

Wycombe District Swimming Club

A Parent's Guide to Competitive Swimming (Open Meets and League Galas)

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Competitive Swimming – A Guide for Parents

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Introduction to Wycombe District Swimming Club

Wycombe District Swimming Club (WDSC) is a competitive swimming club which aims to develop the swimming ability of children living in Wycombe and surrounding areas. WDSC's vision is to enable swimmers to reach their personal goals in swimming both as individuals and together as a team.

The club has its home pool at Handy Cross Leisure Centre in High Wycombe with club designated training times throughout the week, there is an additional training facility for swimmers at Princes Risborough. The club is structured into different squads based on age and ability. This structure enables provision of coaching and training to develop swimmers stroke technique and stamina to be prepared to achieve their best as a competitive swimmer and to enjoy their sport within the team.

WDSC Squads and Training

Swimmers are assessed by the coaching staff when they join WDSC and based on the swimmers age and ability they are assigned to the appropriate training squad. During their membership of WDSC swimmers progress will be assessed by the coaches and they will be moved up through the different squads in accordance with their individual ability and personal goals. As a member of WDSC swimmers are expected to attend all training sessions as advised by the coaching staff. Failure to do so may prevent your swimmer reaching their full potential, slow progression up the squad hierarchy and could jeopardise your swimmers place in their squad.

Stroke Improvers

We accept children into the club Stroke Improver Classes, after they have reached level 6/7 (NPTS) following their Learn to Swim Program. In our Stroke Improver section at the club we concentrate on the three main strokes of Front Crawl, Breaststroke and Backstroke, with the emphasis on developing stroke technique. These sessions prepare the children for entry into the Transition I squad in the club, once their strokes have reached the required level. Stroke Improvers Sessions run during Term Time throughout the year.

Tuesday evenings 7.00pm - 7.55 pm (9yrs - 11yrs)

Saturday mornings 8.00am - 8.55am (7yrs - 9yrs)

Transition I and II

Both T1 & T2 are entry level squads and are the beginning of a swimmers journey into the competitive side of the club. Swimmers generally progress into these squads from our Stroke Improver sessions, or alternatively can join by participating in our regular assessments for new members. Typically swimmers start in T1 aged 7 up to approximately age 9; all squad members are expected to be at around the A.S.A Standard Levels 10/11/12. The focus in these squads is to teach the swimmers about legal turns in all four strokes and to start to learn the differences in strokes from a "learn to swim" approach to "Competitive" strokes.

Junior Development

This squad is the next progression from T1& T2, with swimmers typically aged between 9 and 12 years old. Swimmers start to learn how to train for competition and receive basic energy system training, with a significant amount of time spent on stroke correction.

Junior Squad

Swimmers are usually aged between 10 and 12 years, and in this squad focused competitive training starts. Swimmers are expected to attend sessions as advised by the squad coaches, which are up to 5 sessions per week. Swimmers at this level will attend regular galas and be working towards attaining county qualification times.

Performance I

Swimmers are moved into P1, when the coaches feel they are ready and will usually have achieved county times or are very close to achieving them. They must be prepared to train on a very regular basis; normally 6 or 7 sessions every week. During their time in P1 they are encouraged to reach their full potential. Moving into P1 is entirely at the coach's discretion and swimmers are usually moved into this squad, when coaches feel they are ready and they normally join this squad on a 1 month trial basis, during which time their commitment to training is assessed.

Performance 2 & 3

Swimmers in these squads are normally County, Regional, and National level swimmers and are expected to commit to between 6 and 8 sessions of training every week. The aim of these squads is to train approximately 30,000 -40,000 metres per week. Swimmers are trained on all energy systems in a competitive situation. Squad members are expected to swim approximately 1 swim meet per and compete in County, Regional and National championships, in addition to their regular training cycles.

Club Squad

This squad caters for swimmers aged 12 and over, and is geared specifically to those swimmers who do not want to commit to a competitive training program, but still want to swim and compete in some low level swim meets.

Masters

Masters swimming is basically swimming for adults. It encompasses the whole range of ability from casual fitness swimming to highly organised competitive swimming. To qualify as a 'Masters' swimmer you only need to be over 25 years of age. Masters swimming welcomes everyone, no matter what your reason is for swimming. How far you go with the Masters Swimming system is up to you. The broad objectives of better health, better fitness, and friendship between swimmers are paramount. There is no compulsion on swimmers to compete - a major survey of British Masters swimmers showed that the majority of them rarely do!



