



# Guide to competitions

Competition enables our swimmers to

- Have fun.
- Put into practice what they have been learning in training.
- See how much progress they have made with direct feedback from their times
- Stretch themselves (you never swim as fast in training as you do when racing!)
- Gain a sense of achievement
- Learn to deal with pressure
- Learn from watching better swimmers.
- Improve their Personal Best times (PBs).
- Achieve qualifying times for other galas and championships
- Meet new people.
- Travel
- Represent Cookstown and be part of a team.
- Show the coach you should move up to the next squad with your fast times!
- Win!
- Capture some hardware!! – Medals, Trophies, Certificates, Speed Awards!!

Please note, that whilst we strongly encourage our swimmers to race, if your child does not feel ready or want to compete, then the club are happy for your child to swim with the team for social/fitness benefits and not stress with competition.



You will receive an email or TEAMER notification asking you to register your child's interest in a gala and after you do this, your coach will submit entries and you will receive an invoice for gala entry fees. You will be expected to provide transport for your child to and from open galas. You will also be expected to cover gala duties such as time-keeping, if required. You will be notified if transport will be arranged to interclub galas and you are expected to notify the club if you are availing of the transport and to be on time for departure.

Please refer to our Competitions calendar on our noticeboard for the list of supported events the club will be attending this season. Explanations surrounding the Type of Meet and Level of Meet are explained below:

## INTER CLUB GALA

These are events where a swimmer is invited to swim by the club coach. The swimmer represents the team and competes against other clubs. There are individual and relay races. The coach will select the best available team to compete in the galas, selection will depend on age groups and abilities required for the events – making the best choice of swimmers for the team as a whole. The number of swims a swimmer competes in will vary, and changes can be made to the team up till the last minute. These galas give swimmers an opportunity to swim as a team where they earn points for their team not individual awards. These may be fun or competitive galas or both!

## RELAY GALA

The same as Inter club galas. Swimmers will be selected to swim by the club coach. All events will be relays. (A swimmer may be asked to swim in one event or up to 6!). Swimmers may be asked to swim events that they do not normally swim in to secure points for the team.

## OPEN MEETS

Swimmers will have the opportunity to enter Open Meets throughout the year. You do not have to be selected by the team. These events are great opportunities to race over different strokes and distances. – These tend to be “low-key” events such as a friendly inter-club competition. These meets are great opportunities for first timers and novices to have a go at competing.



## DEVELOPMENT MEETS

These meets are ideal for ALL club members (Unless you are too fast and in the Regional/National Squad!). These meets run throughout the year, there is usually no lower cut off time (i.e. everyone can enter! – with the faster swimmers i.e. regional/national swimmers banned from entering as their times are too fast). Great for achieving PB's and Regional Qualifying Times and for experiencing events with a broader range of swimmers by both ages & abilities.

## QUALIFYING MEETS

These are meets that have a higher qualifying time and are focused at those who are aiming to achieve Regional and National Qualifying Times. To enter a swimming competition a swimmer must be a member of a registered swimming club and enter through their club. All swimmers must be Swim Ireland registered. (Please note you are Swim Ireland registered and assigned a number when you join the Swim Team). Your Swim Ireland number must accompany your event entry (along with estimated Swim time for each event & academy swim team race fee). Each event has a strict closing date. If entries and payment are not received by this date then the swimmer will not be entered. All entries must include your fastest swim time over the distance/stroke you have entered. If you are unsure what time to enter, please ask your coach.

Swim Ulster are developing a new initiative whereby young swimmers 9-12 must achieve a gold passport to enter future development galas from Sept 2018.

There will be 'Skills Meets' held 3 times throughout the year where the swimmer aims to achieve the lowest possible score for each skill in order to gain their 'gold passport'. The coaches will have the swimmers prepared for the skills meet so they can do their best.

At this moment in time no passport is required for open club galas and the system is still under review for qualifying criteria.



