

## New to Competitive Swimming?

What you need to know about entering swimming meets.

So your child has been swimming at club nights for a while and has decided to take the plunge and enter a competition. To help make this as easy as possible (for both you and your child) the following explanations may help.

- 1) **Meets** – a swimming competition is called a Meet.
- 2) **Flyers** – a Meet will be advertised on a Flyer – these are placed electronically on our Meet Information page on our website - <http://www.swimtawa.org.nz/meetinformation.php> Sometimes a hard copy is placed on our club noticeboard at the end of the pool.
- 3) **Important Information on a Flyer**
  - (a) **Level of Meet** - there are many different levels of meets – from novice/entry level meets to NZ Opens and Olympic Qualifying meets. It is important that you read the flyer to determine if the meet is the right level for you. If you are relatively new to competing we suggest you start with the Gold Coast meets and any meet that has the word Novice in its title. Most of these meets accept entries with No Times (more about this shortly). Once you have a few of these entry level meets under your belt you will be ready to move up to Signature Meets.
  - (b) **Type of meet** – Short course or Long course. A short course meet is swum in a 25m pool. A long course meet is swum in a 50m pool. So a 50m freestyle in a SC pool would be 2 lengths. A 50m freestyle in a long course pool would be 1 length. The flyer should tell you if it is a SC or LC meet.
  - (c) **Event restriction** – some meets limit the number of events you can swim – so read the flyer carefully.
  - (d) **No Times (NT)** – the flyer will tell you if No Times (NT) are accepted. If you have never competed before then you won't have a time for any event. This is called a No Time (NT). Some meets do not let you enter if you don't have a time – you will see the words "*No times are not acceptable*" (or something similar). So to start with you may find you are chasing your tail trying to get times – you can't enter a meet unless you have times for the events you want to swim, and you can't get the times because you can't enter the meet! This is why you need to start with Gold Coast and Novice meets (see (a) above). Once you have a few times you are on your way!
  - (e) **Qualifying times** – some meets don't just say *no times are not acceptable* they also set criteria stating you can only swim at this meet if you have swum faster than the qualifying times. Examples of these meets are Wellington Champs, National Meets, etc. If you are aged 12 or under have a look at the NZ Juniors flyer on our website (held in February each year) and check out the qualifying times – it will list the times you need for each event (e.g. 50 free, 100 Free, 200 Free etc) to be able to enter that meet. Then have a look at this year's Wellington Champs qualifying times (these are held in January and August/September each year) – you will see they were a lot easier (slower) than the Juniors.

(f) **Qualifying Period** – as well as having qualifying times some meets also state a qualifying period – that is you must have swum the qualifying time within the period they state (usually within the last 12-18 months). This doesn't apply to our Gold Coast, Novice or Signature meets, but does apply to Wellington Champs and National meets.

(g) **Converted times** – you may also see the words – converted times accepted. This takes us back to point (b) – long course or short course. If you swim a 50m freestyle in a short course pool in 1 min and 20 seconds this converts to 1:20.85 Long Course – that is they expect it to take you longer to swim the same distance in a 50m pool. So if you have swum an event in a 25m pool and have a time, and you are now entering a meet that is going to be in a long course pool (and it has qualifying times) then our Race Secretary will convert your short course time to long course to make sure you still qualify. This may sound confusing, but once you've been competing for a year you will see how it works. Traditionally there are 2 seasons to the competitive year - the Long Course season (over the summer months) and the Short Course season (over the Winter months). But as Wellington only has two 50m pools, we do swim a lot of SC meets. You can find a time converter calculator on our website here

<http://www.swimtawa.org.nz/poollengthconversiontool.php>

(h) **Closing date** – this is a very important piece of information – not just the closing date on the flyer, but the closing date on our meet information page on our website. **The most important closing date for the swimmer is the one on our website** – you must have your entries in by that date otherwise you will miss out. The date on the flyer is the date our Race Secretary must have processed your entries (checked whether you are eligible to swim that meet etc) and have sent them to the hosting club.

(i) **How to enter** – most entries are done on our website – beneath the flyer will be entry instructions – we use google docs for the majority of entries. So click on the link and enter the meet. The information is then placed in a spreadsheet which is also viewable on the meet information page – so you can see which of your friends have entered. It is a good idea to print off the flyer first, highlight the events you want to enter and have this next to you when you do your entry. At smaller meets, such as the Gold Coast, try not to enter races that are directly after each other (the order on the flyer is the order events are swum) as you may not have time to get out of the pool and back to the starting blocks and this may mean you miss your race! For some meets the Race Secretary will ask you to email your entries directly to her.

(j) **Officials** – swimming needs a huge number of officials for any meet to take place and our club policy is that every child swimming needs to have a named person who can act as an official. If you are a newbie we start you off with time keeping, but we do hope that parents will look at learning some of the more involved roles – such as Inspector of Turns (IOT), Marshalling, Team Manager and so on. If you are interested in finding out more about official training then contact our officials' coordinator - [officials@swimtawa.org.nz](mailto:officials@swimtawa.org.nz)

(k) **Paying for the meet** – once you have entered online you need to pay. This applies to ALL meets EXCEPT FOR GOLD COAST MEETS. The flyer will tell you how much it is per event. Work out how much you owe and pay it directly into **Tawa Swimming Club's bank account** (details are on our website). We have to pay the hosting club for entries prior to the meet and therefore we need your payment for the Meet when you enter it. Failure to pay for the Meet may place your entry in jeopardy.

NOTE: Once entries have closed we are unable to give refunds. So before entering a meet make sure you are committed to attend otherwise it could get very expensive for you.

With Gold Coast meets you pay at the door on the day of the meet.

(l) **Entered but now can't swim?** – please let us know if you have entered a meet and now can't swim for whatever reason. If it is more than a day or two before the meet then contact the race secretary – [racesec@swimtawa.org.nz](mailto:racesec@swimtawa.org.nz) If officials for the meet have already been named (check the meet information on the website) then contact the Team Manager. If you have difficulty reaching anyone contact the coach – [coach@swimtawa.org.nz](mailto:coach@swimtawa.org.nz) In certain circumstances refunds may be given on production of a medical certificate, but this doesn't apply to all meets. Failure to turn up at some meets will incur penalty payments, payable by the swimmer.

(m) **Disqualifications (DQs)** – it happens to all swimmers – even Olympians! Don't get disheartened if you get disqualified – it is actually one of the best ways to learn. You hear the coach telling swimmers at training to make sure they touch the wall with two hands in breaststroke, but it is not until the swimmer gets disqualified in a race for touching with just 1 hand that the rule sinks in. So if your child gets disqualified ask the coach what it was for so you can help explain to your child where they went wrong. It's not the end of the world if you get a DQ and the younger swimmers often cope with it best if mum and dad stand back and let the coach or team manager tell the swimmer where they went wrong. Swimmers make resilient people.

(n) **Have fun!** – most importantly of all have fun when you are competing! Don't forget to bring your togs, towels, goggles (a spare pair as well if you have them), Tawa swim cap, food and drink – note swim meets are not the place for fizzy drinks and junk food. The Parents handbook (o) has a great section on nutrition for swimmers.

(o) **Parents Handbook** – a useful tool for parents and it can be found [here](#).