As a member of Wycombe District Swimming Club (WDSC), swimmers are expected to attend all squad sessions. Failure to do so could jeopardise your swimmer's place in their squad.

General advice

Swimmers who have not yet reached their ninth birthday are only (under ASA rules) able to participate in internal events. However it is important to get on the first 'rung' with an officially-recorded personal best (PB) time.

As a general rule, young swimmers start by competing over 25m and 50m distances, the 200m in all strokes and 100m individual medley are then added. At 10 years the 400m freestyle is added and generally only once you are 10 (girls) or 11 (boys) can you compete over 100m distances.

The Club will usually try to put your swimmer in a relay race for their first experience of a Gala competition - this helps to control the inevitable 'first race nerves'.

For most events there are no heats or finals, just races (Heat Declared Winners or HDW). Swimmers race against swimmers with similar qualifying times but not necessarily the same age. The times are then recorded for each race and the winner is the quickest swimmer in that age group. Disqualifications are inevitable especially for the younger swimmer and for the more technical strokes. Your swimmer will be disappointed if they are disqualified but they should be praised for their race effort. In the long run it is better for them to be disqualified in the early stages of their career as they will quickly learn how to avoid disqualification and be competitive. They will have plenty of other opportunities to race again!

Types of Swimming Events

See Club Events Section of our Website for diary dates

- 1. Internal Events.** This covers our Club Championships, held once per year.
- 2. Open or Graded Meets.** These are hosted by ourselves and other swimming clubs and will include swimmers from many clubs.
- 3. League Galas.** Swimmers will be selected by the club to swim in these and will be told which event they will be swimming once they have arrived at poolside.
- 4. Championships.** These include events such as the County Championships, South East Regional Championships (SER), National Championships. These have qualifying times which can be found on the relevant web sites and on the WDSC website.
- 5. Swimmers Q&A**
- 6. Common Terms**

Internal Events

These include Time Trials (for specific squads) and Club Championships (for whole club). Often the coach will decide which stroke the swimmer should do. They are encouraged to use these events to gain times in their less favoured strokes, to achieve a qualifying time for a forthcoming event or for squad progression.

Ages

For internal events and squad qualification, the club uses year of birth or “age as of last day of the event” which means the age your swimmer will be at the end of the event. The notable exception is club records which are age on the day of the swim.

Club Championships

Once a year, in November/December WDSC runs its Club Champs. They are held over several days, usually on a Saturday at Handy Cross Leisure Centre and some Tuesday Evenings.

There is an entry fee to cover costs such as medals, the timing system, and to contribute to the cost of the formal WDSC Presentation Evening etc. Entry forms are given out and should be returned with payment to your squad rep/coach.

Club Champs are open to all swimmers including all transition levels, although some younger swimmers may be invited to participate in selected events only. However the Club Champs are most appropriate for the younger swimmer and a good event for them to get times and have a try at the longer races. They are expect to enter all events they are eligible foreven the 200 Butterfly. It’s definitely a “have a go” competition but there will be disqualifications so you should prepare the younger ones for this.

The races are within age groups, across squads, which enables coaches to compare times across the club. Results are posted after all ages have swum the stroke/distance. Trophies are awarded to any swimmer who finishes in the top three in any race in their age groups. Points are achieved for places 1 to 6 in each race and are accumulated over the course of the whole club championships to determine the “Top Boy” and “Top Girl” winners in each age group. Trophies for Top Boy and Top Girl are awarded at our Club Presentation evening in January each year.

Licensed Meets

An open meet is very different from other events in several ways, so requires more preparation. An open meet takes place over a longer period of time than other events, often a whole day or weekend rather than a single evening. Open meets are generally “age on the day”, so the age your swimmer will be on the last day of the event. Any swimmer who is age 9 or older can enter open meets provided they meet the entry qualification or consideration time for their age.

Licensing Guidelines

This document is for general guidance, definitive English licensed meet conditions from the ASA may be found on the ASA website

Levels

The ASA operates a system of licensing to ensure that appropriate competition is offered to all abilities. There are presently four licence levels, one to four, level one being the highest.

Each level has different organisational requirements, such as entry time limits, provision of electronic timing, qualification of officials, swim down facilities, etc. For competitors, the more significant differences are the level of ability at which they are targeted and the way in which entries may be limited.