## WHAT TO BRING TO OPEN MEETS & GALAS

- Two swimming costumes/jammers – one for warm up and a separate for racing (There is often a long delay between warm up and your event – so you don't want to be sat around in a soggy wet suit!)
- Goggles and a spare pair
- Cookstown Swim Team Race Hat
- Two towels (one for pool side and one for changing)
- Swim Team Race T-Shirt
- Food to last for the time you are there
- At least 2 litres of Water/squash/suitable sports drink NO FIZZY DRINKS recommended.
- Snack foods high in carbohydrates
- Book to read, music or games console (you are RESPONSIBLE for these)

## WHAT TO EXPECT ON THE DAY – TEAM GALAS & SELECTION EVENTS

- Inter-club galas tend to be on a Saturday evening. The event generally starts around 5:00 pm and finish around 8:00 pm. You will have been informed what time to arrive at the pool, and if transport is provided or if you will need to make your own way to the venue.
- Team coaches and managers will always be present on pool-side to guide your swimmer and inform them of what events they are swimming and introduce them to the rest of the team.
- Swimmers for Relay teams and Individual events will be chosen on times and performance and the coach's decision is final.



- As a spectator you will not be allowed poolside, but will be strongly encouraged to support the team and cheer your child on with the rest of the teams' parents & supporters.

## WHAT TO EXPECT ON THE DAY – OPEN MEET

- Arrive at least 15 minutes before the warm up time so you have time to change. Swimmers will sit with the team on poolside alongside a coach (if present) and/or Team Manager.
- There are normally programmes on sale at the entry desk but sometimes you will need to print them off beforehand.
- Make sure your swimmer is with the team and knows where you are in case of emergency.
- Bring your own Pack lunch for the day it can be very hot sat watching your swimmer. Some take a cushion to sit on!
- Keep a copy of the events your swimmer has entered for your information.
- Bring note book and pen/high-lighter to record your swimmers times and PBs.
- You must stay in the designated spectators' area and not cross over into the swimmers/coach area.
  - Swimmers will sit with other team members, coach/manager or designated assistants. Swimmers must inform the coach or assistants if they need to leave the group for any reason
- Please insure your swimmer has the correct club kit
- Results will usually be posted in a central location at the open meet. It is a good idea to take a picture of the results, so you can keep a record for your swimmer. You will also be able to find the results on the web page for the club holding the meet.



# Preparation for Competition (Swimmers)

## Pre-Swimming Meet

1. Parents to know where, when and at what time the event is being held.
2. Parents/Swimmers to know what events they are entered for.
3. Parents to make sure:
  - a. Swimmer is on time for warm-up at least 20 mins before being asked to be there, and signs-in if necessary.
  - b. Swimmer has had a good breakfast before the competition
  - c. Swimmer takes poolside clothing, swim suits, club swim hat, two pairs of goggles, and two towels, and training shoes (no flip-flops!)
  - d. Swimmer takes appropriate snacks, food and water. AVOID fizzy drinks and expensive sports drinks. Water is best! Also avoid chocolate and sweets! These will make swimmers thirsty. Good foods are sandwiches, pasta, fruit, energy bars, rice cakes.
  - e. Swimmers - get a few good nights' sleep before the event!

## At the Swimming Meet

1. Find a place on the side of the pool where swimmers can leave their belongings – do not take valuables with you!
2. Warm-up well and completely and remember to do some short sprints to get used to the starting block and wall (for backstroke starts!).
3. Keep warm and wear training shoes! A lot of heat is lost thorough the feet.
4. Keep hydrated and eat small snacks. Avoid fizzy drinks (water is best) and avoid sweets, chocolate and overly salty foods.



5. Report to the Competitors Stewards in the 'Whipping/Marshalling Area' in good time before your race. Ask your coach when you should do this.
6. Focus on your swim ONLY and swim FAST!
7. Spend time working on your visualisation techniques. Prepare the way that suits you ie you may prefer to listen to some music whilst visualising your 'best' swim (the start, stroke technique, how you will feel, the turns, the finish and so on). Some swimmers like to find somewhere quiet and away from the noisy pool to practice their visualisation techniques. Discuss this with your coach for the best strategy!
8. Support fellow team mates – they will really appreciate this.
9. Plan with your coach how you are going to swim your race!
10. Swimmers should warm-down in a separate pool if it is available – swim gently but for a good 10 – 15 mins.
11. Return to side of pool as soon as possible and wait for next race.

