



Swimming Events - A Parents' Guide



This guide has been put together to help you and your swimmer understand and prepare for the various swimming events they will be involved in. This can either be by Chief Coach's invitation or by achieving a qualifying time for a gala.

The events have been broken down into categories with specifics for each. The last section is a general Q&A with information that applies to most swimming events.

Croydon Amphibians (CASC) expects swimmers to attend all relevant squad sessions, achieve squad-qualifying times and regularly attend events. Failure to do so could jeopardise your swimmer's place in their squad. You should refer to the squad criteria for your child, available on the website.

General advice

Swimmers who have not yet reached their ninth birthday are only (under ASA rules) able to participate in internal events. However, it is important to get on the first 'rung' with an officially-recorded personal best (PB) time.

As a general rule, young swimmers start by competing over 25m and 50m distances, the 200m and 100m IM distances are then added. At 10 years the 400m events can be added and generally only once you are 11 (girls) or 12 (boys) can you compete over 100m distances. The club will sometimes try to put your swimmer in a relay race for their first experience of a Gala competition -this helps to control the inevitable 'first race nerves'.

For most events there are no heats or finals, just races (Heat Declared Winners or HDW). Swimmers race against swimmers with similar qualifying times but who are not necessarily the same age. The times are then recorded for each race and the winner is the quickest swimmer in that age group.

Disqualifications (DQs) are inevitable, especially for the younger swimmer and for the more technical strokes. Your swimmer will be disappointed but should be praised for their race effort. In the long run it is better for them to be disqualified in the early stages of their career as they will quickly learn to be competitive and hopefully not make the same mistake again. They will have plenty of other opportunities to race!

Swimming Events - See 'Events' on CASC web site for dates.

1. Internal.

These will only have CASC swimmers in the event and notification will be posted on the website under club diary.

2. Open or Graded Meets.

These are hosted by other swimming clubs and will include swimmers from many clubs. There are different levels; L4 is usually the first type of experience your swimmer will experience.

3. League Galas.

Swimmers will be selected by the club to swim in these and will be told which event they will be swimming once they have arrived at poolside. E.g. Arena (previously Speedo)

4. Championships.

These include events such as Surreys, Regionals and Nationals. These have qualifying times which can be found on the relevant web sites.

5. Swimmers Q&A

6. Common Terms

1. Internal Events

These include Time Trials (for specific squads) and Club Championships (for whole club). Swimmers are encouraged to use these events to gain times in their less favoured strokes, to achieve a qualifying time for a forthcoming event or for squad progression.

Ages

For internal events and squad qualification, the club uses year of birth or 'age as of 31 December' which means the age your swimmer will be at the end of that year not the age they are on the day of the event.

Time Trials

Entry for time trials is at the discretion of the coach. They may be licensed in order to obtain entry times for galas and meets, or unlicensed time trials, run on an ad hoc basis that are used to follow swimmers progress. Results are posted on the web site a few days after the event.

Club Championships

Once a year, in the autumn term, CASC runs its Club Champs. They are held over several days using existing pool times for various squads, and several Saturday/Sunday afternoons, usually at Whitgift School.

There is an entry fee to cover extra costs such as medals etc. Entry forms are given out and should be returned with payment to your squad rep/competitions secretary.

Club Champs are open to all squads and any swimmer, at the teacher's recommendation, from the upper teaching classes. It is most appropriate for the younger swimmer and a good event for them to get times and have a try at the longer races. Swimmers are expected to enter all events they are eligible for. It's definitely a 'have a go' competition but there will be disqualifications so you should prepare the younger ones for this.

The races are with swimmers of similar times, across squads. This enables coaches to compare times across the club. Results are posted after all ages have swum the stroke/distance. Medals are awarded in age groups, for the top three in each stroke/age group and ribbons for 4th to 6th places.

2. Open or Graded Meets

An open meet is very different from other events in several ways, so requires a bit more preparation.

