

## A Beginner's Guide to Summer Swim Meets

Swim meets should be a fun experience and often become stressful, especially if you're new to the sport and this is your first time.

Here's a few tips and pointers for keeping these summer league meets fun for the whole family.

- 1) **Circuit meets** typically last 3 to 4 hours depending on who is hosting and how many swimmers sign up. The first meet of the season is always slower because it's the first experience for young swimmers and there are lots of stoppages.

**The regional meet** is four sessions split up by age group. Each session lasts as long as a circuit meet. This has little effect on your experience. The coaches, however, will be very tired on Monday and we'll probably not have practice.

**TIP:** It doesn't hurt to pack a cooler with snacks and drinks for an all-day event. If you have brothers and sisters attending, distracting games and other activities are helpful because they *will be* bored.

- 2) **Event Venues vary.** Here's a quick description of each venue for the season:

- **Flowermound Activity Center:** It's an indoor pool with very little deck space and an outdoor area.

**TIP:** Show up early to pick a decent spot. Pack a pop-up tent or an actual tent, lawn chairs, cooler, ice packs drinks etc. Head inside for your child's events then back to your area to relax between events. **Make sure you stay aware of what event numbers are staging.**

- **Ridglea:** An older outdoor pool on a ridge with little covered areas.

**TIP:** Pop up tents or actual tents are a necessity. Bring the big cooler and lots of SPF 30. The pool is setup like an L. The competition pool is perpendicular to a larger open area. You can always bring your suit for a dip to cool off. Otherwise, it's a fun meet.

- **Grapevine:** Home meet! You know the area. It's on a Friday evening.

**IMPORTANT:** The big thing here is that we need **VOLUNTEERS!** If you're new to the sport, *please* don't shy away from helping. You'll be old hat by the end of June, and we will need all the help we can get.

**Flowermound:** See #1

- 3) **What to do on the day of:**

- Show up early. Especially if you're looking to setup a tent
- Make sure the kids get a good night sleep and a full meal the night before with proteins and lots of colorful greens for carbohydrates. My favorite is pizza...that's a vegetable, right? (avoid dairy, or anything too heavy; fruit, granola bars etc. are preferred.) **Rather than try to eat one big meal, swimmers snack constantly on race days**

- **Report to your coach!** The coaches will be seated next to the pool deck. The swimmers should come and check in with coaches right away while the family is setting up.
  - **Heat Sheets:** Buy a heat sheet. They tell you what events, heats and lanes the kids are swimming in. Coaches will have heat sheets and will write the kids event, heat and lane **in that order** on their arms in Sharpie (rubbing alcohol or hand sanitizer removes it). Their arms look like this 19-3-8 --- Which would mean they're in event 19, heat 3, lane 8
  - **Ready Bench:** This is the staging area and is used mostly for younger or inexperienced swimmers to make sure everybody is where they need to be. The ready bench managers will call for specific event numbers. Once the kids' event is called, they bring their cap, goggles, water bottle to the ready bench and report to the managers and tell them their name. They'll make sure they get to the blocks appropriately. If they don't, **let me know.**
  - **Starting Procedures:** This helps if you want to practice (and is why we've been doing trials at practice with 10 & Unders; it's not so much about the times, but the process. You'll see what I mean at the first meet and will know which teams prepped.)
    - (a) Line up behind the blocks, caps on, goggles ready
    - (b) The started will blow five fast whistles – this signals the beginning of a new heat
    - (c) Call for event/heat – the starter will state the full title for the first heat of a new event “Girls 9-10 50-yard freestyle. Heat one.” For the first heat and then just state the heat number afterwards.
    - (d) One long whistle – this is the cue to step on the blocks or to the side of the pull and into starting position
    - (e) “Take your mark” – Assume starting positions
    - (f) “Beep!” - GO! That's your cue to cheer loud enough that they might hear you underwater 😊
    - (g) After the race they should report directly to their coaches for feedback and their times. The little ones will usually go straight to family, please redirect them to the coaches.
- 4) **Race Tips:** Swimming is about personal improvement more so than winning a heat or an event. I won a gold at state for swimming 4 seconds slower than my best and that gold is a reminder of my lackluster performance. It means very little. My favorite meets are when I break my records and hit my personal goals. Please praise the swimmers' efforts and their improvements and remind them that they're racing the clock first. The swimmers in the lanes next to them are motivation to go faster. Think of them as partners. If they happen to win on top of that, well that feels pretty good too! (And please understand this is coming from an *incredibly* competitive person. With younger swimmers, though, this should be about learning to love the experience, rather than winning a race. Plus, you can win a heat and end up 40<sup>th</sup>)
- 5) **Results & Ribbons:** Results are posted to the Gators website usually by the next day if not sooner (depending on the host). First through sixth overall for each event earn ribbons (medals at regionals). Ribbons are distributed at practice. We tend to end up with uncollected ribbons so please check the results
- 6) **Regionals & State:** Top 5 or 6 overall at Regionals qualify for state (varies by participation) 15 & over automatically qualify to participate in state but **must** swim at regionals to be eligible.