



BEING A COMPETITIVE SWIMMER - a guide for swimmers and parents

GALAS/MEETS

When you join the club, you will see on the board that we have a fixture list, with different galas (also known as meets) throughout the year. Most of these are galas that the whole club is involved in, but there are others that can be entered in the local area- a list these are available via a link from the Swim England website (https://www.swimmingresults.org/licensed_meets). When a gala is coming up we normally send out information to swimmers who have been selected by the coaching staff to swim. This will give you detailed information about the timing and nature of the gala. Currently, the club competes in the Nuneaton Junior league (Diddy league) - this is a series of 3 galas run between April and June and is for swimmers up to the age of 12. We also participate in the Division 3 of the Crusader league - again a series of 3 galas between January and June open to swimmers of all ages (10U, 12U, 14U and open).

We have our own Club Championships usually in November - recently a ruling has come in that such championships must be licensed (see below). A licensed event involves lots of organisation and volunteers and thus it is likely that in the future these championships will be held at a different local pool so that we can join with another club to achieve the necessary requirements. Below is a little information to give you an insight into the different levels of competitions that you may come across.

GRADING OF GALAS

Galas are graded to suit swimmers of different abilities, and the fixture list can appear to be confusing at first glance. The different types of meets are detailed below, and also indicated are the criteria and constraints, which relate to the licensing of meets. There are four levels of licensed meets.

Qualifying Times and Upper Cut Off Times: Most meets will have qualifying times and some meets will have Upper Cut Off Times. A swimmer has to be able to swim faster than the Qualifying Time to be able to enter a meet. Likewise if a swimmer has achieved a time faster than the Upper Cut Off time he will be unable to enter the meet. You will see these referred to on the entry packs as QT's (Qualifying Times) and CT's (Cut off Times -sometimes referred to as upper time limits or UCT's).

Level 4 licensed meet

Meets generally include Club Championships, Swimming Leagues, and Development Meets. These meets are ideal for the younger swimmers, they may sometimes require entry times but are an ideal opportunity for your first competition, which should not be missed. County Qualifying times can be obtained at these meets.

Level 3 licensed meet

Again, these meets are ideal for younger swimmers and will often require qualifying times, and will have upper qualifying times. Times obtained in these meets can be used to achieve County and Regional Qualifying time.

Level 2 licensed meet

These meets are high level meets and intended for more experienced swimmers (Usually Regional Development/ Performance). As with Level 3 meets, they will require qualifying times, which are generally faster than those for a Level 3 meet. These meets are always swum in a Short course (SC) pool which is 25 metres.

Times obtained in these meets can be used for Regional Qualification, and times swum can be used for entry in National Competitions.

Level 1 licensed meet

These meets are the highest level of licensed meet, and are intended for British, ASA and Welsh Qualification. Times are also accepted for Regional Qualification. These are always swum in a Long Course (LC) 50m pool. Qualifying times will apply to these meets and there will be no upper cut off times. These meets are mainly intended for the Regional Development + Performance (Those who qualify).

County, Regional and National meets

The County, Regional and National competitions are where you compete against the best in Shropshire County, Midlands Region and the Country. To enter these competitions you must have achieved the qualifying times at a licensed meet for the event for your age as of 31st December. These times are available on the Shropshire ASA website (<https://www.shropshire-asa.com>). Counties are held in January, Regionals in May and June and the National Championships in July. The qualification times are published for each year. There is an 'age on' date for the championships, usually the last day of the Champs - it is this age time which your swimmer will need to achieve, not necessarily their age when they are racing. These championships often represent the pathway of goals for swimmers, as they start competing that first goal is often the first county time!

Who's who on the pooldeck?

To run a gala you require a lot of volunteers, the majority are parents of swimmers, but some continue to support swimming once their children have moved on to uni etc. There are those in white - these are the officials who have been trained and watch the swimmers to ensure a fair race for all (if you ever have a query about a race please speak to the coach - who can then speak to the referee for clarification). The people in blue - are the marshalls who 'herd' the swimmers into their correct heat & lane position. There are many other roles too from announcing, refreshments & being on the door just to name a few. Our volunteers are like one big family and they are always willing to help.

Personal Best Times (PBs)

The coaching team will endeavour to identify swimmers that have qualified for the County championships, but you can also help by keeping an up to date record of your personal best times (PBs) and comparing these to the published qualifying times. If you're unsure of your times click on link for all your recorded licenced times.

<https://www.swimmingresults.org/individualbest/>

YOUR FIRST GALA

If it is your first gala - don't worry or panic. The Coaches will be there to guide you through the event and help you all they can. Any problems - just ask.