Level 1: For swimmers seeking National and Regional qualification. Lower limit times only (the swimmer must be faster than a specified time). The ASA set a minimum standard for the lower qualification time. Held in long course pools (50m) only. The meet may not be specified as 'first come first served' for entries.

Level 2: For swimmers seeking National and Regional qualification. Lower limit times only (the swimmer must be faster than a specified time). The ASA sets a minimum standard for the lower qualification time. Held in short course pools (25m) only. The meet may not be specified as 'first come first served' for entries.

Level 3: For swimmers seeking up to Regional Qualification or also for entry to Level 1 and 2 open meets. Upper and lower limit entry qualifying times apply. (the swimmer must be within a specified time band). Qualification times vary widely and may be dependent on the date that the competition is held within the season but may not be faster than National Qualifying times. Held in short course (25m) or long course (50m) pools. Entries may be on a 'first come first served' basis.

Level 4: For swimmers seeking County Qualification, inexperienced swimmers, or for Club events. No time limit restrictions mandated but may be restricted by the organising club to ensure safety regarding entry numbers.

Note:

National Qualification may only be obtained at Level 1 or 2 Meets or equivalent.

Regional Qualification may only be obtained at Level 3 or higher.

Hampshire County ASA Qualification may be obtained at Level 4 or higher.

Preparing entries

During the course of the year the coaches choose which open meets the Club wishes swimmers to attend based upon the appropriate level of competition. The choice of open meet may be different for different squads. Details of the meet, such as the entry form and

qualification times, are put on the web site. Several weeks (or even months) before an open meet your swimmer will receive an entry form from your squad rep /coach, with details, date, available events, closing date etc. These details can also usually be found on the host club's web site.

Open meet events are in "sessions" with the first session often requiring you to 'sign in' by 8:00am and the last session ending in to the evening! Session details can also usually be found on the host clubs web site.

If you are not sure which events to enter, speak to your swimmer's coach for advice but in general, especially for inexperienced swimmers, it is advisable for the initial open meets, to check which session each swim is in and to choose events that will not involve: a long day, long gaps in between or too many races in one session.

Please *clearly* mark which events you want to enter & return the form to your squad rep/coach with the correct amount of money made payable to Wycombe District Swimming Club. You must return the completed form with payment to your squad rep/coach by the date they have stated so that the Club can submit all our entries in good time before the closing date so that our entries are accepted and so that any queries can be sorted out early. If you miss the closing date your swimmer will not be able to participate.

Acceptance

Even though your swimmer is inside the consideration or qualifying times their entry may not be accepted if the host club receives too many entrants. In this case the host club will reject entries starting with those nearest to the cut off time so check if you were near the qualifying times for that event. For a card meet, if you have card missing your swimmer's entry has probably been rejected for that event. For a cardless meet, accepted entries will be posted up the notice board and on the host club web site. Refunds will be given via the club for rejected entries.

Card Meets

About a week before the meet you will usually receive cards from your squad rep/coach (see later for cardless meets). They are postcard sized and often colour coded; blue for boys & pink for girls. The card will show your swimmer's name and date of birth, the stroke, distance and entry time for the event. Check all the cards to ensure that your swimmer has been entered in the correct events and that the information on the cards is correct. Speak to your squad rep/coach as soon as possible if you think there are any errors.

Make sure you bring the cards with you to the meet and arrive early enough to "post" them. They must be handed in, or "posted", at a specified time (usually the start time for warm-up) to confirm to the organisers that your swimmer will be competing. The last posting time, or box closing time, may be printed on the card but if you are not sure, double-check with your coach beforehand, to make sure you get to the pool on time. The "posting box" is usually by the entrance to the pool or near the changing rooms but may be on poolside. If you can't find the box – ask either one of the organisers, a coach or even another parent.

Do not panic if you get to the meet and find you have forgotten your cards. Report to the officials before the published box closing time and they will be able to issue replacement cards. **If cards are not posted in time a swimmer runs the risk of not being able to compete.**

Cardless meets

Some meets are cardless so you will not receive the pink and blue cards. You should take your ASA card along as you may be required to present it for identification and proof of ASA membership. These meets require your swimmer to sign against their name; “sign in” for each event. As with posting cards, signing in is required by a certain time, usually before the warm up for each session but be aware some meets have a queue to sign in. The signing in sheets are usually found by the changing rooms and have one sheet per event, printed with the entry name in alphabetical order. If you are in more than one event in the session make sure you sign in for all events in that session. Often sheets for later sessions come out during the earlier session so if your swimmer has events in the later session they can sign in early and avoid the pre warm up rush.

