



# **Soundwell Swimming Club**

*Established in 1962*

## **Swimmer and Parent Handbook**

**(updated March 2023)**



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This handbook is not exhaustive. It has been put together in order to assist parents and swimmers to navigate the world of club swimming and to offer some practical advice from parents who knew nothing when they joined but learned fairly quickly!!!



## **Club History**

We are a highly successful swimming club, ranked top ten in the South West. Since our formation 60 years ago, we have had a wide range of members competing in competitions from novice through to Olympic trials.

We are one of the largest clubs locally, with over two hundred members from diverse backgrounds who live throughout South Gloucestershire and the surrounding area. We attribute the club's overall success to the hard work and dedication of our swimmers and coaches, as well as the unwavering support of our volunteers, parents and family members.

### Our mission:

- To continually progress the sport of swimming
- Provide swimmers with the best possible coaching and teaching
- Promote the sport and increase participation levels
- Encourage positive mental attitudes and provide a productive and enjoyable environment
- Teach life skills to create well rounded young athletes
- Recognise each individual for their role within the club and the clubs success
- Create a balanced training and competition calendar for each swimmer to achieve their true potential





## **Squad Information**

The club is broken down into seven squads. Squad moves take place at regular intervals and the coaches decide who to move. Each swimmer is considered on their own merit. Training and attendance are taken into account. The change from one group to another may be a big leap and some swimmers would not be able to cope with the extra work at the same time as others.

Squad structure and training information is available on our website.

## **Why Should Your Child Swim?**

- Swimming builds a strong foundation for a lifetime of good health, by teaching healthy fitness habits. Swimming is considered the ideal activity for developing muscular and skeletal growth by many doctors and paediatricians:
- Swimming develops high quality aerobic endurance, the most important key to physical fitness. In other sports an hour of practice may yield as little as 10 minutes of meaningful exercise. Swimming teams use every precious minute of practice time developing fitness and teaching skills.
- Swimming does a better job in proportional muscular development by using all the body's major muscle groups. No other sport does this as well.
- Swimming enhances children's natural flexibility (at a time when they ordinarily begin to lose it) by exercising all of their major joints through a full range of motion.
- Swimming helps develop superior coordination because it requires combinations of complex movements of all parts of the body, enhancing harmonious muscle function, grace, and fluidity of movement.
- Swimming is the most injury-free of all children's sports.
- Swimming is a sport that will bring kids fitness and enjoyment for life.

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## **Training**

Information regarding required equipment can be found on the website. It is vital that swimmers have the correct equipment at every training session.

- Swimmers should be poolside at least 15 minutes before the start of the training session to enable them to perform their pre-pool warm-up exercises. This helps to minimise injuries..
- Swimmers should wear appropriate “sport style” swimsuits. Racing suits should not be worn to train unless specifically requested by the coach.

## **Pool Etiquette**

In order for every swimmer to get the most from their training session the following points should be observed:

- Lane order is set by the coach.
- Unless instructed otherwise leave a 5 second interval from the swimmer in front of you before you set off.
- Know which side of the lane you should be swimming before you set off.
- Don't pull on the lane ropes or wall.
- If you catch up to the swimmer in front of you tap their toes, wait for them to stop and swim past them. If you are caught up by the swimmer behind you, stop, let them swim past and only re-join the lane when there is an appropriate gap. Swimmers should swim at the pace requested by the coach. Swimming the fastest isn't always the right approach! Sometimes your swimmer will work on their technique, where swimming at a slower pace is appropriate to help them develop their strokes. Being the fastest swimmer will not move your child up a lane, or a squad. Coaches will be looking for technique before they can progress.
- Do not sit on the lane rope.
- Always listen to the coach and show respect towards other swimmers who want to listen and learn.
- Move to the side as you finish the set to allow others to swim into the wall correctly.

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# Competing

## Open Meets

So, what is an Open Meet?

Swimmers qualify for the meet based on their PBs. (Personal Best Times) Although they are representing the club, they are to a large part swimming for them self and a time in each event. The coaches select which particular Open Meets the club will attend and support and give guidance on which swimmers should attend and which events should be entered. Where the club supports an Open Meet there will always be a coach present poolside to give the swimmers pre-race instructions and post-race feedback. Team Managers (DBS checked, trained volunteers) look after the swimmers and ensure they are in the right place at the right time to swim in their events.