### Post Competition

1. Eat some carbohydrate type food after the swimming competition e.g banana, cereal bar, flavoured milk, yoghurts, raisins, nuts.
2. Analyse each swim and report this to your Coach as soon as possible.
  - a. What was the best swim – why?
  - b. What was the poorest swim – why?
  - c. What have you learned from this swim meet?
  - d. Parents contact Coach with any queries a day or so after the event

### Helpful Hints:

1. Be personally responsible for your warm-up, your swim, drinking water, eating and looking after your personal belongings.



2. Don't over-react if you are unhappy about your swim or 'beat yourself up' with negative comments. Focus on taking care of yourself and then help others on the team. There will be others more nervous than you.
3. Pay attention! Report for your race on time and know which events you are swimming in. Don't miss any event!
4. RACE to the best of your ability and strive to swim the best time you can with the best technique.
5. ENJOY the whole competition experience – if approached in the right way you will look back on some very happy memories of your time in swimming races.
6. Develop a winning attitude by being the best you can be and learning how to be 'grown-up'.
7. If you swim well, develop a modest reaction; if you do not swim well demonstrate a good level of maturity and sportsmanship.
8. Do not be afraid to ask questions! Your Coaches and other teammates are there to help you. Poolside officials are there to help too.
9. Try to make a note of the times you swim and keep this information for your personal development swimming diary. Successful athletes make a habit of recording how they have performed. ASK your Coach for results from the swim meet or check the hosting club's website.

## **Preparation for Competition – A parents/careers guide**

The aim of the swimming competition experience is to be a happy one for your son/daughter and in this respect parents/carers play a very valuable part in helping to meet this aim. The most successful swimmers are often the ones who have very supportive parents/carers, who have the desire to see their children do their best and enjoy the competition experience. Your son/daughter will really appreciate you being there to cheer them (and their friends!) on so please





remember that their positive experiences will last them a lifetime. This guide is to help parents with a few helpful hints when preparing their son/daughter for a swimming competition. The list is not exhaustive so please consult the club coach for any additional help that you may require. Please remember that you will play a very important role in helping to get the best out of your son/daughter on the day of the competition. Young swimmers and parents alike can be apprehensive beforehand (it's very normal!) but here are a few tried and tested tips to assist with the competition preparation process:

### Pre-competition:

1. Turn up to regular training sessions. The groundwork has to be completed first and coaches need to prepare each swimmer for each race to the best of the swimmer's ability.
2. Parents to know where, when and at what time the event is being held.
3. Parents/Swimmers to know what events they are entered for.
4. Swimmers - get a few good nights' sleep before the event.
5. Follow a sensible well balanced diet with plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables. Swimming competitions use up a lot of the body's stored energy so high carbohydrate foods such as pasta, potatoes, rice and bread (brown) are very good to have a few days before the swim meet.

### On race day

Parents/carers - please make sure:

- Swimmer is on time for their warm-up at least 20 mins before being asked to be there, and signs-in at the check-in desk if necessary and that swimmers they have all their swimming kit with spares if possible!
- Swimmer has had a good breakfast before the competition (cereal, toast, fruit, juices – please avoid fatty foods!). Snacks and drinks (water NOT fizzy!) can be taken to the competition. Eat and drink 'little and often' is the best advice.
- Swimmer takes poolside clothing, swim suits, club swim hat, two pairs of goggles, and two towels, and training shoes (no flip-flops!)



- Swimmer takes appropriate snacks, food and water. AVOID fizzy drinks and expensive sports drinks. Water is best! Also avoid chocolate and sweets! These will make swimmers more thirsty. Good foods are sandwiches, pasta, fruit, energy bars, rice cakes.
- You don't coach! The best approach is to encourage your son/daughter to swim the best they can and to enjoy the competition! The club coach will decide how best to race each event. Let the coach, coach during the competition. Please ask questions after the competition. The Coach is INCREDIBLY busy at the competition...and is emotional about the "good things and bad things" just like you are. On competition day is not a good time for a reasonable conversation. (Usually.)
- You avoid taking it out on the officials. They are volunteers, nice people and the coach will question anything that needs questioning.
- You avoid taking it out on the coaches! They are only trying to do their very best on the day. The coach has a passion to see your son/daughter do the best they can and feels every swimmer's disappointment as if it were their own child.
- You let your son/daughter have the experience. Don't hold their hand. If they need help they can ask their coach or a teammate, (not you) to help them. That's what coaches/teammates are for.
- For your own comfort – bring an additional chair if you need to sit outside (subject to the weather!)and something to read or do. Swim competitions are a great test for our boredom threshold all the time your child isn't swimming. Keep yourself hydrated – swimming pools are notoriously hot places!
- You are an encourager! Your child will really appreciate this, particularly if they feel that they have not performed to the best of their ability. Children who are encouraged and not criticised develop into more successful and confident people.
- That winning is not the 'be-all and end-all' and not everyone can be awarded first place. Coaches (and you) should encourage swimmers to swim the best they can on the day and more often than not, a personal best time is a fantastic personal achievement and can mean so much to a swimmer.
- If your son/daughter swims well e.g. by swimming a personal best time– treat them to something special (small) after the competition (it doesn't have to be a holiday to Disneyworld!) This places value on their effort and re-enforces positive feedback on their achievements.
- Generate positive conversation at the end of the competition about the racing/event/venue/funny things that have happened etc or on the way



