**Weymouth Swimming Club**

**Guide to Swimming Competitions**

When you first join a swim club the many different types and levels of competitions can all seem quite daunting. So we have produced this guide to help you.

This guide covers the following areas:-

1. Registration
2. General Overview
3. Club Galas
4. Other Competitions including Open Meets, Graded, Development Meets, County Championships, Regionals and Nationals
5. Team Events
6. Essentials Needed for Events
7. Competition Day Tips
8. Survival Guide for Parents
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**REGISTRATION**

After filling out the Club’s Registration Form and paying the appropriate membership you have to be registered with Swim England to make sure your child is insured to swim and able to take part in competitions. You do this when you first join the club and it will renew annually. Your category of registration will depend on the level of competition you are able to compete in:

**Category 1** - Swimmers may enter club internal events. All swimmers who are under 9 will be registered in this category and all those over 9 but do not wish to compete above Club level. Events that can be entered are Club Trophy Galas, Southern Junior League, Novice League, Rainbow Galas, and Dorset Graded Meet.

**Category 2** - Swimmers are able to compete in all levels and types of event (Arena League, Open Meets, County Development Meet, County Championships, Regionals, Nationals)

**Category 3 -** Category 3 membership is for parent helpers and volunteers who wish to help out with the running of our club.

**GENERAL OVERVIEW**

**League Galas** are team events where the whole team competes against other clubs, gaining points for each race. League galas are usually made up of individual races and team/relay races for the different age groups. If your child is chosen to attend a league event, you should make every effort to attend.

**Open Meets** are advertised by the club and are licenced meets for anyone who is eligible to take part. These events are individual races with the fastest swimmers gaining medals/trophies. The meets are given a Level from 1 to 4 (further explanation below).

**Long Course or Short Course?**

Details of what ‘course’ a meet is will be on the meet information pack – usually described as LC or SC. Short course meets are swum in a 25m pool (same as Weymouth Swimming Pool) and long course meets are swum in a 50m pool (our nearest 50m pool currently is at Millfield School in Somerset). Most meets are swum short course whilst long course meets are targeted towards regional and national standards of competition.

**Swimmers’ Entry Times:**

Whenever possible Weymouth Swimming Club records and retains the times achieved by our swimmers. This will include not only times achieved at licensed competitions, but all events we take part in (club, friendly and team events). These times can be found on the Website <https://uk.teamunify.com/Home.jsp?team=swrwsc> or OnDeck App (can be downloaded to all Apple and Android devices) under “Membership” and “Personal best Times”.

**Notifying Entry to Events – Electronic Entry**

Where appropriate entry to all Club Events, Open Meets and Counties will be undertaken using the club Website (<https://uk.teamunify.com/Home.jsp?team=swrwsc> ) or via the OnDeck App (can be downloaded to all Apple and Android devices). Please ensure that you have access to your account (with the use of email and password) to facilitate this. All events will be shown on the website under the “Events Calendar” and under “Events” then “Events and Meet Entries” on the OnDeck App.

**Travel to Events/Galas**

Travel to team events, if not held at Weymouth Swimming Pool, will usually be as a team on a coach. There will be a fee for travelling on the coach of £3.50 for children/members and £5 for the accompanying parent (if not a member of the club). Parents are welcomed to travel with their children and provide support as long as there is sufficient space on the coach.

Travel to Open Meets will be down to parents to provide transport. Often there will be other children attending these events so there is the possibility of car sharing etc.

**Parents attending Events/Galas**

There is normally a fee for on the entrance to League Galas, Open Meets and any club gala held on a Saturday (Club galas held on club nights, there will be no fee). So please always bring change for this purpose. Entrance to League Galas is around £3, however, the entry to Open Meets can vary but is usually anywhere between £3 and £5 per day.

**Age Categories**

Age categories can vary from event to event. However, Club (with the exception of Rainbow galas where there is no age group as competition is against swimming group ie Blue, Red, etc), National, Regional, County, Development and Graded Meets, along with the Arena League, are all ages as at 31 December of that year. For example, if your child is currently 9 but 10 before 31 December – they would be classed as the 10 year age group.

Most other competitions and open meets are “age on date” so they swim in the age group that is their age on the date of the competition.