OK, so the coaches select specific Open Meets for the club to attend, how do you work out if your swimmer should attend and if so which events they should enter?

In part, some of these decisions are made for you as every Open Meet is licensed with Swim England and part of that licensing process determines what level the event is aimed at. It also determines the number and level of qualification for the officials and potentially whether such things as electronic timing are in place.

There are four levels of Open Meet licensing, with each level being defined by certain criteria and the top being

<b>Level 1</b>	50m (Long Course) pool only. No upper limit times and minimum standard qualification times. Suitable for obtaining National or Regional Qualifying Times (QTs)
<b>Level 2</b>	25m (Short Course) pool only. May have upper limit times (although not faster than National Qualifying Times – see below) and minimum standard qualification times are required. Suitable for obtaining National or Regional Qualifying Times
<b>Level 3</b>	Should have upper limit and lower limit qualification times to reflect the standard at which the meet is aimed. Suitable for obtaining QTs for County Champs, Regional Champs and Level 1 or 2 meets. These events are open to swimmers aged 9 and
<b>Level 4</b>	Suitable for obtaining QTs for County Champs and Level 3 meets. Upper qualification times should be in place (other than for club championships) and no lower qualification time is required. These are open to all age groups.

Some points worthy of mention here, firstly the distinction between Long Course and Short Course events. Long course means the event is swum in a 50m pool; short course is a 25m pool. There are conversion factors which allow you to convert a time achieved in a Long Course event to an equivalent Short Course time, an online convertor can be found on the Swim England website. You will be told when a converted time is allowed for entry.

The Open Meet will generally take the age of the swimmer to be as at the last day of the meet itself. Specific events at the Meet will be run for specific age groupings and gender and each event will have times specific to that age/ gender. Sometimes a Meet will set ages as at 31st December of that year. This means your child will be placed in the age band they will be at the end of the year.

Some Meets will use single banded ages (eg 10 years old) others may have double banded ages (eg 9-10 years old or 10 and under – the latter may be shown as U11). Some specific races may not be open to certain ages.

Before entering your swimmer into every possible event you should consider two other things. Firstly the programme of events for the Open Meet and secondly how many swims in total and per session you are going to enter your swimmer for. **Please consult with your child's coach if you are unsure which, and how many, events you enter them for.**



## **Parent and Swimmer guide to Meet Entries**

1. You will receive an email from us notifying you of the competition. The email will contain two links:

- The first link takes you to a summary of the event, including details of the races, age groups, timings, entry criteria and costs of races. This information will be updated as confirmed timings and entries are provided by the Meet organiser. **It is important you read all of this information before you submit your race entries.**
- The second link takes you to a page that allows you to enter your swimmer. Before entering races, please speak with your child's coach to agree which events they should do. You will need to check the qualifying times we have for them with their Swim England rankings personal best times to ensure they are correct, and notify our Competition Secretary if they need updating.

2. Once your entries are submitted, you should transfer the race fees to our Competition Account - details are provided with the race information. **If race fees are not received by the closing date, the entry will not be submitted.**

3. In the event a meet is over-subscribed it may mean some or all of your child's entries are "scratched" (cancelled). Usually this is done by scratching the slowest entries first. If this happens a credit note for the cost of the entry fee will be issued, which can be redeemed against future competitions.

A helpful guide on how to use Team Unify to enter races in the Parents Zone section under the Club tab of our website. If you still need help entering your child for a competition, please email [competition@soundwellswim.org.uk](mailto:competition@soundwellswim.org.uk).

### **On the day of the Meet**

Before the event itself you should remind yourself which events you've entered, you should also ensure that both you and your swimmer are prepared for a potentially long day at the pool. Make sure that both you and your swimmer have enough with you to drink, as swimming pools are invariably very hot places! You might regret wearing those jeans and that polo neck jumper! You will also need suitable snacks and/or breakfast/lunch/tea/supper (or a combination of all!!!)

Also check:

- ☐ You know where the venue is and how long it will take you to get there
- ☐ The time of the warm-up
- ☐ The actual start time of each session
- ☐ Your swimmer has everything they need and is wearing their club T-shirt and/or hoodie
- ☐ Ensure your swimmer knows to Inform the chaperones of any medical information that might be appropriate.