It is a good idea to have packed your bag the night before you swim with everything you might need. Here is a checklist, which should be useful to you (no glass bottles or any other breakable items).

- At least 2 swimming costumes (1 for warm-up / Dry 1 for competition)
- Goggles plus a spare pair
- Club Swim Hat and a spare
- 2 Towels
- Club T shirt
- Clothes to keep your body heat in on the poolside - Shirt, Shorts or Tracksuit bottoms, Hoodie etc
- Food of sufficient quantity to last the day or evening (No Nuts please)
- Money in case of emergency
- Something to occupy yourself on poolside EG: books etc
- A suitable drink - at least two litres plus - for a whole day

.
***** Please ensure that your name is on all items *****

Arrival at a Swimming Gala

When you arrive at a swimming pool for the Gala, make sure you do so in plenty of time (at least 30 minutes before your warm-up time). Report to the head coach or person in charge if you have not travelled on the team coach. For each team gala there will be a changing room chaperone (usually one of the older swimmers) for both boys and girls. You will be told who this is - make sure that you know who they are and if you have any problems please ask them -they are all swimmers so know how you will be feeling.

Once you have been told to go and get changed, ensure that you take all your belongings on to poolside in one bag for the event. Familiarise yourself with where the toilets are.

Warm up

Check with the Coach or Team Manager which warm-up is yours and be on time for it. Ensure that you have your hat and goggles on ready to enter the water. When you warm up make sure you get the most out of it - this is an opportunity for you to familiarise yourself with the pool. Don't stop and talk to your friends, as you will have plenty of time to do this throughout the day. Your Coach will

advise-what warm up to do, but also ask what strokes you will be swimming, and ensure you practice the appropriate stroke technique and turns. If you have any questions about specific techniques or rules, then please just ask one of the coaches or helpers. There will also be an opportunity to practice your starts during the warm up. You must keep going and warm up your muscles properly to avoid injury.

Race

Simply do your best!

Remember the starters signals: Series short sharp whistles means get ready
Long whistle means stand onto block
Starter says: "Take your marks"
Followed by starting sound.

At the end of race: wait for all competitors to complete the race before leaving the pool

After the Race - Go and see the coach or person in charge first. The coach will tell you how you did and what you can do to improve next time.

Cheering for Others

Do not expect others to cheer for you if you do not cheer for them. There is nothing better to improve your performance than seeing others do well. Don't just sit down and stare into space - enjoy yourself. At some meets you'll be allowed to stand at the turn end to cheer swimmers on, just check on the day.

Important rules (see also ASA code of conduct for swimmers contained in Wavepower)

1. DO NOT leave poolside at any time as the coaches are responsible for you during the event.
2. If your parents are there, please ask the coach for permission to leave the building with them after your last race if you are not travelling back on the team bus.
3. It is a good thing to cheer others who are swimming from your Club.
4. You are representing the whole club at a gala and remember that some swimmers may be younger than you so please behave appropriately.
5. Swimmers are expected to sit with the team and not with parents in the spectator area.
6. Parents are not allowed on poolside at ANY time during a competition unless helping the coaching team.

7. DO NOT leave the poolside to get changed after you have finished your events. Speak to your Head Coach first.

NUTRITION

Swimming workouts help you perfect your technique and endurance, which will improve your performance. With training and dry land exercises, strength will increase which will also contribute to improved performance. The benefits of good nutrition are not as easily seen, as are the results from conditioning and training. However, nutrition can be the weak link in keeping you from reaching and fulfilling your potential, or it can be a factor that enhances your performances at a swim meet. The nutrition programme should involve a plan for what to eat before, during and after a swim meet. Eating meals high in carbohydrates 48hrs prior to an event is recommended for high energy levels for competition. Examples include pasta, bread and potatoes.

Before the Competition

Nervous tension is usually part of any swimming competition. Your stomach feels unsettled and eating is not attractive at the time. Stress and tension cause a decrease in your blood flow to your stomach and small intestine, slowing down activity and increasing the acid levels in your stomach. This may be likened to butterflies in your stomach, or that it is tied in knots. Since individuals have different feelings and reactions to the same food, it is difficult to issue a specific menu. However, there are some general guidelines to follow

- Choose food that is high in carbohydrates since the stomach can break this down quite easily and readily (potatoes, breads, cereal, rice etc). It is strongly recommended that chips, potato crisps or any fried food are not included in your diet before a meet.
- Choose foods that are low in fat and protein. Avoid bacon, sugary cereals, croissants, too much butter or margarine.
- Choose fresh fruit, canned fruits in their own juice and dried fruits like raisins, figs, apples and apricots.
- Drink water. It is absolutely vital for maximal performance because dehydration causes fatigue, drowsiness and muscle cramps. Drink approximately one cup of water every hour before you race and sip water between races. Water or diluted squash for optimal performance. Do not drink fizzy drinks.
- Try to eat a small meal 2 to 4 hours before a swim meet so as to have an empty stomach when competing. Avoid greasy foods as your stomach cannot break down the fat fast enough and there will still be food in your stomach when competing.

