



West Suffolk Swimming Club

Useful Competition Information for Parents of New Swimmers

The parents of new swimmers are often faced with a lot of new terminology about competitions and associated matters. This document attempts to provide some guidance to frequently asked questions.

Competitions - Common Terms

Long Course – a competition held where the pool length is 50 metres.

Short Course – a competition held where the pool length is 25 metres.

Open Meet – a competition open to any swimmer from any club who meets the criteria for entry.

PB – personal best time. This is best time your child has set in a particular event and will be different for Short and long course competition.

DQ (disqualification) – competition referees apply the rules of swimming and a swimmer can be disqualified for a number of reasons. Any infringement of the rules is reported on a British Swimming form which the coach can request to see. If a swimmer does get disqualified, they shouldn't get too down hearted (even swimmers in the Olympics get disqualified!) but speak to their coach to find out what happened and how to prevent it from happening again.

Masters – swimmers over the age of 18 are eligible to compete as masters swimmers (but do not have to and can continue to compete in main stream swimming). Masters swimming operates different competition rules and a different swim season.

Licensed Meet – British Swimming use a Licensing method to grade the competitive ability of the meet, 4 being the lowest and 1 being the highest. The license also dictates certain criteria such as qualifications and numbers of officials, pool format, and entry time criteria.

A Level 4 licence can only be awarded for a Club Championships and some Invitation Galas with a maximum number of teams. Times can only be used for entry into Level 3 Meets and County Championships.

A Level 3 meet is often aimed at development swimmers and usually has an upper cut-off times with the facility to swim a 'Time only' swim i.e. no award, if space allows.

A Level 2 meet must be held in short course pool with a minimum qualifying standards.

A Level 1 meet must be held in a long course format, again with minimum qualifying standards

All Open Meets have to comply with ASA regulations regarding maximum session time/hours per day and therefore must apply a method to reduce entries if oversubscribed. Level 3 Meets can be 'first come, first served (fcfs)' or slowest swimmers across each age group. Level 1 and 2 can only apply the method of rejecting the slowest swimmers across each age group.

Regional qualifying times can only be achieved in a meet licensed at Level 3 or higher.

National qualifying times can only be achieved in Level 1 or 2 meets of the relevant length.

Please see [Swim England Open Meet Licensing Criteria](#)

Competition Age – Every competition has an "age at date" which can be either the date of the competition or 31st December of the competition year. A swimmer cannot enter an open meet until they reach the age of 9, and some competitions have other minimum age requirements for specific events. Swimmers can compete in club championships before this age, as this is not an "open" meet.

ASA Membership – A swimmer must be registered Category 2 in order to take part in an Open Meet. Category 1 is only suitable for those swimmers under the age of 9 or for non-competitive Masters. You can check your swimmers membership details at www.swimmingresults.org/membershipcheck

Withdrawals – Once you have been entered and accepted into the gala, if there are any events you are unable to do on the day, please speak to your coach as they will need to withdraw you from the event. It is becoming increasingly usual for swimmers to be fined for not withdrawing correctly – any fines may have to be paid by the parent before the swimmer can compete again in a competition. This procedure is typical for Licensed 1 and 2 competitions and championships (County, Regional, National).

Signing in – Some Level 3 and 4 competitions operate a sign in procedure. The swimmer must sign in for each race they have entered by a specified time (often no later than warm up start time). If they do not sign in, they will not be allowed to compete in that event on the day. If you are delayed or stuck in traffic when travelling to a gala, please call the coach urgently, who may be able to sign you in.

Rankings Database – British Swimming keep a record of all times achieved at Licensed meets – you can access this at www.swimmingresults.org/individualbest/ Competition results are usually loaded within a few days of a competition. Check your PB's against this when entering new competitions. Some competitions, mainly Level 1 will require entry times to be retrieved automatically from the rankings database, and may apply a conversion (from short course to long course) to determine a swimmer's fastest time.