home (unless your son/daughter is fast asleep from the day's efforts!). Please resist the temptation to coach your son/daughter and also avoid 'post-race' phrases such as 'you could have', 'you should have' 'why didn't you do this?' etc. Above all, young swimmers need heaps of encouragement and experience happy competitions. In this way they are more likely to stay participating in the sport of swimming.

Thank you Parents/Carers – your support is VERY much appreciated!!

## **Frequently used swimming acronyms and competition terminology**

ASC: Amateur Swim Club

Age Group: Division of swimmers according to age, usually in one or two year bands.

Anchor: The final swimmer in a relay.

Blocks: The starting platforms which are located behind each lane.

Closing Date: The last date when entries into a competition have to be received by the club in order to send them to the Meet Organiser. Entries will not be accepted after the closing date.

Course: The length of pool: Long Course = 50 metres / Short Course = 25 metres.

Disqualified: The swimmers performance in an event is not counted because they breached the rules.

Distances: • Short Courses Distances 25 metres = 1 length 50 metres = 2 lengths 100 metres = 4 lengths 200 metres = 8 lengths 400 metres = 10 lengths 800 metres = 32 lengths 1500 metres = 60 lengths • Long Course Distances 50



metres = 1 length 100 metres = 2 lengths 200 metres = 4 lengths 400 metres = 8 lengths 800 metres = 16 lengths 1500 metres = 30 lengths

**Electronic Timing:** A timing system that is operated electronically which normally has touch pads in the water that hook up to a computer and records the swimmers split and finish times when they touch the pad.

**Eligible to compete:** The status of a member swimmer that means they are registered with Swim Ireland/Ulster and have met all the entry requirements.

**Entry Fees:** The amount per event a swimmer or relay is charged. This varies depending on the type of meet.

**Entry Limit:** Normally meets have a maximum number of swimmers they can accept for each race.

**Event:** A race.

**FINA:** Federation Internationale de National de Amateur, the international governing body of competitive swimming, diving, water polo and synchronized swimming.

**False start:** When a swimmer leaves the starting block or moves on the block before the starter has started the race. The swimmer will be disqualified for making a false start.

**Faulty Start:** When a swimmer or swimmers leave the starting block because of an error of an official or failure of the starting equipment.

**Final:** The championship final of an event in which the fastest eight swimmers from the heats or semi-finals compete. **HDW:** means heat declare winner and there will be no final but the winner is the swimmer who swam the fastest heat

**Fins:** Rubber training fins worn on the feet designed to help develop kick and ankle flexibility.

**Flags:** The flags that are suspended over the width of each end of the pool. These are designed to assist backstroke swimmers to determine how far away the end of the pool is.

**Free:** Freestyle is a category of stroke defined by the FINA rules, in which competitors are subject to only limited restrictions on their swimming stroke.



(In other words, they have great freedom with respect to their swimming style.) The stroke used almost universally in freestyle races is the front crawl, as this style is generally the fastest.

**Gala:** This is a team event, where swimmers compete for their club against other clubs.

**Gallery:** The spectator viewing area.

**Goals:** Short, Medium and Long term targets for the swimmers to aim for.

**Heats:** When an event has too many swimmers to allow them to all compete at the same time. The swimmers are split into heats and then the overall results for the event are given after all heats of the event are finished.