An open meet takes place over a longer period of time than other events, often a whole day or weekend rather than a single evening.

Open meets are generally 'age on the day', so the age your swimmer will be on the last day of the event. Any swimmer who is age 9 or older can enter open meets provided they meet the entry

qualification or consideration time for their age.

Open meets are graded with 'B/C' or 'L2/3' meets designed for swimmers who are developing and are not the fastest in their age group.

Level 2/3: These can have upper and lower qualifying times -swimmers must be faster than the lower limit but slower than the upper limit. These meets are usually suitable for children trying to qualify for the county/regional championships as the upper limits are normally set just above the relevant qualification times.

Level 1: These are the highest level of meets and only have lower qualification times - i.e. the swimmer must be faster than the entry times shown. These are suitable only for the top swimmers and are aimed at swimmers trying to obtain regional/ national times.

For your swimmer, it is a great opportunity to compete in a wide range of strokes/distances against swimmers from many other clubs. It is also a chance to get new 'personal best' times, see how their swimming has improved and where they are seeded amongst the external competition. You will quickly begin to recognise your 'competition'.

Preparing entries

During the course of the year the coaches choose which open meets the Club wishes swimmers to attend based upon the appropriate level of competition. The choice of open meet may be different for different squads. Details of the meet, such as the entry form and qualification times, are put on the web site. Several weeks before an open meet your swimmer will receive an entry form from your squad rep / competition secretary, with details, date, available events, closing date etc. These details can also usually be found on the host clubs web site.

Open meet events are in 'sessions' with the first session often requiring you to check in by 7:30/8am and the last session sometimes end in to the evening! Session details can also usually be found on the host clubs web site.

If you are not sure which events to enter, speak to your swimmer's coach for advice but in general, especially for inexperienced swimmers, it is advisable for the initial open meets, to check which session each swim is in and to choose events that will not involve: a long day, long gaps in between or too many races in one session.

Please **clearly** mark which events you want to enter **together with your swimmers latest times &** return the form to your squad rep/competition secretary with the correct cheque and administration fee, made payable to CASC. It is advisable to return the form before the closing date rather than on the very last day, so that any queries can be sorted out early. ***If you miss the closing date your swimmer will not be able to participate.***

Acceptance

Even though your swimmer is inside the consideration or qualifying times their entry may not be

accepted if the host club receives too many entrants.

If this case the host club will reject entries starting with those nearest to the cut off time so check if you were near the qualifying times for that event. You will be advised of any rejections by the competitions secretary and the relevant refund will be paid once it has been received from the hosting club, please be patient, records are maintained by CASC as to who is due to have monies returned but the refund cheques can be slow to be received from the hosts.

Signing In

Some meets require your swimmer to sign against their name; 'sign in' for each event. Signing in is required by a certain time, usually before the warm up for each session but be aware some meets have a queue to sign in. The signing in sheets are usually found by the changing rooms and have one sheet per event, printed with the entry name in alphabetical order. If you are in more than one event in the session make sure you sign in for all events in that session. Often sheets for later sessions come out during the earlier session so if your swimmer has event in the later session they can sign in early and avoid the pre warm up rush.

Active Withdrawal

Active Withdrawal assumes that the swimmer will compete in all the events they have submitted entries for. In order not to compete for any/all the entered events, the swimmer needs to 'scratch' their name from the start lists prior to that session warm up or notify the CASC representative that will be poolside on the day or to the squad coach or competition secretary in the days leading up to the gala.

It is important to adhere to these procedures as not to could result in a delay for all other competitors.

On the day of the Open meet

(See also '**Swimmers Q&A**' for general advice)

Warm up is 30 minutes to an hour before the event starts and is usually separate for boys / girls and, depending on numbers; the older swimmers will often warm up after the younger ones. There is no diving during the warm up but towards the end of each warm up session, listen for the announcement, some lanes will be dedicated as sprint lanes where swimmers can dive in and sprint one length, getting out at the other end and walking back. The Coach may give your swimmer advice on how much warm up to do and what thing to concentrate on depending on the event they are swimming that day.