Competitions – General Information

Open Meets

These are Licensed at a level as referred to above. In an open meet, a swimmer is usually swimming to improve their PB and to attain qualifying times for County, Regional or National events. The club enters many open meets throughout the year and your coach will direct you towards which competitions and events to enter. We try to get these meets as local as possible however sometimes it is important to go further afield so our swimmers can compete against different swimmers. Some meets, specifically Level 3, work on a first come first served basis – i.e. the meet can only accommodate a certain number of swimmers and those applying first get preference over those applying later. This is why we set application dates in advance of the meet closing date, to give our swimmers every chance of being selected.

WSSC run two 'home' Open Meets every year; The A'May'zing Spring Development Meet (L3 fcs) in May, this is aimed at Junior Squads and provides a chance to post qualifying times for the Suffolk County Development Meet.

The Neate Meet (L3) in early October, is aimed at Development/Competitive swimmers and is a last chance opportunity for Winter Regionals QT's.

As well as being good competitions for our swimmers these raise a significant amount of money for the club, and goes towards greatly reducing monthly swim fees. We encourage all parents to put themselves forward to help, we always need new volunteers coming through the ranks to ensure continuity for our future swimmers. No specialist knowledge is needed and you won't be asked to do anything without help, you won't miss your swimmers' races (no spectator fee is payable when helping) and most people find it is more enjoyable to do something useful to help your swimmer/s and be part of a team than just sit and watch. Please speak to any Coach or Committee Member if you need more information.

Club Championships are held in December **Licensed Level 4** so that swimmers can gain entry times for other competitions, including County Championships. We offer a full programme of events and accept all entries from WSSC members (this is a closed meet, i.e. not open to other clubs)

We do encourage as many of our swimmers as possible to participate in this event. It is a good opportunity for some of the younger swimmers to compete against their team mates in familiar surroundings, and for those more experienced to update Rankings times in less favoured events. We operate a FINA points system across specific

events for best total points in each age group and awards are made at the Club Presentation event in early January. We also include a 'Medley Skins' which is a knock-out event with a cash prize award. Please see Club Championship Rules + Conditions for more information.

What Level of swimming should my child aspire to?

County Championships

West Suffolk SC is a competitive club and we hope everyone in the club reaches a minimum standard of going to the County Championships. These are held in January/February each year across four separate weekends. To qualify for the championships you must achieve the minimum entry times set by the County ASA. These times must be recorded on the British Swimming database and must have been set after 1st March in the prior year. Please note you cannot compete in more than one County in any year and you must have been a member of WSSC for 3 months prior to the entry closing date.

Regional Championships

We also want as many swimmers as possible to attain Regional qualifying times. Regional championships are held over two weekends in April (Youth 15+) and May (Age Group 14/under) in 50m pools at Inspire: Luton Sports Village and Norwich UEA Sportspark. Qualification is achieved by meeting minimum entry times in the 12 months prior to the current competition. Regional championship medals are awarded for the top three in each event and age group, with finals being held for all 50m, 100m and 200m events. In addition the Region runs a shortcourse Winter Championships in November, where anyone can enter who achieves a minimum qualifying standard.

National Championships

For those swimmers who reach Regional level, their next challenge is to attain National qualifying times. The National events are held over 2 Championships in July and August. British Swimmers ranked in the top 24 in their age group for an event are invited to the British Summer Championships. The next 20 ranked English swimmers are invited to the ASA National Championships. If you wish to compete for a different Home Nation other than England, this must be recorded by the ASA. Ranking times must be set within the qualifying window (March-May). There is also the National Winter Championships held in December which is a Short Course competition and qualifying times must have been achieved in a Level 2 Meet.

The swimming season runs from September – August

WSSC attend a wide cross section of competitions to suit the progression of the membership, these include:-

Open Meets at different licence levels and across different course length.

Championships County, Regional and National

League Competitions (see selection policy) and Novice Team Galas, these are team competitions and whilst coaches want swimmers to swim fast and achieve personal best times, the primary aim is to gain valuable team points. As in many sports, winners and losers can be promoted and relegated the following season.