Be aware that there is a "warm up" swim at the beginning of each of the sessions, and your swimmer will be expected to swim in each of these. **Swimmers should arrive poolside no later than 30 mins before the first warm-up of their first session.**

Having deposited your swimmer into the changing area you'll then make your way to the viewing gallery; if this is the first session of the day prepare for a long queue to get in! When you get to the front of the queue be prepared to part with more cash as you will likely be charged for entry and also for a programme. Bear in mind the entries and programmes can be specific to each session or day of the event.

### **Protection and Health and Safety Guidelines.**

**Swimmers need to sit with the Team Managers and coaches so that they are ready for their races and the coach will then be able to prepare them for the race. Swimmers are not permitted to leave the poolside without the permission of the Team Manager. They cannot come to join you in the viewing area during a session or sneak out to see you under the guise of "going to the toilet". You will pay a small 'chaperone' fee for your child to be looked after poolside by a Team Manager (we have to pay for coaches and Team Managers to go poolside, and this cost is split across swimmers attending). Please make their job of keeping up with the swimmers as easy as possible, swimmers constantly wanting to leave poolside is a safeguarding nightmare.**

# **Race Considerations**

## **General Considerations**

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

At the end of all races swimmers must remain in their lane until told to get out by the referee.

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

Flash photography is not allowed at the start of a race.

**STARTS:** 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 take up their position at the edge of the pool (on the blocks, the side of the pool or in the water as appropriate). Swimmers who have not achieved the standard of the ASA Competitive Start Award must start in the water if the start is at the shallow end.

Backstroke starts are always in the water.

When the swimmers are ready the Starter gives the command "Take Your Marks" followed by the signal to "Go", which may be by shot, whistle, klaxon or verbal command. Electronic starting equipment may also have a light to assist hearing impaired swimmers.

Under the One Start Rule now in operation, any swimmer starting before the signal is disqualified at the end of the race. There is no recall of swimmers for a second start. However, if a faulty start occurs (e.g. there is a disturbance) the swimmers may be recalled by blasts on the whistle or klaxon, and a rope is dropped into the water across the pool.

## **Disqualification**

The main reasons for Disqualifications (DQs) are:

- ☐ A false start – there are no 2nd chances on the start, strike one and you are out
- ☐ Incorrect stroke technique
- ☐ Incorrect touch at the finish
- ☐ Finishing on front when swimming backstroke

A false start can consist of no more than the swimmer moving on the starting blocks once the starter has called "Take your marks"! Getting the start right is an important early lesson for our younger swimmers.

The judges and referees have passed examinations (theory and practical) and would prefer not to disqualify, however they have to maintain standards without which some swimmers could gain an unfair advantage.

If your child is disqualified, please use this as a learning experience. It is not the end of the world. It happens to swimmers at all levels and is part of the preparation for later competitive events. It is essential that in addition to being able to swim fast that a swimmer understands the rules and can be disciplined enough to follow them. Disqualification is only done if the official is completely sure that they have seen an infringement of the rules. If they are not sure, they will always give the benefit of doubt to the swimmer.

## **Where do I find my swimmer's times?**

Once your swimmer has participated in an open meet their time will be recorded at:

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

This will be the time that you use on the entry form for their next meet.

There is also a paid app available which can give real time results at Open Meets. Meet Mobile is available through most app search engines.





## **The National Arena Swimming League**

The National Arena Swimming League takes place in October, November and December with the Finals in April. It is a nationwide league with over 400 teams participating. As with the Mini series swimmers are selected to represent the club and confirmation should be e-mailed to the Head Coach. Swimmers are expected to stay until the end of the event. This event is usually targeted at more experienced swimmers.

You can keep track of future dates by going to the Competitions tab of our website and click on the Calendar sub-tab. We tend to follow a regular annual calendar, so you will begin to get a feel for the timing of events each year, which will help you plan your weekends.

Keep checking the website as it is possible for arrival times/venues to change last minute.

There is a Junior version of this event, held on a smaller scale, with rounds taking place in May, June and July. Selection procedure is the same as for the Senior League.

## **The National Arena Junior Swimming League**

This competition takes place using the same format as the National Arena League, and is swum in May, June and July. It is open to swimmers 12 years and under. The league is run 'virtually', with times swum and recorded under gala conditions. We usually team up with other local clubs to make it a better experience for our swimmers.