On the day of the Open meet

(See also ‘Swimmers Q&A’ for general advice)

Warm up is 30 minutes to an hour before the event starts and is usually separate for boys / girls and, depending on numbers; the older swimmers will often warm up after the younger ones. There is no diving initially during the warm up but towards the end of each warm up session, listen for the announcement, some lanes will be dedicated as sprint lanes where swimmers can dive in and sprint one length, getting out at the other end and walking back. The Coach may give your swimmer advice on how much warm up to do and what thing to concentrate on depending on the event they are swimming that day.

When the event starts, announcements will be made calling each event in turn. When the announcement is made for the relevant events your swimmer will be called by the Coach for a last minute talk and then sent down to the Marshalling or “Whipping” area.

The younger ones especially will want to wave to you as they go down to the Marshalling area and at this point you start to panic that they haven’t got their goggles, hat etc.

In the Marshalling area your swimmer should put their goggles on their head or push them down around their neck. If they are carrying them it is possible they will put them down or get in a “faf” at the last minute. It will also stop them chewing and biting them - goggles always snap in the whipping area never in the pool - now why would that be? They should also have their swim-cap on in plenty of time.

Swimmers will be lined up in the Marshalling area in heat order and then asked to go forward and stand behind the relevant lane. The timekeeper for the lane will ask your swimmer to confirm their name. For a card open meet your swimmers card will be handed back to them in the Marshalling area and they should hand the card to the timekeeper for their lane.

Depending on how many competitors there are in an event there can be a lot of heats and it can take absolutely ages! However your swimmers race will be over pretty quickly so be sure you don't miss it by an inappropriate moment for the loo, coffee or a snooze.

After your swimmers last event they may go home. Although it is advisable to tell the Coach, so he/she knows who is still on the poolside, your swimmer does not have to wait for the end of the event unless the Coach advises otherwise.

Results

When the races have been swum, the times of each swimmer are recorded on the computer system which produces the final result sheet after all the races for a particular event have been swum. Results sheets are displayed around the poolside for the swimmers and around the spectator area for you to read as soon as it is possible to do so.

Speeding Tickets

For some lower graded open meets there are a set of upper cut-off times (usually UQT or UQT plus a few seconds), which swimming faster than these times earns a 'speeding-ticket'. Check the small print in the gala conditions, usually found on the host clubs website, to see if there will be speeding tickets and if so whether the cut of times are UQT or above. Getting a speeding ticket means that the swimmer is not eligible for medals (and is effectively disqualified) but it is a very positive indicator of a 'good time' for that race, in that age group. So your swimmer should be reassured that a speeding-ticket is a good thing just as is a win or a placing or personal-best.

Medals

Generally medals are awarded for the top three in each stroke/age group and ribbons for 4th to 6th places. These can be collected at the event any time after the results are published.

Galas

Throughout the year the club enters teams in galas and leagues at different standards of competition. Swimmers will be selected by the club to swim in these and there are no entry fees or forms to fill in. Not participating in a Gala for which your swimmer has been chosen may jeopardise their squad place. The age groups are (usually but not always) determined as age on the 31st December of that year so your swimmer will be swimming against other swimmers of a similar age who may be faster or slower rather than swimming against other swimmers with similar times regardless of age as at Open galas. Swimmers will be told which event they will be swimming once they have arrived at poolside.

Galas and League events take place in a single evening. The races are within age groups against five other (usually local) clubs. The exact number of teams competing depends on the league and the number of lanes at the host pool.

For younger swimmers the races are generally 50m (sometimes 25m for the youngest age groups) individuals for each stroke, a Medley relay, a Freestyle relay and a Squadron relay. Swimmers may swim up an age group but may not swim down.

You must read the notice board each time you come training and regularly check the website. If you are selected to swim in a gala you must follow the instructions given on the team selection notice.