In the **National League** we compete in the East Midlands section with three rounds held in October, November and December of each year. We also compete in two Suffolk based leagues, the Winter League and the Summer League. Each League has its own set of rules, age-groups and events, swimmers will be selected to swim a particular event which won't be advised until the day of the competition. A swimmer should be honoured to be selected and it should be the aim of any swimmer to make it into a club team and they are therefore expected to make themselves available if at all possible. All swimmers must be prepared for whatever is required for the team which may be one or more individual event plus or only a relay. These competitions are fast paced and good fun, all swimmers are expected to vocally support their team mates and remain on poolside for the entirety of the competition. Team Galas are usually unlicensed and therefore times are not recorded on the Rankings database and cannot be used as qualification for Level 1 / 2 competitions.

In-House Mini Galas (non licensed). To promote racing experience for our youngest swimmers, provide a social format for development swimmers and to recruit parent helpers in a low key environment.

Swimmers may also receive a call up from Suffolk County ASA to represent them at an InterCounty competition.

Entering an Open Meet

The Club fixtures calendar is organised around qualification dates and the training cycle to achieve optimum performance. Competing during a block of heavy training will often result in a time outside of your personal best. For these Open Meets, all entries are made to WSSC who will submit an electronic file entry to the Host Club and full payment for the whole team – payment therefore must be made to WSSC inclusive of a £1 per swimmer fee which is used to offset the purchase cost of poolside passes for the Coaches in attendance.

Please check the internal Club closing date and ensure your entry reaches the Entries Secretary by that date (email entry with BACS payment is perfectly acceptable) A list of received entries will be published on the website to check everyone who wishes to enter has done so) The team entry will then be processed and sent to the Host Club, after this time, no more entries will be accepted. The Club have to pay for the whole team entry at time of submission therefore if paying by BACS, please ensure this is done promptly at time of entry, unless otherwise instructed. We do not have time to chase late payments and this may affect acceptance of future entries.

Please study the programme thoroughly to ensure you enter a selection of events across the sessions and allow recovery time particularly if there are finals. A full weekend on poolside can be very draining and it can be a good idea to be selective about sessions. You do not need to enter every event your swimmer qualifies for. There can be an awful lot of hanging around for the swimmers (and parents) after warm-up and between races so please come prepared with music/books/games/homework to keep them occupied. Once you have entered, you are then committed to the cost of those events. It is not possible to get a refund if you decide to withdraw from some races nearer the time. All the latest information regarding the Meet; entry lists/timing etc will be published on the WSSC website 'Events' tab, please make this your first port of call before asking.

Please be aware when entering Level 1 Meets, these can get very busy particularly in the National Qualifying Window (NQW). Swimmers who have not achieved Regional standard should not be looking to enter L1 Meets. Some Clubs have to make wholesale rejections from the slower swimmers in each age group which can result in a swimmer being left with hardly any of their chosen events. Unfortunately it is not possible to get a refund for any 'accepted' race regardless of whether it is still worthwhile attending. Also please ensure that any necessary hotel bookings are made on a flexi basis or after the 'accepted list' is published.

Non-Club Meets

It is understood that in certain circumstances a swimmer may wish to enter an Open Meet which is not on the Club Calendar.

This can be done by an Individual Paper Entry and payment to the Host Club providing they will accept this.

WSSC will **not** be providing a Coach in attendance and if there are a number of swimmers (usually more than 6) the Host Club may request a Team Manager (DBS checked) for whom a 'Coach Pass' must be purchased and/or a Licenced Official. Please note that WSSC cannot be involved in organising this for you.

WSSC do not encourage swimmers to 'over compete' and continually chase times, this often results in the swimmer becoming demoralised by negative progress and takes valuable time out of the training schedule.

Results will not be recorded on the WSSC database.

Gala Guide

What equipment do we need?

- WSSC swim hat (plus a spare)
 - Goggles (and spare pair)
 - Racing Costume (and a spare). It is generally not a good idea to wear training costumes such as 'Uglies' for competing as they are not streamlined and create resistance which is good for training but not racing. Older swimmers often warm up in training costumes and change into racing costumes when the meet starts. Please note FINA regulations stipulate you may only wear a single costume, when racing (no layering)
 - Pullbuoy and kickboard – some competitions allow you to use this equipment in warm up – please check with your coach.
- Towels- minimum of 2 and maybe 3 if there all day – swimmers have a habit of getting their towels soaked very quickly!
- Other kit – wear team WSSC T shirt, hoodie, shorts, tracksuit bottoms and **poolside shoes**

What food and drink should I take to a Gala?

