

Swim Meets 101

- **Before the 1st day of the meet!**
 - Check what events you are swimming on each day!
 - Entries are posted at the bulletin board by the pool, and there are links to them in the latest newsletter and at the website (www.gwinnettaquatics.com). It is the swimmer's responsibility to check his/her entries before the day of the meet!!!

- **Day of the Meet**
 - Arrive at the venue at least 20min before the posted warm-up start time!
 - Warm-up times are sent with the latest newsletter. Again, it is the swimmer's responsibility to arrive at the venue on time!
 - **10min before the beginning of warm-up: line up for active stretching.** We will stretch behind the blocks when possible; when there is not enough space available behind the blocks, look for the coaches (we'll be finding a proper area for stretching).
 - Warm-up
 - Keep in mind what events you are swimming
 - Work on a few details that might feel different from one pool to another (stroke count for backstroke finishes and turns, etc).
 - Warm-up will end with a team cheer!
 - During the Meet:
 1. **Talk to your coach before each one of your races!**
 2. If you have more than 30min between warm-up and your first race, you'll need to do another, shorter warm-up! This is also the case when you have more than 30min between races. It's not a bad idea to talk to your coach about the race before warming-up (he/she might tell you to work on something for that race you can also rehearse during your warm-up). Example of a pre-race warm-up:
 - 150-250 straight swim, doing some breath control (B3/B5)
 - Kicking - you need to warm-up your legs! - either 4x50s kick or 4:00 of wall kicking, alternating EZ and FAST
 - Drill/Swim - drill some of the stroke you are about to race, and work on efficiency when doing the swims. For BR and BK, it's also a good idea to work on the speed of your hands!
 - Breakouts! A couple 25s with great breakout speed, then loosen the rest of the way
 3. **RACE!** Give it your best, most honest effort, and when you touch the wall feel like that was the best you could do on that day.
 4. **Warm-down.** This is a crucial part of the meet! In order to be able to continue racing during that day, and on the next day as well, you must be taking care of your body! Remember, you put a lot of time and effort into your swimming up to this point, so don't shoot yourself in the foot by being lazy about warming down! Example of a warm-down
 - 100 EZ, loosening up and regaining control of your breath
 - 4-6x50 at 75-80% effort! It is important to swim at a faster speed, to continue to blood flow to your muscles. That will deliver nutrients and remove by-products, keeping them good to go for the rest of the meet! Put these on a relatively challenging interval (0:45 - 0:55), and swim them trying to get 5-10sec rest!
 - Kicking: again, it is important to keep a good blood flow to your legs. They have a large percentage of slow twitch muscles, and

those help with the recovery process! Do either 3-4x50 kick, or another 2:00 to 4:00 of wall kicking, alternating EZ and FAST

- A little more loosen swim. It is important to continue moving until you feel like you are ready to race again, right away! If you are still huffing and puffing, and feeling tired from the race, that means you should continue cooling down!
 - If you have less than 20min between the end of your warm-down and your next race, you will not be warming-up again. That being said, it is a good idea to do some drills and breakouts preparing for your next race (of the stroke you will be racing next).
5. **Talk to your coach after each one of your swims!** Remember, the main purpose of each meet is to learn!!! Coaches are there to help facilitate your learning process, and they will critique your races with you. There is only one flaw in all this: for it to work, you need to go talk to your coach (and listen to what he/she says)!!!
 6. **Repeat steps 1-5 until you are done with all your races!** After your last race, you'll need a longer warm-down! You should do at least 2x as much as you have been doing for all your other races. This is important to really loosen up your muscles and make sure they are ready to go for another day of competition, or your next practice!
 7. **The golden hour:** once you are done competing and cooling down, your body will be ready to replenish your energy stores. Studies have shown that the 60min following exercise is the optimal time to eat carbohydrate-rich foods and drinks, since during this time the muscles will absorb the most nutrients and glycogen (energy stored on the muscles and liver) will be replaced most efficiently! Taking advantage of the golden hour is important after every meet, but even more so when swimming at a multi-day, prelims-finals meet, since the faster energy storages are refueled, the better the swimmer will perform in finals and on subsequent days! **Note:** keep in mind, the golden hour also applies following practices, so it is a good idea to have a healthy carbohydrate-rich snack (fruits!) ready to eat on the commute back home after practice!

Other important things to remember:

- **Hydration!** It is important to make sure you are constantly taking sips of a drink (water preferably, maybe some Gatorade as well). If you wait until you feel thirsty to drink, you are already dehydrated!!!
- **Food:** you will not need a lot of food to get you through a 3-4h session. In fact, eating a lot will take energy away from your muscles to be used for digestion. Chose an easily digestible food (low in fat, rich in carbohydrates) and take small bites of it at a time.
- **NO Candy or Sodas!!!** Candy will get you hyper, and that energy will be dispersed instead of used during a race! The same is true for sodas, and the carbonation of those will also cause additional discomfort for your races!
- **Have fun!** Meets are, according to most swimmers, the best part of swimming! Enjoy your teammates' and friends' company, all while focused and engaged to make you better!
- **Recap:** want to continue improving? Take some time to think about the lessons you learned at the meet. If you made mistakes, start making a focused effort in practice to correct those. Everyone makes mistakes, and there is always room for improvement. The fastest way to improve is to learn from your mistakes: figure out what the correction is, and start working on that!