## **Nutrition at Open Meets and Galas**

If your swimmer is going to be poolside for a couple of hours or more they will need food!! They should be encouraged to eat small and often between races and not just a big meal at lunchtime if they are swimming all day. Food should be nutritious and easily digestible for example:

Pasta/rice	Cereal Bars
Bread/Pita Bread/ Bagels/Muffins	Sports drink/weak squash
Rice cakes	Water
Popcorn	Sweets such as Haribos or jelly babies
Fruit (especially bananas)	

Energy gels or supplements are not recommended for children as these are made to adult strength and are not suitable for children.

Your child will need to carry with them all the food and drink they need for the time they are competing. They will not be able to join you in the spectator area to collect food, or leave poolside to buy food. Please ensure they come with plenty to eat and drink.

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## **Parent Responsibilities**

A successful swimming program involves understanding and cooperation among parents, swimmers, and coaches. The working relationship among these three groups will have a large impact on the progress of your child as a swimmer. You, as a parent, have created a nurturing environment for the development of your child. You have worked hard to impart your values, provide the right training experiences, and model appropriate behaviour. Most of us as parents have hopes, aspirations and expectations for our children, and at times we may not be objective in matters concerning the abilities of our children. We hope the guidelines below will help you keep your child's development in proper perspective:

1. Let the coaches do the coaching. Swimmers and coaches need to develop a trusting relationship as soon as possible regarding swimming matters. Our coaches are trained to use strategies, drills, and workouts to improve skills and help the swimmers confidence in their abilities. If a parent interferes with his or her own ideas or opinions, then he or she may confuse the swimmer or undermine the coach/swimmer relationship. Parents have enough on their plates when it comes to childrearing. Let the coaches shoulder this one burden.
2. The best swimming parent is one who offers love, support, recognition, and encouragement as needed to work hard in practice. These efforts will pay off in terms of confidence to perform well in competition. Remember to encourage your swimmers to do better by striving to improve their times. The swimmer "wins" when he or she improves, not only when they win their particular heat or race.
3. Keep in mind that the pace of development is often uneven and varies from child to child. Everyone learns at his/her own pace, and responds differently to different teaching styles. Some kids may "get worse" before they get better. As they acquire new skills, sometimes swimmers are unlearning poor habits and additional stress may be placed on muscles. They will gradually strengthen and improve.
4. Twelve and under swimmers can be notorious for inconsistency in terms of performance. This can be frustrating for everyone. Be patient, and permit the swimmers to learn to enjoy the sport.
5. Plateaus are inevitable in swimming. They are normal occurrences in every swimmer's career, even Olympic swimmers. Be supportive when your child does not seem to be making progress from meet to meet. Over the course of the year, swimmers will gradually work through these delays.
6. Show your enthusiasm by being involved with the club. Be enthusiastic about Meets or taking your child to training. Stay and watch parts or all of a training session.

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 that the child knows EFFORT as well as success will be rewarded. An over-emphasis on winning by parents can result in fear of failure - with your love and respect being seen by your child as conditional upon winning.

Before reading on think for a moment about how much your child's sport means to you. Now gauge your involvement in your son or daughter's sport by reading through the questions listed below.

- ☐ Do you want your child to win events more than he/she does?
- ☐ Do you show your disappointment if he/she has a poor result?
- ☐ Do you feel that you have to "psyche" your child up before a race?
- ☐ Do you feel that your child can only enjoy swimming if he/she wins?
- ☐ Do you conduct "post mortems" immediately after events or training?
- ☐ Do you feel yourself frequently wanting to interfere during training or competitions thinking that you could do better?
- ☐ Do you find yourself disliking your son or daughter's opponents?

If you have answered "yes" to any of the questions above you may be putting unnecessary pressure on your child, which in turn could lead to his or her eventual rejection of the sport or even lasting damage to your child/parent relationship. The Do's and Don'ts which follow will help you maximise your contribution to your child's sport whilst minimising any adverse effects.

Have you answered the above questions honestly?



### **How Can You Help – Some Do's**

DO respect the Coach's opinion - the coach should be more knowledgeable than you - both about swimming and the development of young swimmers.