On the night

(See also 'Swimmers Q&A' for general advice)

Club transport is sometimes provided (at a charge) for further afield league galas but when it isn't you may want to share lifts or ask someone else to transport your swimmer if you cannot take them. Arrive at the host pool at the time requested on the board/sheet. The requested arrival time allows for confirmation of arrival to the Coach, changing and warm up but getting there late will worry the Coach who at some point will have to reallocate your swimmer's races. Once on poolside (although sometimes after warm up) a team sheet will be available and your swimmer will be able to read this to see which events they are swimming. Swimmers swim the stroke and distance allocated to them. There is no discussion about this as in the weeks prior to the competition a great deal of thought has gone into what stroke each swimmer should do. Relays are always swum in the order stated. The club will usually put a swimmer in just a relay race for their first experience of competition as this helps to control the inevitable 'first race nerves'. So do not be disappointed if your swimmer only does one length in the evening - it is an honour to be chosen to swim for their club.

All swimmers are expected to stay until the end of the event and to support their team mates and to congratulate the winning club and the other participating clubs.

Championships

Ages for Championships are usually "age on the last day of the meet". Entry forms can be found on the relevant web sites but will also be distributed via your squad rep /coach. Please clearly mark which events you want to enter & return the form to your squad rep/coach with the correct amount of money made payable to Wycombe District Swimming Club. It is advisable to return the form before the closing date rather than on the very last day, so that any queries can be sorted out early. If you have not got a consideration time for an event but expect to get it in an event before the championship then please speak to your swimmer's coach for advice. If you miss the closing date your swimmer will not be able to participate.

County Championships

These are the first major championships a competitive swimmer will encounter. They are held over a series of weekends in Feb/March and are similar to a Level 1 Open meet in that there are only lower consideration times. However it is not an open meet because they are only open to swimmers of clubs affiliated to the relevant County ASA which for WDSC is South Bucks and Berks ASA. In the autumn of each year, the following year's county qualification times" are published on the South Bucks and Berks ASA website. They can alter a little each year (usually getting faster), but the previous year can be used as a guide. If your swimmer is faster than the time(s) published the Club would expect your swimmer to compete. Qualifying times need to be achieved at Level 1 to 4 galas, i.e. times recorded at galas that are not registered with the ASA don't count. An added complication for County Championships is that no qualifying times are set for the youngest age groups in 100-metre

events (Girls 10 & under, Boys 11 & under) - you can enter these only if you make the relevant 200-metre entry time. Although the meets are long-course, entries require short-course times. Entry forms will be distributed via your squad rep /coach and should be returned with the relevant payment (made out to Wycombe District Swimming Club).

Regional Championships

This is the next level of Championships which are split between Age Group Championships (Boys and Girls up to 14 years old) and Youth Championships (Boys and Girls aged 15 years old and over). Both Championships are held over one or more week-ends in May and June. Clubs from the South East Region are eligible to enter swimmers for this event who have achieved regional qualification times (these are published on the South East Region website). This is a high level of competition and the club would expect swimmers obtaining these times to compete. Qualifying times need to be achieved at Level 1, 2 or 3 galas. An added complication for Regional Age Group Championships is that 10 / 11 year old boys to have a qualifying time for the 200m event to be allowed to swim 100m. For the Youth Championships there is a full set of events. Entry times are short course although the Championships will be swum in a long course pool.

National Championships

This is the top level of “age group” swimming for swimmers aged 11-14 (Age Group Championships) followed by the National Youth Championships for girls and boys of 15 and over. It is held in July and is open to all swimmers who achieve a national qualifying time. These are available from the ASA website. It is important to note that qualifying times for National Championships must have been achieved at a Level 1 or 2 meet. **If your swimmer gets this far you probably know what you are doing by then!**

Obtaining Qualification Times for Championships

Currently County times must have been achieved within 12 months of the closing date; at a licensed meet, level 1 – 4.

Both Regional and National times must be achieved from 1st Oct preceding the year of competition. Regional Times need to be achieved at licensed meets, level 1 - 3 and National Times at a licenced meet, level 1 – 2.

Swimmers Q&A

How should we prepare?

In the week before the meet, and at the end of each day of the meet, ensure that your swimmer refuels on top quality athlete’s food containing complex carbohydrates. They should also be drinking plenty of fluids, to ensure their body’s cells are fully hydrated. It can add to the nerves before a race if a swimmer is worrying about a new pair of goggles that have just been bought because their usual ones broke. Where possible swimmers should refrain from trying out new costumes or goggles for the first time in a race. It is best

for new items to be "experienced" during a training session so that any problems can be resolved ahead of the competition.

What equipment will be needed?