When the event starts, announcements will be made calling each event in turn. When the announcement is made for the relevant event your swimmer will be called by the Coach for last minute talk and then sent down to the marshalling or 'Whipping' area.

The younger ones especially will want to wave to you as they go down to the Whipping area and at this point you start to panic they haven't got their goggles, hat etc.

In the Whipping area your swimmer should put their goggles on their head or push them down around

their neck. If they are carrying them it is possible they will put them down. It will also stop them chewing and biting them -They should also have their swim-cap on in plenty of time. Boys need to tie their costumes up tight - double-knot!

Swimmers will be lined up in the whipping area in heat order and then asked to go forward and stand behind the relevant lane. The timekeeper for the lane will ask your swimmer to confirm their name. For a card open meet your swimmers card will be handed back to them in the Whipping area and they should hand the card to the timekeeper for their lane.

Depending on how many competitors there are in an event there can be a lot of heats and it can take absolutely ages! However your swimmers race will be over pretty quickly so be sure you don't miss it by an inappropriate moment for the loo, coffee or a snooze!

After your swimmer's last event they may go home. Although please tell the Coach, so he/she knows who is still on the poolside; your swimmer does not have to wait for the end of the event unless the Coach advises otherwise.

Results

When the races have been swum the times of each swimmer are recorded on the computer system which produces the final result sheet after all the races for a particular event have been swum. Results sheets are displayed around the poolside for the swimmers and around the spectator area for you to read as soon as it is possible to do so. The hosting club will make the results available on their website, usually within a couple of days, at most a week after the event.

Speeding Tickets

For some lower graded open meets there are a set of upper cut-off times (usually UQT or UQT plus a few seconds), which swimming faster than these times earns a 'speeding-ticket'. Check the small print in the gala conditions, usually found on the host clubs website, to see if there will be speeding tickets and if so whether the cut of times are UQT or above. Getting a speeding ticket means that the swimmer is not eligible for medals (and is effectively disqualified) but it is a very positive indicator of a 'good time' for that race, in that age group. So your swimmer should be reassured that a speeding-ticket is a good thing just as is a win or a placing or personal-best.

Medals

Generally medals are awarded for the top three in each stroke/age group and sometimes, ribbons for 4th to 6th places. These can be collected at the event any time after the results are published.

3. Galas

Throughout the year the club enters teams in galas and leagues at different standards of competition. Swimmers will be selected by the club to swim in these and there are no entry fees or forms to fill in. Not participating in an event for which your swimmer has been chosen may jeopardise their future place in the team.

The age groups are usually determined as age on the date of the gala so your swimmer will be swimming against other swimmers of a similar age who may be faster or slower. Swimmers will be told which event they will be swimming once they have arrived at poolside. The 'A' team of each age group will generally swim in the higher division of the league and the 'B' team will swim in a lower division at different location.

Galas and League events take place in a single evening. The races are within age groups against other clubs. The exact number of teams competing depends on the league and the number of lanes at the host pool.

For younger swimmers the races are generally 50m (except 25m fly for the youngest age groups) individuals for each stroke, a Medley relay, a Freestyle relay and a Squadron relay. Swimmers may swim up an age group but may not swim down. Events swum are at the coach's discretion and swimmers will not usually be told what they are swimming before they reach poolside on the evening of the event. This is necessary as there are frequently last minute changes to team due to illness/injury and prior advice of events could prove to be incorrect on the night.

Parents, you will be notified by email if your swimmer has been selected for a team gala, details of venue and arrival times will also be made available. A prompt response is greatly appreciated to allow us to get team details sorted, as is notification of unavailability, a replacement swimmer can then quickly be asked. In any case, failure to reply by the requested deadline, could jeopardise the swimmers chance to be in the team as it will be assumed that they cannot attend and a replacement will be asked.

Club outerwear (hooded sweatshirts and polo shirt) should be worn to and from the gala, as should CASC swimming hats whilst swimming.