**IM:** Individual Medley, The swimmer uses all four competitive strokes in the order: butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke and freestyle.

**Kick Board:** A flotation device used by swimmers during training when swimming with legs only.

**Kick:** The leg movements of a swimmer.

**Late Entries:** Meet entries from a club or individual which are received by the meet host after the entry deadline. These entries are usually not accepted and are returned to sender.

**Leg:** The part of a relay event swum by a single team member.

**Log Book:** A personal log book kept by the swimmer including information on training sessions and personal best times.

**Long Course (LC):** Used in competitions where the pool is 50m long also known as "Olympic size" times are slower than in SC pools (generally due to lack of turns) times can be adjusted accordingly using a conversion chart.

**Marks:** The command to take your starting position.

**Meet:** A series of events/races held in one programme that an individual enters. Generally they are "one-off" competitions and are hosted by swimming clubs.



**NTR:** No Time Recorded. The abbreviation used on a heat sheet to show that the swimmers time was not officially recorded.

**Nationals:** Swim Ireland senior, junior and age group meets conducted each year.

**Novice:** A beginner or someone who does not have experience.

**OT Official Time:** The swimmers event time recorded to one hundredth of a second (.01).

**Official:** A judge on the poolside. The judges have a variety of roles, including an official starter and also lane judges monitor the swimmer's strokes, turns and finishes.

**Open Competition:** Meet Competition which any qualified club, organisation, or individual may enter.

**Over the Top Start:** At some meets to save time, swimmers will remain in the water after their event until the next race starts. This can happen for Front Crawl (Freestyle), Breaststroke and Butterfly races.

**PB Personal Best:** The best time a swimmer has done so far in each stroke and distance.

**Pace Clock:** The large clock at the end of the pool so the swimmers can check their times during warm-ups or swim practice.

**Paddles:** Hand paddles are devices worn by swimmers during training. They consist of a curved plastic plate worn over the swimmer's palm and attached over the back of the swimmer's hand with elastic cords. The plate is often perforated with a pattern of holes. These give the swimmer considerably more forward propulsion from the arm stroke than the hand can give alone.

**Pull Buoy:** A pull buoy or leg float is a figure-eight shaped piece of foam used in training. Swimmers place the buoy between the legs – either between their thighs or their ankles to provide support to the body without kicking the legs. This allows the swimmer to focus on training only their arms and developing both endurance and upper body strength.



**Qualifying Time:** Times Published times necessary to enter most Open Meets, regional and National competitions. Some competitions will have upper and lower qualifying times.

- **Upper Qualifying Time (UQT)** – this is the fastest time a swimmer can be enter a specific race. Anyone with a faster time cannot enter.
- **Lower Qualifying Time (LQT)** – this is the slowest time a swimmer can be enter a specific race. Anyone with a slower time cannot enter.

**Referee:** The head official at a swim meet.

**Relays:** A swimming event in which 4 swimmers participate as a relay team and each swimmer swims an equal distance of the race

**Seed:** The swimmers are assigned heats and lanes according to their submitted PB times.

**Senior Meet:** A meet that is for senior level swimmers and is not divided into age groups. Qualification times are usually necessary and will vary depending on the level of the meet.

**Set:** Swim workouts are divided up into sets of swims in a particular stroke, style, and distance, such as kick sets, pull sets, Distance sets, sprint sets, IM sets, etc. Sets are given in terms of the distance to be swum, calculated in metres.

**Short Course:** A 25 metre pool.

**Split Time:** A swimmer's intermediate time in a race. Splits are registered every 25 or 50 metres depending upon the distance of the race and are used to determine if the swimmer is swimming at the correct pace.

**Step-Down:** The command given by the Starter or Referee to have the swimmers step down and move off the blocks.

**Submitted Time:** Times used to enter swimmers in meets. These times must normally have been achieved by the swimmer at a prior meets.

**Swim Ireland Number** Each swimmer has a unique number they are given when they join the swim club. This number is needed for entry forms and ranking purposes.



**Time Trials:** An event or series of events where a swimmer records their times in order to improve on personal best times and achieve qualifying times for entry to events.

**Touch Pad:** The removable plate (on the end of pools) which is connected to an automatic timing system. A swimmer must firmly touch the touch pad for it to register their official time in a race