Swimmers usually take their bag with equipment on to pool side. However at large events many items end up in lost property or go missing so ensure everything is well marked and encourage your swimmer to put everything away in their bag when not using it especially during warm up and races. This will also have the advantage that they can find their goggles/hat quickly when they are needed for the race! To enable identification of swimmers and to have a "team" look, all swimmers are expected to wear a Wycombe District Swimming Club hat when swimming in external events. It is a good idea to bring several swimming costumes to a long meet so your swimmer can get changed after a race (if there is time) and stay warm. They should also have at least one spare (tried) pair of goggles or spare straps and clips.

Your swimmer will be in and out of the water all day, so make sure you bring more than one towel. You might find it useful to get a swimmer's chamois. It allows the swimmer to dry off most of the moisture without soaking their usual towel, and saves your laundry basket!

What clothing will be needed?

Some pools can be draughty and it is important to keep warm between events, so bring plenty of warm clothes. Club kit – Official Wycombe District Swimming Club T-Shirts must be worn, this does not include any of the variety of event specific shirts or polo shirts, such as Summer Training Camp shirts etc... Don't forget a pair of pool shoes, or flip-flops or *clean* trainers & socks, as a lot of heat can be lost through bare feet on a cold poolside. Don't forget, if they arrive in their poolside clothes, to make sure they have a dry set to go home in! It can also be useful to have a spare plastic bag for regular clothes and other belongings to keep them dry while the swim bag is on poolside.

What should the swimmer do when not swimming?

Swimmers are expected to stay on poolside during the meet. They must not leave the poolside without a coach's express permission. Coaches need to speak to swimmers during the day for either race strategy advice or to send them up for marshalling to get ready for their race. If your swimmer wants to leave poolside, even if it's just to go to the toilet, they *must* let the Coach know to ensure that they don't miss their race. The Coach has a whole team to keep track of, which can be very difficult if swimmers keep "disappearing" at crucial moments. If a swimmer leaves poolside to spend some time with parents they must get back in plenty of time for their next race, and let the Coach know they are back. After their swim it is vital that your swimmer immediately sees the Coach, swim down and then if time permits visit with you. Please do not beckon your swimmer over to the spectator area after a race to discuss/congratulate their performance. There should be no messing about in the swim down pool...it is not playtime! Swimmers should be tidy and pick up all their litter. There are usually plenty of rubbish bags and bins at meets so do encourage your swimmer to use them.

Although swimmers are encouraged to support their team-mates it can be helpful, especially for open meets, for them to bring something, such as a book, magazine or computer game, to keep them occupied during quieter moments. Do be aware that neither the club nor the venue can be held responsible for loss or damage to property so your swimmer should not bring valuables or things that can be damaged by being in a damp atmosphere.

Note that if swimmers do leave poolside, they should always dry themselves and put on shoes before visiting spectators, shops or other areas.

What should the swimmer eat and drink?

On the day of the meet your swimmer may be on poolside for the whole day, so they need to be kept well stocked with small, easily digestible snacks, rather than having large meals. It is just as important to stay well hydrated, so provide plenty of fluids and encourage your swimmer to sip often at their drink during the day. Although some venues have excellent catering facilities it is best not to rely on them, so bring a selection of food to keep your swimmer in top form throughout the day. For younger swimmers it is best to hand the food to them in small “doses” to avoid them eating it all within the first hour! To keep perishable food fresh we suggest you use a cool bag with an ice pack.

Food suggestions

- Complex carbohydrates for “grazing” throughout the day, e.g. small portions of:
- Pasta/Rice salad
- Muffins (sweet or savoury)
- Bread, Pitta bread, Bagels
- Pizza (but be careful of fatty toppings)
- Rice cakes
- Breakfast cereals or Cereal bars
- Bananas
- Popcorn
- Jacket potatoes are also suitable if available at the venue’s catering outlet.

Drinks suggestions

- Water
- Sports drinks
- Weak squash

What do I need to do?

You have to make sure that your swimmer gets an early night before the gala and arrives at the pool in plenty of time. In the rush to get your swimmer ready it can be easy to forget your own needs, so don’t forget to pack items for yourself. You might want to bring a comfortable cushion (some venues have very hard spectator seating), something to read, a pen or pencil to mark up your programme, and a separate picnic with plenty to drink. Some parents also like to bring a stopwatch but this is not essential as many venues have electronic time board and results will be printed and displayed at the venue during the sessions. It is worth noting your swimmers times for each event as DQ’s will not get an



official time recorded but praise for a PB, even with a disqualification, will help the disappointment. Then you have to be seen to be cheering, taking photos (remember spare batteries, memory sticks or film and to sign the child-protection form/ photographic register), and worrying!