**COMPETITIONS ENTERED BY WEYMOUTH SWIMMING CLUB**

**CLUB GALAS (All who can are encouraged to enter)**

**Rainbow Gala (open to blue, green, jade, mauve, pink, red, development and squad swimmers under 14 – unless otherwise dictated prior to the gala, occasionally when times are needed for older swimmers it will be opened up to older ages)**

These galas are a great introduction to competitive swimming all groups will enter events appropriate to their level with the lower groups undertaking 25m in backstroke and freestyle right up to Red and above undertaking all 4 strokes at 50m. They take place 3 times a year (usually March, September and November). The coaches use the times recorded from these galas to select their team for events such as the Novice League and Southern Junior League (see details further down the guide) and if children have shown significant improvement this will be noted and they may also be moved up a group for training. The times gained at Rainbow Galas can also be used for the County Development Meet, Dorset Graded Meet and Open Meets but are not suitable for use in the County Championships or Regional Championships.

**Trophy Gala** (Level 4)– Open to all swimmers to enter

This event is held once a year usually in April. All children swim 100m in all 4 strokes (there is an opportunity to opt out of strokes if a swimmer does not feel confident or the coaches do not feel they are able to legally swim a certain stroke). This gala is a great opportunity to win trophies, improve personal best times and gain times for use at the County Championships and open meets. Times gained at this event are not suitable for entry into Regional/National Championships.

**Individual Medley (I/M) Trophy Gala** (Level 4)– Open to all swimmers to enter

This event is held once a year usually in October. Children 10/under swim 100m IM. 11 and over swim 200m IM. Individual Medley consists of swimming a continuous swim in the order of butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke and freestyle. This gala is a great opportunity to win trophies, improve personal best times and gain times for use at the County Championships and open meets. Times gained at this event are not suitable for entry into Regional/National Championships.

**200/400m Trophy Galas** (Level 4) – Open to all swimmers to enter (who can swim 200m)

These events are split into junior (14/under) and seniors (15 and above). These galas are recommended for children who are in the higher end groups (pink, red, d squad and squad) who can swim 200m, however if children in pink and below are capable of swimming 200m continuous freestyle then they can enter – please discuss with a coach before entry. This gala is a great opportunity to win trophies, improve personal best times and gain times for use at the County Championships and open meets. Times gained at these event are not suitable for entry into Regiona/National Championships.

**50m Sprints Gala** (Level 4)- Open to all swimmers to enter

This event is held once a year between April and June. This gala is an opportunity to swim 50m sprint in each stroke. There will be medals and trophies for each age group from 10U to Open. This gala is a great opportunity to win trophies, improve personal best times and gain times for use at the County Championships and open meets. Times gained at this event are not suitable for entry into Regional/National Championships.

**OTHER COMPETITIONS INCLUDING OPEN MEETS, COUNTY, REGIONAL & NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS**

**Open Meets**–minimum entry age is 9 as at date of the meet

Open meets are a great opportunity to get qualifying times for Counties, Regionals and to gain personal best times (PB's). The Club usually enters a few Open Meets a year and these will be advertised as and when. Information for these will be posted on our Facebook page and an email sent out via Team Unify.

**NB**: *It is possible to take part in Open Meets on an individual basis, however, this would entail purchasing a coach/chaperone pass (usually between £10 and £20) to accompany your child or arrange for them to be looked after by another Club at the meet. Swimmers would not be allowed poolside unaccompanied.*

Open Meets consist of various levels as explained below:-

1. **Level 1** Meets are long course (50m) only and cover National, Regional and County Championships. Their purpose is to enable athletes to achieve qualifying times for entry into National, Regional and County Championships.
2. **Level 2** Meets are short course (25m) only and cover National, Regional and County Championships. Their purpose is to enable athletes to achieve qualifying times for entry into National, Regional and County Championships in short course.
3. **Level 3** Meets are long and short course events. Their purpose is to enable athletes to achieve times for entry into Regional and County Championships and other Meets at Level 1 or Level 2.
4. **Level 4** Meets are entry level events in pools 25m or greater. County Championships are an example. They are for inexperienced athletes and swimmers seeking to compete outside their club environment. If times are good athletes progress to Level 3 Meets.

**Dorset Graded Meet** (Level 4) – Age 9 (on date of the event) to 12 as at 31 December.

The Dorset Graded meet gives the opportunity for all children to compete equally and therefore at this event there are upper cut off times. The event is usually in April of each year and held in Dorchester. This is a great opportunity for all swimmers with times to take part in 50m (all 4 strokes), 100m (back, breast and freestyle) and 200m (freestyle) and club galas such as the Trophy or Rainbow galas should be used to gain these times. This meet is a fabulous introduction to the world of competitive swimming to children and is often the first time they have competed against swimmers at their level from other clubs. The swimming club will send out invites for this event.