During the Competition

- During the competition, the main aim is to stay hydrated and maintain energy levels.
- Over the hours at a meet, you need to supply energy from carbohydrates to maintain energy stores required. Foods such as muffins, fruit bread, small sandwiches, bagels, pasta, fresh fruit, canned fruit in its own juices and dried fruit can replenish energy supplies.
- Foods like chips, cheese, fizzy drinks, doughnuts and sweets go against what your body requires. Salt reduces water levels in the body during the meet. Fizzy drinks, coffee and tea contain caffeine, which dehydrate the body.
- Evening Galas only require drinks and a couple of small snacks (cereals bars, Fruit) - no sweets

After the Competition

After the meet it is very important to eat properly. You have to replace the fluid lost during the meet, and you must replace the carbohydrates or glycogen stored in your muscles and liver. Remember, if you don't replace your energy stores you will feel like nothing on earth when you get up the next day to continue racing or getting back in the training pool. Eat your way to a great meet!

Please remember we operate a No Nut Policy.

PARENT INFORMATION

Competitive swimming provides many benefits to young children. They develop self-discipline, good sportsmanship and time management skills amongst others. Competition allows the swimmer to experience success and how to learn to deal with defeat, whilst becoming physically fit and healthy.

As a parent, your role is to provide a stable, loving and supportive environment that will encourage your child. Show your interest by ensuring your child's attendance at training sessions and by coming to swim meets.

The running of the club doesn't happen by magic-everyone is a volunteer. Parents are involved in the coaching, committee, organisation, officiating and generally helping out. They are all volunteers, so please consider helping in some small way if you can. Please speak to any of the club volunteers.

The most important part of your child's swimming experience is that they continue their enjoyment of the sport.

Try to avoid responding to a bad result or mistake with punishment or criticism. Give your child some time to work out for him/herself why things went wrong. If they ask your advice, first compliment them for something he or she did right, then give advice emphasising the positive results first. Follow this up by highlighting the necessary areas for improvement and why, chat to any of the coaches if necessary about this.

Naturally parents are interested and want to help out as much as possible. Indeed in many cases the support and interest of one or more parent is crucial to a child's participation. Avoid becoming over involved and inadvertently putting pressure on the child to train harder than they should, or to win at the expense of enjoying taking part in swim meets.

Watching your child can be an emotionally draining experience. However, you may be taking your child's sport more seriously than he or she is. Of course most parents are only trying to help. It is important that the young swimmer learns to see training and competition not as a threat, but as an enjoyable challenge. It is very important the child knows that effort as well as success will be rewarded.

General gala information for parents:

- ❖ Take plenty of change for car parking - be prepared to pay up to £10.00 parking per day at some events
- ❖ Be prepared to pay anything up to £7.00 per day per adult entry fee at some events. You will also be asked to buy a programme and raffle

tickets. It is recommended that you purchase a programme as you can follow the event and see when your child is competing. If there is a group of you this can be shared.

- ❖ Take a packed lunch if you can, food at the Galas can be quite expensive and dull.
- ❖ Take some kind of entertainment such as a book, ipod etc.
- ❖ Try to leave little ones at home with a relative if you can, especially if you are at the event all day or in some cases all weekend, there is a lot of waiting around and it can get boring.
- ❖ It gets hot in the viewing areas of Galas so dress accordingly.

The coaches will play an important role in your child's general development. Do remember to respect the Coach's opinions and decisions. All of our coaches are qualified to ASA level 1 and 2 and complete Continuous Professional Development training on an ongoing basis.

Try not to view your child's progress in relation to any other swimmers, even within the same age group. Every child is uniquely different, in terms of biological age (as opposed to chronological age), body shape, size, limb length, stage of maturation etc. The list is quite exhaustive.

At Newport Swimming Club we will strive to ensure that swimmers gain the correct knowledge base and skills set to enable them to maximise their potential and ultimately fulfil their aspirations.

Above all, remember that competitive swimming should be about the enjoyment of the sport!!

Newport and District Swimming Club

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