The quantity of food depends on the duration/number of sessions you are competing in. The coach will give guidance on this however we recommend a number of drinks (non fizzy) as dehydration can be an issue and food that can be snacked upon during the day. It is not advisable to consume heavy, carbohydrate rich foods just before racing.

How do I get there?

We do not provide transport for Open Meets and you are expected to make you own way to the venue – car share is encouraged whenever possible.

For team events, we may at times provide a coach if the venue is further afield. This is primarily for Swimmers, Coaches, Team Managers and Officials however any extra seating will be allocated to parent spectators on a 'first come, first served basis for a small charge. If we do hire a coach then Swimmers are expected to all travel together to encourage team bonding.

What time should I turn up?

All competitions publish a warm up and start time for each session, please aim to arrive around 30 mins prior to warm-up to allow time to change and for the attending Coach to brief swimmers on what they are swimming and allows for sign-in and withdrawals if required.

Heat-seeding

Competitions are run on a basis where swimmers of similar time ability compete against each other in a heat. This can often mean your child will swim against a child of the same age but this is not always the case. Hence later heats will be the faster heats. This explains why we hear young swimmers saying "why didn't I get a medal when I won my race" – it is excellent news when they win their heat, however there may be swimmers of the same age who are faster and swim in a later heat. Programmes can be used by parents to gauge where their child is relative to others in a competition.

How do I know what age-group my child will compete in?

A swimmer competes in an age category as defined by the competition rules. Generally, the age is determined by the last day of the competition or is as 31st December in the year of competition.

What if I need to withdraw on the day of the competition?

We hope parents only have to withdraw swimmers in exceptional circumstances as the time and administration required to make changes, particularly at the last minute, is extensive. In all League/Team competitions, we have to submit team sheets in electronic format in advance of entering, hence one withdrawal might impact the Coach having to put swimmers

in different age-groups (swim-up) and events and might possibly prevent a relay team from taking part if there are not enough swimmers in that age-category. Therefore please think carefully before deciding a social event is the preferred choice on the day! Please inform the Head Coach by phone/email as soon as possible if you have to withdraw your child.

Expectations of the swimmer during a Gala

Make sure you have all kit and equipment prepared for the day – it is best when the swimmer takes responsibility for getting their own bag ready. Take sufficient fuel ‘nutritious snacks and drinks’ – not all Sports Centre cafeterias stock appropriate food for competition swimmers. Nobody performs well on burger and chips.

If there is a sign-in required, please do this in plenty of time or you may find you have been withdrawn from your race and it will probably be unlikely that you can be re-instated. Please do not sign-in or withdraw any other competitor.

Warm-up is there for a reason, do not think it is acceptable to miss your warm-up session and if the Club Captains are running a ‘dry’ warm-up please ensure you take part in this promptly and fully.

Know when your races are in the programme and be available poolside when the Team Manager will send you to Marshalling – please do **not** disappear to sit with parents in the spectator gallery during a session in which you are swimming. Coaches and Team Managers do not have time to go looking for you and you may miss your race.

Make time to talk to your Coach before their race if possible and **always** return to your Coach immediately after you swim (even if you are disappointed with your performance) for feedback. During a busy competition, a Coach will have moved on to other Swimmers if you choose to speak to parents first.

At all times be polite to Officials and other helpers such as Marshalls on poolside, they all have a job to do and they are all volunteers - even if you consider yourself an experienced swimmer, it is not a reason to ‘dodge’ the Marshalling process however tedious you may find it.

Display good sportsmanship with other competitors and support your team mates.

Clear up any rubbish from your designated team area on poolside.

Do not make a noise when a race is about to start or walk around the starting area once the Referee has blown his whistle for the next race.

Do not leave your lane at the end of a race until the Referee has told you to, or the next race has started (over the top starts). Under **NO** circumstances do you climb out over the timing pads but exit by the nearest steps.

No swimmers are allowed to take photographs on poolside or in the changing area.

Please do not leave the team area without telling the Coach or Team Manager where you are going. Any problems should be advised to the Coach/Team Manager at the earliest opportunity.

Enjoy yourselves

