**First Competition Guide**

**PREPARATION**

The day before the meet, make sure you eat well and get a good night’s sleep. Be sure to pack everything that you will need to be comfortable for the day.

Before arriving at the meet make sure you know which races you are in.

Make sure you have all your equipment and that it is clearly marked. You should have:

* Swimming costumes x 2
* Goggles x 2
* WDSC swimming hat x 2
* WDSC pool t-shirt or hoodie.
* Spare top and bottoms
* Towels
* Water bottle and healthy snacks/lunch
* Small race bag to keep items safe when you go up to race (WDSC race bags will soon be available for purchase)

**ON ARRIVAL**

Do arrive in plenty of time. If you are going to be late or not attend the event, please let us know.

WDSC swimmers will be sitting in a pre-assigned area on poolside. A team manager will be on hand should you have any queries or need any help.

Parents need to be aware that when your child is sitting with their team on the pool deck, that you will not be able to walk over to them during the meet (parents are not allowed on the pool deck). Depending on the size of the pool it may not be possible to communicate with your child until the meet is over. This means that you need to be sure their swim bag is packed with everything your child will need for the day.

**WARM UP**

Before the races start you will be allowed some time to warm up. Listen out for your coaches and team managers announcements as the warmup time will generally be split between age-groups and/or girls and boys.

This is a good time to do your pre-pool flexibility.

After the warm-up you need to dry up and put your club pool t-shirt back on to keep warm.

**EVENT**

For each event there will be a few heats. Swimmers are seeded based on their entry time, not their age.

At the end of the event the swimmers will be classified in their respective age group based on the time that they achieved in their heat

**‘AGE AT’ DATE**

Galas set an ‘age at’ for the competition. This may be set by age on the last day of the competition or age on the 31 December.

For example if the gala is in March and your birthday is in June, but the ‘age at’ date for the gala is 31 December, then your age will show up in the programme and results as 1 year older.

For the classification of results and medals most competitions group by age, so the age category you may be swimming in is 9/10 years rather than just swimming against 10-year olds.

**MARSHALLING**

Listen out for Team Managers announcement to go to the marshalling area for your event.

At the marshalling area there will also be Marshalls (usually parent helpers) who will organise all the swimmers for an event.

The Marshalls will:

* Line you up with others in your heat in lane order
* Keep in this order as you move around the pool - the Marshall will guide you
* Make sure you know what event you are swimming and the number of lengths in your race
* Keep your club pool shirt on until the last minute
* At the start of the heat before yours, you will be asked to stand behind the lane you will be swimming in
* It is very important you are quiet at the start of all races
* Wait for instructions before taking your place at the side of the starting block

**RACE START**

The Referee signals that a race is about to start by a series of blasts on a whistle, followed, when the swimmers and officials are ready, by a single long blast. At this point the swimmers step up onto the blocks or get into the water if it is Backstroke.

When the swimmers are ready the Starter gives the command "Take Your Marks" followed by the signal to "Go", which may be by shot, klaxon or command.

Under the One Start Rule now in operation, any swimmer starting before the signal will be disqualified at the end of the race. There is no recall of swimmers for a second start. However, if a faulty start occurs (eg. there is a disturbance) the swimmers may be recalled by blasts on the whistle.

All swimmers and spectators should be silent for the start of each race.

**RACE FINISH**

After you have completed your swim, remain in the pool and hold onto the lane rope until the next race starts at which stage you will be instructed by the officials to leave the pool by the side. Do not climb over the touchpads as you may damage them. If you have completed a backstroke event you need to wait in the water and hold onto the lane rope until you are asked to clear the water by the race officials.

Collect your belongings, DO NOT put on your club pool t-shirt until you are dry, then go to your Coach to discuss your race. After your discussion with your Coach go to the club sitting area and then rehydrate by drinking your water and have a healthy snack before your next event.

**DISQUALIFICATION**

All galas are held under strict Swim England guidelines. All swimmers have been disqualified at some point so do not worry if you are disqualified; just try and learn from the reason why you were disqualified and try not to do the same.

There are several reasons why you may have been disqualified depending on what stroke you are swimming; this may be a false start to a one-handed touch just discuss with your Coach so you learn from the experience.

**BASIC RULES FOR THE START, STROKE & FINISH**

**THE ONE-START RULE**

Any movement on the blocks is interpreted as the swimmer trying to gain an advantage. Therefore, all swimmers must remain ‘completely still’ once they are in the starting position.

Any movement at this time will disqualify the swimmer (even to adjust goggles).

**BREASTSTROKE**

Movement of hands and feet must be simultaneous and on the same horizontal plane.

At some point during each stroke the head must break the surface of the water.

At the start and turn only one complete stroke may be made under the water (one arm pull followed by one leg kick) before the head breaks the surface.

At the turns and at the finish, the two hands must touch at the same time. Elbows should remain in the water at all times except on the turn.

**BUTTERFLY**

Movements of hands and feet must be simultaneous. Arms must be brought forward above the surface, and back on or below the surface.

At the turns and at the finish, hands must touch at the same time at the same level. One or more leg kicks and one arm pull are permitted under the water at the start and turns.

**BACKSTROKE**

Swimmers must remain on their back during the race except when executing a turn. During the turn the shoulders may turn over the vertical to the breast but the swimmer must have returned to a position on the back when leaving the wall. Gliding into the turn is disqualifiable. At the turn a touch must be made by some part of the swimmer’s body.

At the finish, the touch may be made by hand, arm, shoulder or head and some part of the swimmer’s body must be above the water and the swimmer must remain on their back.

The flags across the pool are to assist backstroke swimmers and indicate 5m to the wall.

**INDIVIDUAL MEDLEY**

Order of the swim - Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke, Freestyle

All the above stroke rules apply. In addition, during the Backstroke to Breaststroke turn swimmers must touch the wall on their backs and then can push off on their front.

**THE FINISH**

Stay in the water and hold onto the lane ropes until advised to leave by the side by an official.