How can we see the Results?

Each time the swimmer swims the results will be fed back to the Club and WDSC swimmers times will be available on our web-site under the “Members Logged Times” area. Full results of external meets will be posted on the relevant hosting clubs/championship web site. This can take a few weeks so keep checking!

Are there trophies or medals?

The medal system and their quality will vary from event to event. Please see advice on individual events for guidance on awards.

What/Where are my Personal Bests?

When the swimmer achieves a time that is better than their existing time for that stroke/distance it is recorded on the clubs PB database. The latest PBs can be found in a file on the website. PBs are recorded separately for 25m short course (SC) pools and 50m long course (LC) pools.

These PBs should be used to check against qualifying times for Open Meets and Championships. PBs achieved in events where your swimmer is not representing WDSC i.e. schools galas, can be emailed to the coach for inclusion in the PB database.

What are BAGCATS?

British Age Group Categories or BAGCat points are system of points which are awarded for different swims. When a swimmer competes in a BAGCat event, their time is converted into points that take into account a swimmer's age and sex. A swimmer can take part in as many events in a season as they choose to, but only their highest points score in each swimming category will count towards their final BAGCat total. For an event the overall position of a swimmer is the sum of the BEST point score in each of the 5 categories (50m events, 100m, FORM, Distance and IM (100IM for 9-11year olds and 200-400IM for older swimmers). It is therefore advisable to enter every category in the Age Groups if you can achieve the qualifying times. (N.B boys 11 and below and girls 10 and below don't swim the 100m individual events).

COMMON TERMS

- **Consideration or Qualification time** - the slowest entry time for a particular event that the organisers of a gala will consider.
- **DQ'd and disq.** - Abbreviation for disqualified on result sheets and time cards (See reason codes below)
- **Entry time** - The time submitted by the Club for a swimmer being entered in a gala. If entries are made well in advance, the entry time may not be the swimmers current PB
- **Form Stroke** - One of the three strokes having specific requirements (ie. 200M, Breaststroke, Butterfly or Backstroke). Freestyle is not a Form Stroke but is used for distance events, such as 200/400/800 or 1500m depending on the swimmers age and sex.
- **Heat Declared Winner (HDW)** - When no final is swum and the winner is declared on the times swum in the heats
- **Individual Medley (IM)**. The competitor swims all four strokes in the following order:
- butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke and freestyle.
- **Licensed Meets:** These are the only meets via which you can qualify for County, Regional and National competitions (see section on Licenced Meets)
- **Long Course (LC)**- Events held in a 50 m pool
- **Lower Qualification Time (LQT)**. The slowest entry time for a particular event that the organisers of a gala will consider.
- **Medley Relay** - Four swimmers each swim a different stroke. The order is always backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly and freestyle.
- **Personal Best (PB)** - A swimmer's personal best time for a given event.
- **Upper Qualification Time (UQT)**. The fastest entry time for a particular event that the organisers of a gala will consider.
- **Short Course (SC)** - Events held in a 25m pool
- **Squadron Relay** – Usually the last race of a gala. A freestyle relay consisting of one swimmer from each age group or one swimmer of each sex from each age group.

Disqualification Reasons

The following codes are built into Hy-Tek meet Manager Software; these codes are used in many open competitions.

General

- 7O False start
- 7P Declared false start
- 7Q Did not finish
- 7R Delay of meet
- 7S Entered water without permission
- 7T Interfered with another swimmer
- 7U Walking on or springing from bottom
- 7V Standing on bottom
- 7W Pulling on lane line
- 7X Finish in wrong lane
- 7Y Unsportsmanlike conduct

Backstroke

- 2I No touch at turn
- 2J Non-continuous turning action
- 2K Not on back off wall
- 2L Shoulders past vertical towards breast
- 2N Head did not break the surface by 15 metres
- 2P Toes curled over gutter after the start
- 2Q Did not finish on back