On the night (see also 'Swimmers Q&A' for general advice)

Club transport is sometimes not provided so you may want to share lifts or ask someone else to transport your swimmer if you cannot take them. Arrive at the host pool at the time requested on the email. The requested arrival time allows for confirmation of arrival to the Coach, changing and warm up but getting there late will worry the Coach who at some point will have to reallocate your swimmers' races.

Once on poolside (although sometimes after warm up) a team sheet will be available and your swimmer will be able to read this to see which events they are swimming. Swimmers swim the stroke and distance allocated to them. There is no discussion about this as in the weeks prior to the competition a great deal of thought has gone into what stroke each swimmer should do. Relays are always swum in the order stated.

The club will usually put a swimmer in just a relay race for their first experience of competition as this helps to control the inevitable 'first race nerves'. So do not be disappointed if your swimmer only does one length in the evening -it is an honour to be chosen to swim for their club. All swimmers are

expected to stay until the end of the event and to support their team mates and to congratulate the winning club and the other participating clubs.

4. Championships

Ages for Championships are usually 'age on the last day of the meet'.

Entry forms can be found on the relevant web sites but will also be distributed via the competitions secretary or can be downloaded from the CASC website. Please clearly mark which events you want to enter together with the swimmers up to date PB's & return the form to the competitions secretary with a cheque, payable to CASC, for the correct entry fee plus admin charge. It is advisable to return the form before the closing date rather than on the very last day, so that any queries can be sorted out early. If you have not got a consideration time for an event but expect to get it in an event before the championship then please speak to your swimmer's coach for advice. If you miss the closing date your swimmer will not be able to participate.

County Championships

These are the first major championships a competitive swimmer will encounter. They are held over a series of weekends in Feb/March and are similar to a Level 1 Open meet in that there are only lower consideration times. However it is not an open meet because they are only open to swimmers of clubs affiliated to the relevant County ASA which for CASC is Surrey ASA. In the autumn of each year, the following year's 'county qualification times' are published on the Surrey ASA website. They alter a little each year (usually getting faster), but the previous years can be used as a guide. If your swimmer is faster than the time(s) published the club would expect your swimmer to compete.

Entry forms will be distributed and should be returned with the relevant payment (made out CASC) at the earliest opportunity as there are literally hundreds of entries to process.

Regional Champs

This is the next level of Championships and are held May/June. Clubs from the London Region are eligible to enter swimmers for this event who have achieved regional qualification times (these are published on the London Region website). This is a high level of competition and the club would expect swimmers obtaining these times to compete.

Qualifying times need to be achieved at recognised, licensed (i.e. not internal club galas or time trials) meets. An added complication is that at LR's (and Nationals), no qualifying times are set for the youngest age groups in 100m events - you can enter these only if you make the relevant 200m entry time. Although the meets are long-course, entries require short-course times.

National Champs

This is the top level of 'age group' swimming for swimmers aged 11-13 (girls) and 11-14(boys) followed by the National Youth Championship for girls 14+ and boys 15+.It is held in July and is open to all swimmers who achieve a national qualifying time. These are available from the ASA website. **If your**

swimmer gets this far you probably know what you are doing by then!

5. Swimmers Q&A

How should we prepare?

In the week before the meet, and at the end of each day of the meet, ensure that your swimmer refuels on top quality athlete's food containing complex carbohydrates. They should also be drinking plenty of fluids; to ensure their body's cells are fully hydrated.

It can add to the nerves before a race if a swimmer is worrying about a new pair of goggles that have just been bought because their usual ones broke. Where possible swimmers should refrain from trying out new costumes or goggles for the first time in a race. It is best for new items to be "experienced" during a training session so that any problems can be resolved ahead of the competition.

What equipment will be needed?

Swimmers usually take their bag with equipment on to pool side. However at large events many items end up in lost property or go missing so ensure everything is well marked and encourage your swimmer to put everything away in their bag when not using it especially during warm up and races. This will also have the advantage that they can find their goggles/hat quickly when they are needed for the race!