**Dorset Development Meet** (Level 3) – Age 9 (as at the date of the event) to 18 as at 31 December.

Great opportunity to gain qualifying times and beat those PB's. Invites to this meet are issued by the club. This event is a Level 3 licensed meet and subject to upper cut-off times and lower consideration times and is usually held on the 1st weekend of July each year at Littledown Sports Centre, Bournemouth.

**Dorset County Championships** (Level 2) - minimum age 10 as at 31/12 through to Open Age Group

Counties are held normally once a year over 4 weekends during January/February. You need to have achieved county qualifying times to be eligible to take part which must be obtained at any level of licensed meet (including the Club Trophy Galas). Based on these times invites will be issued by the club to the qualifying swimmers. It is a big achievement to gain county qualifying times. The 50m to 400m events take place at the Littledown Sports Centre, Bournemouth and the 800m and 1500m events usually at the Dorchester Sports Centre.

**South West Regional Championships** (Level 1) –The next step up from county championships is regionals. Only times achieved at a Level 1, 2 or 3 meets or competition can be used for entry into Regional Competitions. The Club will notify you if your child has times for this competition. The competitions are held in Bristol and Millfield.

**Nationals Championships** (Level 1) –This is the next step up from regionals and only times gained at Level 1 or 2 meets or competition can be used for entry into National Competitions.

Swimmers’ times achieved at licensed competitions can be found here:

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

 (*Simply enter the swimmer surname or membership number to locate their times)*

The database is a great tool to take a look at. It records every swim and provides graphs and other useful performance data. Event rankings can also be accessed on this site

**TEAM EVENTS (CHILDREN WILL BE SELECTED TO SWIM BY THE COACHES)**

**If your child is selected to swim for the Club at these events please make your best efforts to be available – if your child has been selected they are needed – do not assume there will be someone to take their place**

**Dorset Novice League** Age 9 to 14 years (age as at the date of the last gala in the series)

The aim of the Dorset Novice Swimming League is to provide the novice swimmer with the opportunity to compete on equal terms with other swimmers in the County. There are 3 rounds usually in January, February and March. A time limit will be set for each event in the gala programme. Any swimmer finishing in a time faster than that set will be issued with a speeding ticket and no points will be awarded to the swimmer for that event. However, speeding tickets are celebrated within the club as it means you have achieved a fast time, which is also a valid time that is recorded on the club database and can be used for open meets, Dorset Graded Meet or Development Meet.

**Southern Junior League** Age 9 to 12 years (age as at the date of the last gala in the series)

This is a competition for young swimmers from clubs in various parts of the South West. The Club will choose the team for this league and invites will be sent out accordingly. This is a series of galas usually held in June, July and September of each year. Any times gained at these galas can be used for entry to Dorset Graded and Development Meets and open meets.

**Arena League** –Age 9 to Open as at 31/12

This competition is held over three rounds on the 2nd Saturday of each month from October, to December. Galas are held at locations across the South West of England and South Wales. The team normally travels by coach. The fastest swimmers will be selected even if this means younger swimmers swimming an age group higher. Swimmers are expected to attend even if they are only swimming in a relay as every swimmer makes a valuable contribution to the team effort. The Club has presently entered into an arrangement with The Tornadoes of South Dorset to enter this League under the name of Weymouth Tornadoes.

**ESSENTIALS NEEDED FOR EVENTS**

**Club Events & Team Galas**

2 towels

Swimsuit and one spare (just in case)

Goggles (two pairs in case one breaks)

Swim Club hat (except Arena League where one will be provided)

Swim Club T-Shirt (except Arena League where one will be provided)

Water bottle with water

Snack

**Open Meets**

All of the above with the addition of:-

Plenty of food for the day with a selection of energy giving snacks and fruit

A book or something to entertain your child as there is a lot of waiting between events

**COMPETITION DAY TIPS**

Swimmers should aim to arrive and be ready on poolside **at least 15mins** before the first warm up is scheduled to start. On arrival at a gala/meet, a swimmer should first get changed and bring everything needed with them poolside.

Look for their team/coach and sign in with the Club’s Team Manager(s). Once signed in stay with the rest of the team and sit together once changed.

