



Marshfield Area YMCA Sharks Swim Team

How to Equip Your Child for Competitive Swimming

If you're reading this, it means you have either taken the leap into competitive swimming, or are considering doing so. Congratulations! This sport has created some of the world's most successful people – and we don't mean in the pool. The lessons your child will learn in this sport translate very well into real-life success. This guide is to help first-year swimming parents equip their kids for success during their critical first season, so they will feel encouraged to stay in the sport long enough for it to have a meaningful impact on their lives.

What to Bring to Practice

1. Swim suit (mandatory).

What kind of suit doesn't really matter. The main things to look for are a comfortable and secure fit, relatively low drag, and durability. For girls, make sure they will stay on when diving, and make sure the cut doesn't restrict movement. For boys, either a brief or jammer style (one that is cut at the knees) works best. Regular swimming trunks create a lot of drag, making it harder for the swimmer to make forward progress.

2. Goggles (optional).

Although goggles aren't a must-have, they make a huge difference in one's comfort in the water, making it easier for a swimmer to focus on the actual swimming. There are many types of goggles out there – try going to a sports store that allows customers to try them on. We're looking for goggles that are adjustable and fit the swimmer's face, as well as comfort and a somewhat smaller profile. Goggles the size of Kansas are more likely to fall off when a swimmer dives in!

3. Hair Tie/Cap (optional).

For swimmers with long hair, it is nearly impossible to swim properly when their hair is in their face. Tie it back each day with a hair tie, or better yet, use a swim cap. The cap reduces drag and also helps reduce the “straw hair” phenomenon that our good friend chlorine provides. If you need a cap, we are providing the old-style team caps free, until they're gone – just ask!

4. Water Bottle (optional).

For every hour a swimmer is in the pool, they release over a cup of sweat into the pool. Now we know why our friend chlorine is around all the time, and why we might want a water bottle! Water bottles help our kids quench their thirst without having to interrupt practice with a trip to the drinking fountain.



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What to Bring to Meets

A first swim meet is like the first day at school – new environment, new kids, and a whole new set of societal norms to learn. Swim meets are where all of the training is put to the test, and where kids get to learn how to balance pressure and competition with focus and sportsmanship.

1. See the last page.

All of the things your child needs to swim in practice, he or she will also need in the water to compete. Does your child need an expensive racing suit for their first swim meet? No! Start worrying about that at the Olympic Trials, and not until then!

2. One or more towels.

Most kids will do a warm-up swim before the meet even starts, and will usually swim 2-4 events per day at a meet. Having a spare towel handy will help your swimmer stay comfortable when the first one gets waterlogged.

3. Backups.

Goggles break, suits rip, and caps break too! Although a swimmer can go without a cap or goggles if they have to, it certainly doesn't hurt to be prepared.

4. Things to Do.

Once you endure your first swim meet, this will become your #1 priority! A lot of time can pass in between events, and it can be especially boring if you're not prepared. Reading material, homework, games, etc. can all help keep everyone sane while waiting hours for their next event. This goes for the parents too!

5. a. Cash b. Food c. Both

If the swim meet is a long one, you'll probably get hungry and/or thirsty. Bringing a cooler along for an indoor picnic is certainly a good idea. Because your swimmer will likely be drawn to the concession stand, cash is a good idea too. Once you've helped run a concession stand, you'll learn to love it when parents pay in small bills (wink, wink!).

6. Places to Sit

Most larger swim meets set up a gym or common rest area for swimmers & parents, which is nicer than sitting in the bleachers for hours at a time. However, these rest areas don't typically include furniture. Lawn chairs & sleeping bags are popular.

Anything Else?

There are a million different tips & tricks for what you & your kids might need for swim practices and/or meets. Your best resources are the veteran parents – they've been through the first year, and they haven't forgotten it! Feel free to ask, and they'll help. Also, the social contact will help cover the boredom at swim meets!