want to get our entries in early.

What do you bring to a swim meet?

Parents:

- **Bring some cash.** There might be a parking charge based on the pool. Most teams sell "heat sheets" which is the program for the meet that tells where and when your child will swim. Some meets are now using online versions. It depends on the meet. Do not ask the coach to use their heat sheet. If it is your first meet it is a good idea to get one so you know what is going on. Also, you can team up with other parents to share one. Teams typically post the heat sheet as well and you could take a photo with your phone so you have it.
- **Bring a Sharpie marker and a pen or pencil to write your swimmer's times in the heat sheet and a highlighter to follow their events.** More on this later.
- **Concessions** will typically be available at most meets (another use for that cash)
- **It gets warm** in many pools- be prepared for this, dress in layers.
- Be prepared for a lot of down time at some meets between events. Bring stuff to keep you and your swimmer entertained.

What do Swimmers need to bring?

- **Team swim suit**
- **2 pairs of goggles and 2 swim caps** (it is a good idea to have a spare in case one breaks or you can't find it).
- **Multiple towels plus one-** it is nice to have a dry one at the end of the meet to use to get changed
- **Shoes-** tennis shoes and socks are best, keep feet warm and dry between events
- **Snacks, water, sports drinks (no sugar based snacks) – they need to be hydrated!**

- **Team shirt, sweat shirt**
- **Parka (if cold)**
- **Sleeping bag, Chair, Bleacher Seat:** there is not enough seating for swimmers at most meets. Plan on having something in your car in case you and your swimmer need a place to sit.
- **No electronics, books, schoolwork, games, etc.** - Being at a meet is an opportunity for our swimmers to get to know each other better and bond as a team. Bringing stuff to distract us from the meet affects the sense of comradery within the team. Be active and be loud at meets, cheer your teammates on and remember swimming brings our team together when we rally behind one another.

Once at the meet:

Being on time is critical. Warm-ups typically start about an hour before the meet and are extremely important for your swimmer to attend- they get to rehearse in the pool they are swimming in. **We expect swimmers to arrive 15 minutes before warm up ready to swim,** which means if they are planning on changing at the meet or like to socialize you need to get there earlier.

Coaches will be at the meet and ready to greet the swimmers. They will either be at a coaches table, on deck (depends on the meet) or at the end of a lane right before warm up starts.

Depending on the meet there may have split warm up sessions and if we are assigned the first half of warm up and you miss it, your swimmer will not be able to warm up.

Swim meets are divided into morning sessions and afternoon sessions. Look at the information carefully as it can change from meet to meet. Prelims/Finals meets typically have the older swimmers swim in the morning so they get a break before coming back to swim in finals.

Positive check in: Michigan Swimming requires positive check in at a meet. These events are seeded at the meet once the deadline to check in has passed. The deadline is typically 30 minutes before a meet starts. Swimmers are responsible to sign themselves in. Have them ask and we can show them.

Just before the start of the session (or shortly after) is the time to use the highlighter you brought. Go through the heat sheet and find your swimmer's name and highlight their events.

How to read a heat sheet:

Event 11 Girls 8 & Under 25 yard freestyle

Lane	Name	Age	Team	Seed Time
Heat 1 Finals				
1	Down, Susie	8	AQUA-MI	NT
2	Smith, Annika	7	AQUA-MI	17.67
3	Glossner, Emily	8	AQUA-MI	18.23
4	Reed, Samantha	8	AQUA-MI	22.0

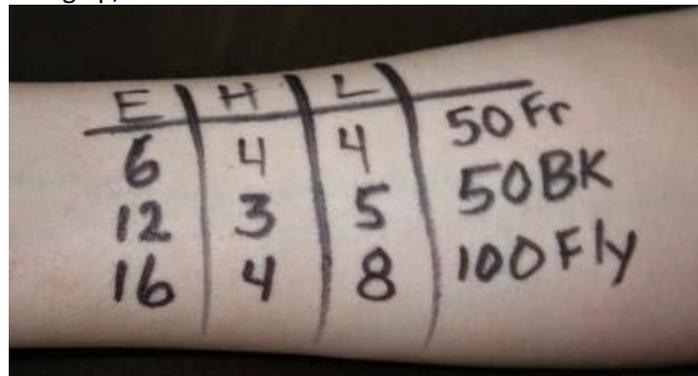
Now to use that sharpie. Swimmers don't typically use heat sheets, when they get older they will start looking at them to see the competition. To help them know the events, lanes and heats you can write each swimmer's information on their leg or arm. **Prior to arrival, know what events your athlete is signed up to swim and come to the meet with the Event number and name written in sharpie before they arrive to the pool.** However, please to not make them late to warm up to do this. The coaches do not do this. If you are unsure; ask a veteran parent or a swimmer.

Parents: **BEFORE** arrival on deck make sure to write this out on your swimmer's forearm



E= Event H= Heat L= Lane

Parents: AFTER warming up, the coaches fill the H and L column



During the meet:

Swimmers are expected and told that they need to report to the coaches before and after their

events. The coaches should be the last person they see before they race and the first person they see after racing. We will send them to you after they have talked with us and completed cool down for the session.

What do we tell them? Younger swimmers: we are reminding them with a few basic pointers: two hand touches, feet together on fly, touch on your back etc. We are not talking race strategy with our youngest swimmers. After the race we go over what we saw. We always look to give technical feedback with all of our swimmers and as they get older we work with our athletes over the season to develop a race strategy and execute it.

Questions for coaches: If you have a long involved question for a coach regarding your swimmer's meet performance please wait until after the meet or email/ call after the meet. The coaches might not be able to talk during the meet as they are watching the other swimmers.

Cool Down: after your swimmer has swum an event they will be told by the coaches to go and swim a cool down (if a pool is available). This is not playtime. **For younger swimmers** we are creating the habit that after a race you need to "cool down your muscles" to prepare for the next race. **For older swimmers** it is even more critical so that they can rid themselves of lactic acid and be prepared to swim again. **Please don't ask your child to skip cool down.** I know it can add to the length of a meet but is especially important to them at the end of the day. It can make or break the following day for your swimmer.

What if your child misses an event: We hope this does not happen but it occasionally does. The coaches instruct the swimmers to immediately go to the Starter (the official at the end of the pool) if they miss an event. They are to tell the Starter they missed their heat. The Starter will try and get them in if possible. The coaches will also go to that same spot and help the swimmer. Your child should not come over to you. If too much time goes by they will not add them in.

Meet Mobile: This is an app that is available for purchase that will allow you to see results are almost every meet. You can see your child's times here or find them posted on the wall.

Encourage your swimmer to sit with the other swimmers at the meet and cheer on their teammates. This is how they meet other swimmers and build relationships- the whole reason to be on a team.

Parents on the pool deck: During swim meets parents are not permitted on the pool deck. At home meets parent volunteers helping to run the meet are permitted on deck.



Be the **BEST** you can be!

Encourage your swimmer whether they have a good swim or not so good of a race.

Sometimes your swimmer might not have a best time every time they swim- that is ok. They might have had an especially hard week at practice, we might be changing something in their stroke, they might be swimming a lot at a meet, or other factors outside the pool affect the emotional state of the swimmer influencing performance. Keep it all in perspective and remember they are working really hard in practice and best times will come-maybe at the next meet. You should be their cheerleader and their coaches are the coaches. Let us take the brunt of a bad swim not you.

Meets with finals: Our team expectation is that **ALL** swimmers who qualify for finals will swim those events at finals unless **PREVIOUSLY** discussed with Coach Mike or Coach Kevin. Placing is not determined until finals are swum. We can lose points for no-shows and swimmers can be penalized.