DO assess your child's progress - don't be afraid to ask the coach the training plans and objectives. Ask the coach to explain to you the reasons for any decisions you don't understand, by knowing the objectives you will be able to assess your child's progress (perhaps every few months).

DO talk to other parents - it is often a good idea to get to know other parents so that you can share problems or car duties.

DO establish clear lines of communication - in case you need to speak to the coach regarding training or competitions, find out when it is convenient and appropriate to contact him or her, and the best way of doing so. Don't ever address a criticism to or of your child or the coach in front of other parents and swimmers.

DO encourage effort as well as results - don't assess your child's progress solely by how many medals they win. It is important to recognise and reward effort.

DO be generous in your applause - it is important during an event that you applaud all the swimmers' efforts as this acts as encouragement for all the participants.

### **How Can You Help? – Some Don'ts**

DON'T respond to a bad result or mistake with punishment or criticism - give your child time to work out for him or her 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 if the instruction is followed rather than the negative consequences of a mistake or not following the instruction. It is VITAL for a parent to avoid giving an impression that they do not still value a child after a loss.

DON'T turn a blind eye to any bad behaviour, cheating or bad manners by your child - in such instances reasonably prompt action is appropriate. To do otherwise will infer that you condone such behaviour or at least do not consider personal standards and respect of people and rules important in sport.

DON'T forget that your child is still growing - training which may be appropriate for an adult (eg, prolonged repetitive activities and work with heavy weights) can have adverse long term effects on the growth and development of a young child.

DON'T ignore aches and pains - children are often reticent to describe sports-related injuries, especially if it means missing training or a competition; so keep an eye on persistent grumbles about health; it is important to take injuries seriously. If your child has an injury, get professional advice as soon as possible from your GP, Physiotherapist or local Sport's Injury Clinic and speak to your child's coach as soon as possible.

DON'T ignore other children in the family - sometimes brothers and sisters may feel left out or bored if the whole household revolves around the needs of the young swimmer. It is important to try to keep a balance between swimming and the interests of the other members of the family.

DON'T allow the situation to develop where your child is frightened of losing because of the way you respond - a fear of failure can often result in children feigning injury and not entering or withdrawing from competitions.

DON'T force a young child to specialise entirely on swimming - children should be allowed to develop their own preferences.

DON'T always greet your child with "Did you win?" - why not start "Did you enjoy it?"

DON'T say "we" won or "we" lost - it is important that you don't become over-involved in your child's swimming. Remember it is your child who is participating - you are there to support and encourage, not compete.

**Summary: Providing that a child is faced with realistic challenges, swimming should be fun at whatever level they participate. With appropriate parental support, your child will be able to develop his or her athletic potential in an enjoyable, rather than stressful, sports environment. You can provide your child with the opportunity to obtain a sense of achievement, competence and self-worth. Parental example is important. If YOU cannot cope with the ups and downs of your child's swimming life - how can you expect THEM to?**

This section has been adapted and reproduced by kind permission of the Lawn Tennis Association Trust and is based on an original by Stephen Rowley, Bsc, M.Phil. entitled "Parents are important too".



## **Volunteering**

**Please don't skip this page, your child cannot train or compete without volunteers**

The club is run entirely on a voluntary basis and we are always looking for people to help support the club. Even if you can only offer a few hours every now and then your help will be greatly appreciated. From coaching, chaperoning and officiating to administration roles and club desk roles if you offer to help someone will show you what to do!!!

Soundwell's Open Meets cannot take place without enough volunteers and this will mean important club revenue will be lost. If every parent just committed to one thing the mammoth task would be so much easier and less work for everyone.

Volunteering at Meets as a Team Manager or Official is a great way to make the time go quickly as your child spends more time competing. Keeping busy in the long periods where your child isn't racing is preferable to sitting in a crowded, uncomfortable and hot spectator area!

Please contact the club if you are able to help in any capacity - Thank you in advance

## **How Do I Stay Up To Date**

It can seem like a full time job keeping up-to-date with everything you need to know. Best way to stay informed is by checking the website regularly:



<https://uk.teamunify.com/Home.jsp?team=swssc>



@soundwellswim



@soundwellswimclub

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**Anything that is not included in this handbook can probably be found on the website.  
If not, please ask.**

**There is never a daft question!!**