To enable identification of swimmers and to have a 'team' look, all swimmers are expected to wear a CASC hat when swimming in external events and to arrive in the club 'hoodie' and wear the club logo polo shirt poolside.

It is a good idea to bring several swimming costumes to a long meet so your swimmer can get changed after a race (if there is time) and stay warm. They should also have at least one spare (tried) pair of goggles or spare straps and clips.

All swimmers should wear a club swimming hat for races and have a spare available.

Your swimmer will be in and out of the water all day, so make sure you bring more than one towel. You might find it useful to get a swimmer's chamois. It allows the swimmer to dry off most of the moisture without soaking their usual towel, and saves your laundry basket!

What clothing will be needed?

Some pools can be draughty and it is important to keep warm between events, so bring plenty of warm clothes. Club kit - polo shirt and hoodie - must be worn. Don't forget a pair of shorts or tracksuit bottoms and a pair of pool shoes, or flip-flops or *clean* trainers & socks, as a lot of heat can be lost through bare feet on a cold poolside.

Don't forget, if they arrive in their poolside clothes, to make sure they have a dry set to go home in! It can also be useful to have a spare plastic bag for regular clothes and other belongings to keep them dry while the swim bag is on poolside.

What should the swimmer do when not swimming?

Swimmers are expected to stay on poolside during the each meet. They must not leave the poolside without a coaches express permission. Coaches & team managers need to speak to swimmers during the day for either race strategy advice or to send them up for marshalling to get ready for their race. If your swimmer wants to leave poolside, even if it's just to go to the toilet, they *must* let the Coach know to ensure that they don't miss their race. The Coach has a whole team to keep track of, which can be very difficult if swimmers keep 'disappearing' at crucial moments. If a swimmer leaves poolside to spend some time with parents they must get back in plenty of time for their next race, and let the Coach know they are back.

After their swim it is vital that your swimmer immediately see the Coach, swim down and then if time permits visit with you. Please do not beckon your swimmer over to the spectator area after a race to discuss/congratulate their performance. There should be no messing about in the swim down pool... it is not playtime!

Swimmers should be tidy and pick up all their litter. There are usually plenty of rubbish bags and bins at meets so do encourage your swimmer to use them.

Although swimmers are encouraged to support their team-mates, it can be helpful, especially for open meets, for them to bring something, such as a book, magazine, ipod or computer game, to keep them occupied during quitter moments. Do be aware that neither the club nor the venue can be held responsible for loss or damage to property so your swimmer should not bring valuables or things that can be damaged by being in a damp atmosphere.

What should the swimmer eat and drink?

On the day of the meet your swimmer may be on poolside for the whole day, so they need to be kept well stocked with small, easily digestible snacks, rather than having large meals. It is just as important to stay well hydrated, so provide plenty of fluids and encourage your swimmer to sip often at their drink during the day.

Although some venues have excellent catering facilities it is best not to rely on them, so bring a selection of food to keep your swimmer in top form throughout the day. For younger swimmers it is best to hand the food to them in small 'doses' to avoid them eating it all within the first hour! To keep perishable food fresh we suggest you use a cool bag with an ice pack.

Food suggestions

Complex carbohydrates for 'grazing' throughout the day, e.g. small portions of:

- Pasta/Rice salad
- Muffins (sweet or savoury)
- Flapjacks

- Bread, Pitta bread, Bagels
- Pizza (but be careful of fatty toppings)
- Rice cakes
- Breakfast cereals or Cereal bars
- Bananas
- Popcorn

Jacket potatoes are also suitable if available at the venue's catering outlet.

Drinks suggestions

- Water
- Sports drinks
- Weak squash

Note: Fizzy drinks & glass containers of any kind are banned.

What do I need to do?

