

# Swimming 101 For Parents

Welcome to your crash course in being a swim parent. Some of you may have been at meets before, or on summer teams, but this is a little different. Some of you may have been on this team for a year or so but just have not gone to meets before. SO we are going to try to give you some support as you the parent of a swimmer begin to do something new with your child!

## Lesson 1 – Sign up for the meets!

GO TO THE WEBSITE! [www.waunakeeaquatics.com](http://www.waunakeeaquatics.com).

The team has worked to develop a site so that it is informative, easy to access and FUN filled!! Important information is published there as soon as possible. Changes to practices and even meets will be there as well.

Swim meets have closing dates so the host team has time to organize the swim meet. Our team has an online sign-up on the front page on the “events” section. All the information about the meets is also on the “events” page: date, host, times, entry info and its location is posted.

***You will be charged by the team for each meet you sign-up for even if you do not go to the meet,*** so check your calendars before you sign up and be sure you will be able to be there. It is very difficult to sign up for a meet once it is closed. Most meets charge \$4-\$5 per event that the swimmer is entered in, so if they swim 3 events it is \$15. There is also a “splash” fee that is paid to Wisconsin Swimming (\$3.00 for the entire meet, one day or multi-day meets)  
\*\*Please note that you are not required to attend all the days for a multi-day meet. Friday sessions are the longer distance events. Saturday and Sunday sessions will offer different events. Check your schedule and try to attend both days, but it is not required. Just a Saturday or a Sunday will still provide your swimmer with the meet experience. Also when attending both days your swimmer will be swimming different events each day. The more meets your swimmer attends, the more experience and hopefully better times they will get.

**PLEASE** give the meet experience a chance. Most meets that WRAT enters are located within 30 to 45 minutes of our pool (except during the summer “long course” season when we try to swim in as many 50 meter pools as possible and outdoors). They are very fun and a wonderful way for your swimmer to

see the results of all of their practice work! Dropping time is the name of the game and they will see results at meets.

## **Lesson 2 – Going to the meet**

Before you leave: be sure you have directions, give your swimmer something light to eat, low in fat and sugar – fruit, half a bagel, half of a sandwich, yogurt.

Your child will be at the meet for about 4 hours. They will be in 3-4 events and sometimes a relay. So your swimmer will be very busy. For the most part they are on the deck at all times. Encourage them to cheer their fellow teammates on during the various events! Team spirit! You will not be as busy so bring something to read or other busy work that you want to get completed.

All swimmers need to be at the pool 15 minutes before warm-ups to check-in and get ready for warm-ups. AM sessions usually begin warm-ups at 7:00 A.M. and the meet starts at 8:00 a.m. Plan on being at the pool at 6:45 a.m. PM sessions usually start with warm-ups at Noon (see Meet Packet as this sometimes varies) and the meets begin at 1:00 p.m. Plan to be there at 11:45 a.m.

**Check-in for swimmers:** Some meets require positive check-in, where your swimmer needs to highlight their name on the list to show they are HERE otherwise they will be scratched from the next two events for the day. Swimmers check in can be on deck or sometimes near the entrance to the pool for swimmers. Best advice – consider ALL meets positive check in and have them find their coach upon arrival.

Most meets will charge a small fee for entry as parents. This helps pay for the meet and at times can be part fundraiser for the team. They will ask if you want a “HEAT” sheet. This is an extra charge. A “HEAT” sheet will list all swimmers by event, lane and age group. It will also let you know which heat your swimmer is swimming. A HEAT is the group of 6-8 swimmers that are swimming at the same time. There can be upwards of 15 heats at times depending on how many swimmers are entered in the event. Other swim teams will offer “PSYCH” sheets on line. These really don’t give you that much information regarding your swimmers. It is a list of all swimmers signed up to swim, but not divided by heat and some of those swimmers listed may not even show up to swim. This will give you an idea of where your swimmer will be seeded at the meet.

**What to bring parents:** this will vary by individual. As stated above, you want to bring something to do for you. Also, most meets will offer some sort of concession stand. You may want to consider your child and what you want to spend that day, so it might be wise to bring your own water and potentially a healthy snack for both you and your swimmer. Most swimmers and families bring small cooler and healthy snacks. For our outdoor meets you might also consider bringing in a fold up chair. Bleacher seats or a seat cushion is always a welcome relief. Most meets have benches to sit on and after 4 hours your “bum” may be a bit stiff.

Some facilities will have some limited open space to set up a chair. If you want to do this, the recommendation is that you arrive early to get one of those limited spots.