Breaststroke

- 3A Alternating Kick
- 3B Non-simultaneous kick
- 3C Downward butterfly kick
- 3D Scissors kick
- 3E Hands brought beyond the hipline during stroke
- 3F Non-simultaneous arms
- 3G Arms two strokes underwater
- 3H Arms not in same horizontal plane
- 3I Elbows recovered over water
- 3J One hand touch
- 3K No touch
- 3L Non-simultaneous touch
- 3M Shoulders not at or past vertical towards breast
- 3P Head under for 2 or more strokes
- 3Q Incomplete stroke cycle other than 1 pull - 1 kick

Butterfly

- 1A Alternating Kick
- 1B Kick breaststroke type
- 1C Scissors Kick
- 1E Non-simultaneous arms
- 1F Arms underwater recovery
- 1J One hand touch

- 1K No touch
- 1L Non-simultaneous touch
- 1M Shoulders not at or past vertical towards breast
- 1N Head did not break the surface by 15 metres

Freestyle

- 4K No touch on turn
- 4N Head did not break the surface by 15 metres

Individual Medley

- 5P Strokes out of sequence

Relay

- 61 Stroke Infraction swimmer #1
- 62 Stroke Infraction swimmer #2
- 63 Stroke Infraction swimmer #3
- 64 Stroke Infraction swimmer #4
- 66 Early take-off swimmer #2
- 67 Early take-off swimmer #3
- 68 Early take-off swimmer #4
- 6P Changed order of swimmers
- 6Q Not enough swimmers

Your Child's First Gala

Firstly remember to get there on time, being late will make your child stressed, so aim to arrive at least 15 minutes before warm up commences.

If this is a gala where your child has been selected to swim for the Club remember they are there to swim for the team. Confirm as early as possible to the team manager that your child is or is not available to swim. If later your child cannot make the gala, let the team manager know as soon as possible. Dropping out at the last minute lets the whole team down. Sometimes your child may only be selected for relays - that is part of being a team.

What should your child to bring with them?

Remember galas usually last 90 minutes or longer, unlike the time trials your child will have started out on.

- They will need a drink, ideally half a litre per hour. 2 parts water mixed with 1 part fruit juice is ideal, you don't need to waste money on expensive energy drinks.
- Something to nibble on; an energy bar, jelly babies, fruit gums or jelly cubes are ideal - not chocolate.
- A tee shirt, but not cotton as it absorbs too much water and they will get cold.
- Shorts, again not cotton.
- Flip flops, crocs or similar to put on your feet.
- 2 costumes, 2 pairs of goggles and 2 swimming hats.

- 2 towels.
- Cards, book or something else to do poolside, because it can be a long wait between races.

What should you bring with you?

- A drink and something to nibble on - it gets hot in swimming pools and catering facilities can be non-existent.
- A pen to write down your child's result and possibly a stop watch to time them - most mobile phones have a stop watch function.
- Something to do/read, as stated earlier galas can be long and dull.
- Lots of positive energy and sympathy - always look for something positive to say to your child, sometimes this is hard but with practice it can be done.

Try not to get too wound up.

Very few young children are focused, yours may be the exception but most aren't. They will forget to drink, they won't remember to do any land warm up and if you are really unlucky they may even miss their race because they are too busy chatting etc. They do get better over time and usually the coaches and older swimmers help them to remember all of these things.

Galas for Parents of more advanced swimmers.

As your children progress they will need more kit poolside.

- Warm up costume.
- 2 racing suits.
- 3 pairs of goggles and 3 hats, which they should take with them up to the starting blocks - goggles always snap just before a race, it is universal law.
- Shorts, tracksuits and woolly hats because some pools are colder than others.
- iPod / MP3 player to concentrate the mind before a swim, but make sure they give it to the coach before they swim.
- Trainers and socks because flip flops aren't good if you need to do a land warm up.
- Something more substantial to eat, more energy bars, bananas, dried fruit, energy gels.

Get involved

- Why not volunteer and get a poolside role.
- It makes the day go quicker.
- All of the officials and other helpers are unpaid and the gala wouldn't run without them. The children of many of the officials stopped swimming 20 or 30 years ago!



- Get involved in supporting gala's in different ways, providing refreshments, manning the raffle, helping at the signing in desk etc.
- If you can help with marshalling on poolside see the clubs Welfare Officer to have a CRB check, as you cannot help poolside without it
- Assisting is enjoyable and it makes the day go quicker.
- All of the officials and other helpers are unpaid and the gala wouldn't run without them. The children of many of the officials stopped swimming 20 or 30 years ago!
- You will still get to see your child swim, often from a more favourable position on poolside!