You have to make sure that your swimmer gets an early night before the gala and arrives at the pool in plenty of time

In the rush to get your swimmer ready it can be easy to forget your own needs, so don't forget to pack items for yourself. You might want to bring a comfortable cushion (some venues have very hard spectator seating), something to read, a pen or pencil to mark up your programme, and a separate picnic with plenty to drink. Some parents also like to bring a stopwatch but this is not essential as many venues have electronic time board and results will be printed and displayed at the venue during the sessions. It is worth noting your swimmers times for each event as DQ's will not get an official time recorded but praise for a PB, even with a disqualification, will help the disappointment.

Then you have to be seen to be cheering, taking photos (remember spare batteries, memory sticks or film and sign child-protection form), and worrying!

How can we see the Results?

Each time the swimmer swims the results will be fed back to the club and CASC swimmers' times will be posted on the club board and on the web site under 'RESULTS'. Full results of external meets will be posted on the relevant hosting clubs/championship web site. This can sometimes take a few weeks so keep checking!

Are there trophies or medals?

The medal system and their quality will vary from event to event. Please see advice on individual events for guidance on awards.

What/Where are my PBs?

When the swimmer achieves a time that is better than their existing time for that stroke/distance it is recorded on the clubs PB database. The 'latest' PBs are available on the Squad page of the club website. PBs are recorded separately for 25m, short course (SC) pools and 50m long course (LC) pools.

These PBs should be used to check against qualifying times for Open Meets and Championships. PBs achieved in events where your swimmer is not representing CASC i.e. schools galas, can be emailed to the coach for inclusion in the PB database.

What are BAGCATS?

British Age Group Categories or BAGCat points are a system of points which are awarded for different swims. When a swimmer competes in a BAGCat event, their time is converted into points that take into account a swimmer's age and sex. A swimmer can take part in as many events in a season as they choose to, but only their highest points score in each swimming category will count towards their final BAGCat total.

For an event the overall position of a swimmer is the sum of the BEST point score in each of the 5 categories (50m events, 100m, FORM, Distance and IM (100IM for 9-11 year olds and 200-400IM for older swimmers). It is therefore advisable to enter every category in the Age Groups if you can achieve the qualifying times. (N.B boys 12 and below and girls 11 and below don't swim the 100m individual events).

6. COMMON TERMS

Consideration or Qualification time - the slowest entry time for a particular event that the organisers of a gala will consider.

DQ'd and disq. - Abbreviation for disqualified on result sheets and time cards

Entry time -The time submitted by the club for a swimmer being entered in a gala. If entries are made well in advance, the entry time may not be the swimmers current PB.

Form Stroke -One of the three strokes having specific requirements (ie. 200M, Breaststroke, Butterfly or Backstroke). Freestyle is not a Form Stroke but is used for distance events, such as 200/400/800 or 1500m depending on the swimmers age and sex.

Heat declared Winner (HOW) -When no final is swum and the winner is declared on the times swum in the heats

I.M. - **individual medley.** The competitor swims all four strokes in the following order: - butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke and freestyle.

Licensed meets: This term has now replaced "designated meets". These are the only meets via which you can qualify for county, regional and national competitions

Long course -Events held in a 50m pool

LQT -Lower Qualification Time. The slowest entry time for a particular event that the organisers of a gala will consider

Medley relay -Four swimmers each swim a different stroke. The order is always backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly and freestyle.

PB -A swimmers personal best time for a given event.

QT -Upper Qualification Time. The fastest entry time for a particular event that the organisers of a gala will consider.

Short course -Events held in a 25m pool

Squadron relay -Usually the last race of a gala. A freestyle relay consisting of one swimmer from each age group or one swimmer of each sex from each age group.

Time conversions - Swimmer's times are recorded as either 25m (short course SC) or 50m (long course LC) times. Different meets will require times to be submitted in either one of these formats. In some instances, conversions between the times are accepted. LC times are always slower than their short course conversion and are converted using specific formula. If you are unsure of your swimmer's LC/SC times, please ask your coach who will advise you.