### **What to bring swimmers:**

- ✍ Extra goggles, WRAT swim cap, towels, water,
- ✍ Footwear as the deck gets slippery
- ✍ WRAT team sports wear – T-shirt of the day, shorts or warm-up. We look great on deck when everyone is wearing his or her team wear. Our team prides itself on looking like a team. It also makes finding your swimmer easier when they are on deck or in the pool!

- ✍ Something to do during down time. Beware of expensive electronics as they can be stolen or even broken. Cards puzzle books, travel size games.

- ✍ Change of clothes for after the meet – especially during winter.

\*NOTE: Most meets have swim apparel companies present and you can buy most needed items if you need a replacement. But not always so be prepared!

### **Lesson 3 ~ Watching the Meet**

By all means, sit with other WRAT Team parents. Usually there is a group of two sitting together (people try to save some space for others). Someone will have a “WRAT” t-shirt or something to signify them if you don’t recognize anyone right off (purple is a good indicator).

Pay attention to the announcer who will announce the events and “next on deck” for each of the events. Follow along with your “HEAT” sheet – it will also tell you what lane your swimmer is swimming in! Do cheer your swimmer on, but remember they really can’t hear you when you are in the stands. Start to write down their finish time for them, it will be posted on the event board by place and lane. Then when your swimmer is finished you can start to encourage them about how (faster hopefully) their time was from their

previous best time for that event. The difference with this level of swimming is that most swimmers don't really see too many ribbons or medal when they are starting out. So therefore getting them to be excited about dropping time on a stroke can be motivational.

Do not leave before the end of the meet unless you have checked out with your coach as your swimmer may be in a relay. Relays are lots of fun and kids get very disappointed if they don't get to compete when one of their team is missing in action.

#### **Lesson 4 – Volunteering at the Meets**

Please volunteer for the home meets. Swim meets are our best fundraisers. It keeps our team afloat! You will have a terrific time working with fellow swim parents from our team. Camaraderie is not only for the kids!! Please do not worry about your “experience” level, we have a job for everyone on our team. \*NOTE: you may get a few splashes while timing so consider wearing crocs, sandals, WRAT t-shirt, shorts and even bring a towel. You can always change at the pool.

#### **Lesson 5 – Your swimmer at the Meet**

Once warm-ups are over, the swimmers should stay on deck with their teammates. There is a lot of camaraderie that develops with the team when they hang out together, remind each other of events, cheer for teammates and develop friendships. Please encourage them to stay on the deck. It also makes it easier for the coaches to find the swimmers. Remind your swimmer to check in with the coach before and after the event. The coaches give each of the swimmers a great break down of their swim with tips for making improvements.

***Eight and Unders at a Meet:*** There is a “Bullpen” or “Staging Area” for the 8 and unders. Volunteers line the children up in their heat and lanes which helps move the meet along more quickly. They generally start lining up the children anywhere from 3-4 events prior depending on how many heats are in each event. The 8 and unders will all stay together in the bullpen when they are not swimming so they can be found when it is their turn to swim!!

***All other swimmers need to be in charge of their own events.*** Put a pen or sharpie marker in their bag so they can write down their events and lane assignments on their hands. Generally, the swimmers will help each other out with this. Don't be too hard on your swimmer when they are sitting on the deck and do NOT get up for their event. It happens to all of them. Their disappointment in themselves is a far more powerful lesson than you getting on their case about it. We've all see it happen!

## Reminders:

1) Remind your swimmer to go to the bathroom when they have a break in swimming. We have all seen many a swimmer jump out of the pool immediately following their event and rush off. I can assure you they will have a much better swim time when they are comfortable, but it may need to be something you remind them of. It is very exciting and fun to be at a meet and going to the bathroom is not always something they think of.

2) They will need plenty of water and some food as the morning or afternoon progress. Nothing high in sugar or fat will provide them with good energy for their swim. Be sure they have an opportunity to get a snack during the day so to keep their energy up!

## Lesson 6 - TIDBITS

We have **THE BEST** coaches. When they say they are available, they mean it. If you have any questions, concerns, etc. please let them know, they are very responsive. One of the greatest things about this team is that every swimmer is equal and just as important as the next. All are easily available by e-mail (found on our website). Also, the coaches are available before and after practice, they only ask not to be interrupted during swim practice itself. So, if you have a question, problem, ask.

We want to encourage you to ask ANYONE your questions. This team has a marvelous group of parents – experienced and new. They are always willing to share their experiences and bits of advice if you are willing to listen. When you go to a meet find a group of WRAT parents. You will learn more from them in one sitting than we could ever put in a handout. By all means, feel free to give any one of us a call too!

Hope this is a helpful document to take some of the guesswork out of being a Swim Parent!