



# 10 do's and don'ts for swimming parents

When coaches, swimmers and swimming parents work well together, incredible things are possible. The team is committed and focused on helping the swimmer to realise their full potential.

For swimming parents there are a few simple dos and don'ts that can help ensure that you are guiding your child in the right way and fulfilling your all-important role.

## 1. Do be supportive – rain or shine!

Whether your child comes first or last, sets five PBs or none, you should still love and support them the same. One of your most important roles as a swimming parent is to provide emotional support during the tough times, of which there will be many. Let your child know that they are still loved, no matter how badly they think they swam. And likewise, try not to let them get cocky when they win.

## 2. Don't pressure your child

Remember that swimming is your child's hobby. If your child has their own reasons and own goals for participating, they will be far more motivated to excel and therefore far more successful. It is normal and healthy to want your child to excel and be as successful as possible, but swimming parents cannot make this happen by pressuring them with expectations. Instead, you can encourage them and offer them unconditional support and guidance.

## 3. Don't be the coach

'Coaches coach. Swimming parents parent.' Your child's coach is there to teach the technical swimming skills. You can help your child to learn values and develop positive character traits. Showing unconditional love and support, and creating a happy and balanced home environment will help them to get the most out of what they are doing in the pool.



## **4. Do encourage independence**

Confidence is the essential ingredient in all great swimming success stories. Confidence comes from knowing; knowing you can do it. Encourage your child to pack and empty their own swimming bag, to make their breakfast, to carry their swimming kit, fill their water bottles etc. This will help to create independent and self-motivated swimmers, with a strong sense of confidence, self-belief, resilience and self-reliance.

## **5. Don't dangle carrots**

Try to avoid extrinsic motivation (bribery!). It's important to be careful of the message you send out – swimmers should swim for themselves and for the positives the sport brings. When your child does well, try to praise them for what they did well, not the outcome that they achieved.

## **6. Don't criticise the officials**

The majority of officials are volunteers. Many are even swimming parents who have decided they want to help out on the poolside. Children sometimes make mistakes at meets – it happens! If your child is disqualified at a meet, try not to complain or worry. If a disqualification is questionable, as sometimes is the case, the coach (and not the parent!) will take the necessary steps.

## **7. Do respect the coach**

Trust the coach to do their job. If you have any questions about something your child's coach is doing or saying in the sessions, it is usually ok to ask. However, their attention will be on the swimmers they are coaching during session times, so try and grab a word with them before or after training. Remember that a huge number of coaching staff are giving their time voluntarily and are keen to get the best out of every one of their swimmers!

## **8. Do be loyal and supportive of the team**

Where possible emphasise the importance of being a team player. Swimmers that motivate others are often the happiest and gain the greatest benefit out of training and competition. This goes for swimming parents also. Cheer for your



own child but cheer for their teammates too. This will help to create a positive atmosphere amongst the swimmers and their supporters.

## **9. Don't make your child feel a failure**

Children develop at different rates, in terms of size, strength, coordination, emotional and intellectual maturity and just about everything else. Encourage your child to compete against themselves, and to measure themselves against only their own best efforts. If they do win and beat everyone else, it's a bonus!

## **10. Don't push for Olympic or Paralympic glory**

Maybe your child will become an Olympian, but for most this isn't the case. Encourage your child to be the best they can be and to enjoy their sport, but make sure both your and their expectations are not too set too high. It's great to have goals and dreams, but the most important thing is that they are happy. If they are happy the good performances will come naturally.