Warm up sessions will start at the advertised times, the Team Managers will let swimmers know when you are required to warm up. A warm up session gives swimmers the opportunity to do approximately 10mins of continuous swimming followed by 5mins of diving and sprinting.

It is advisable to wear poolside clothes after warm up and between races. This will keep muscles warm, ready for racing.

The Team Manager will tell your child which events they are swimming in. Children **SHOULD NOT** leave the poolside area without letting the Team Manager know.

Children should always be ready to start a race as no one will wait for them if they aren’t there or have forgotten their goggles or hat.

Remember children are part of a team, so should cheer on their team mates when they swim and always create a good impression as they are representing Weymouth Swimming Club.

**PARENTS’ SURVIVAL GUIDE TO OPEN MEETS**

You will need to make sure you have planned the day or weekend. Getting to the event can be tricky and sometimes involves a very early start. Pack plenty of food to get through the day as you will be at the event for a long time.

Parking can also be somewhat difficult but if you arrive in plenty of time this isn’t usually an issue.

Once you have ensured that your swimmer is poolside with everything they need. Take your seats and enjoy the competition!

Most meets will have an area for parents to watch the gala. There is usually a spectator entrance fee and programmes will often be available to purchase. So make sure you have some cash with you.

Your child will often be seated in another part of the pool with parents restricted from the swimmer area. The children all try to cheer each other on and parents are encouraged to cheer for the children as loud as they like to spur them on during races!

Above all, despite all the trials of getting to an open meet they are good fun and if lots of children are there they all enjoy each other’s company and entertain themselves through the day. Parents can have a good old chat too!

The main reason for entering these competitions is to achieve qualifying times that will allow a swimmer entry into county, regional and national competitions. It also allows the coaches and teachers to see progress and to further improve a swimmer’s technique. Entering a variety of these competitions will increase a swimmer’s confidence in a live setting and hopefully help you see continued progression by swimming faster times at each competition and improved individualised feedback.

**FAQ’s**

**What are Qualifying Times, Upper Limit Times and Consideration Times, Qualifying times / Upper Limit Times / Cut off Times:**

A **qualifying time** is the time that the swimmer ***must have already achieved*** in order to enter an event at the competition.

**Upper limit/cut off times** are times set by a competition organiser that a swimmer ***must be*** ***slower than*** to be able to swim at the competition.

Qualifying times or cut off times will be included in the competition meet pack so please look out for these and check before submitting an entry for your swimmer(s).

**Time conversions**

This is particularly relevant when you wish to enter a long course meet but only have short course times. At the majority of swim meets, time conversions are permitted from short course to long course or vice versa. The following website has a tool which can convert these times:

http://www.pullbuoy.co.uk/times

**How much does it cost to take part in swimming competitions?**

Team events and friendly galas are mostly club funded or free to take part in Licensed meets typically cost between £5 and £8 per race depending on the level of the meet and length of the swim (events over 400m are typically around £8 entry per event)

**How do I find out about competitions the club is entering?**

Competitions will be advertised by the club via email, our group Facebook page, club and website (OnDec App on mobile devices). If you are concerned that you are not receiving information, please contact wsccompetitionsec@gmail.com .

**Is my child ready for competitions and which events should he/she enter?**

The best person to provide advice on this is your child’s coach. The best time to have a chat is before or after training or to contact the coach directly via email.

**What is a disqualification (DQ) and why did it happen?**

Most swimmers get disqualified numerous times during competitive swimming. This can occur for a variety of technical reasons and is very easily done! Although this can be frustrating it should be considered as one of the learning curves in swimming!

Disqualification can occur for reasons such as moving on the blocks, incorrect stroke technique and when turning at the end of the pool to name just a few. A reason will always be provided by meet officials.

Swimmers or parents should not be concerned about this as coaches will explain and seek to remedy any mistakes made in training.

**My child is worried about an upcoming competition, what should I do?**

Competitions particularly the first few your child enters can be a daunting experience for both swimmers and parents. There are plenty of experienced Weymouth parents and swimmers at the club attending competitions. You can always ask them for advice/help and they will be happy to answer any of your questions or point you in the direction of someone who can!

The important thing to remember is that swimming is very much an individual sport. The focus should be on self-improvement over time and everyone has to start somewhere!

First time competitors need only be concerned with recording their first set of times and seek to improve on these gradually through training and technical improvement.

We hope you have found this guide a useful reference for understanding competitive swimming! Should you have any further questions or queries please contact COMPETITIONSEC@GMAIL.COM OR speak to your child’s coach.