



## ***Swim meet handbook***

Enjoy your family's journey into this wonderful sport!

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***Extraordinary Athletes***  
***Extraordinary Swim Club***

## Weekend Meets

There are weekend meets in Minnesota & Wisconsin that registered U.S.A. RVSC swimmers can compete in. Weekend meets are strictly voluntary and at the family's additional expense. Meets usually are two days, most often weekends, and swimmers may attend one or both days. They are also a lot of fun!

Swim meets are organized throughout the year for various ability levels. Even novices can participate in the competitive experience. Meets are an important part of the training and swimmers are encouraged to attend meets. A RVSC coach will email a 'meet notice' to parents for each team approved meet. Be sure to read the meet information and identify the number events and time standards required to attend. If your swimmer qualifies for the meet, simply email a coach of what days you want to attend. Once our web page meet registration is running, parents will be able register for a meet via the web site.

In general, short course (25 yard pool) meets will start in October and finish in March with the age group Finals and State Championship meets. April through July is generally the long course (50 meter pool) season. Finals & state meets will require qualifying times to attend. Detailed qualifying times for each age and gender can be found on the USA swim site. In addition, our team may attend several invitational meets when it is appropriate for the team.

### How to sign up for a meet

Check the website under the **meet info** tab & watch for a coach email about that meet. Included will be a team deadline to enter the meet. The team deadline is earlier than the meet entry deadline. Included in the **fall meets** will be a link that contains important details such as:

- o **Name** and **date** of the meet
- o **Location** of the meet
- o **Directions** to the pool (meet).
- o **Age groups** for the meet (10 and U: 10 years and under group etc. Note for each meet, this can change slightly. Please pay close attention as this will affect which session your swimmer will swim). (ALL USA meets use 1st day of the meet to calculate swimmer's age for the meet).
- o **Order** (sequence) **of events**.
- o **Event Limit** (per meet, per session)
- o **Sessions** (how many session in how many days), warm-up and start times etc.
- o **Qualification time** if a meet requires it (such as A/B meet, pre-C meet).
- o **Event fees**

If you qualify for and are interested in attending the meet, respond to the coach's email before the team deadline. Include which day(s) you would like to attend.

Coaches will select events and set up relays for the meet. Swimmers' best time for each event will be automatically entered by the computer. If you haven't swum a particular event, you will be entered as NT for no time. USA time standards and individual swimmers may also find their official times on the USA swimming website: [www.usaswimming.org](http://www.usaswimming.org)

Once all the RVSC entries have been processed, those entries will be sent out in an email for you to review before a coach submits them to the host team. Please be prompt to review and respond if there is an error in your entries – you usually have 24-48 hours to respond for any necessary correction. After that time, we will not be able to correct as the entries are submitted to the host team

USA swim meets are preseeded meets. When the swimmer arrives at the meet, the events, heats, and lane assignments are printed in a program, this 'heat sheet' is sold by the host club.

### Time standards

There are two Time Standards, Short Course (25 yard pools) and Long Course (50 meter pools). The Chisago & Osceola pools are a 25 yard pool, or short course.

The Summer A / B State and Champ meets are held in long course pools, Winter, in short course pools. The time standards are listed by stroke and distance, being divided by sex and age group. The time standards you will find listed note 'C', 'B', 'A', 'Champ', and 'Zone' times. (The 8 and under group does not have the 'Zone' time standard.) These are the times your swimmer needs to swim to qualify for various swim meets at the end of the season.

Swim meets are a great family experience! They're a place where the whole family can spend time together. Listed below are some guidelines geared to help you through the first couple of swim meets. Once you have attended one or two meets this will all become very routine. Please do not hesitate to ask any other veteran River Valley Swim Club parent for help or information. These meets are a lot of fun for the swimmers! He/she gets to visit with friends, play games, and meet kids from other teams. He/she gets to 'race' and see how much he/she has improved from all the hard work put in at practice.

### **Before the meet starts**

- Arrive at the pool about 10 minutes before the scheduled warm-up time begins. This time will be listed in the meet information emailed out to all River Valley Swim Club members. Upon arrival, find a place to put your swimmer's swim bag. The team usually sits in one place, together, so look for some familiar faces. Make sure your swimmer has his/her cap, goggles, sweatshirt, and towel. Parents should find a spot to sit in the spectator section.
- Kids should find the coach and check in. Coach will tell them where to go and what to do.
- Once "checked in," parents may write each event-heat-lane number on your swimmer's forearm in permanent ink. This will help your swimmer remember what events he/she is swimming and what event number to listen or look for on the display board.
- Swimmer's bodies are just like cars on a cold day- he/she needs to get the engine going and warmed-up before he/she can go fast. A coach will supervise and direct the warm up. **Sit and slip in entries** are required at all meets. Those failing to do so may be disqualified.
- After warm-up, your swimmer may go back to the area where his/her towels are and sit there until the next event is called. This is a good time to make sure he/she goes to the bathroom if necessary, gets a drink, or just gets settled down.
- The meet will usually start about 10 minutes after the warm-ups are over.
- According to USA Swim Rules (because of insurance purposes), parents are not allowed on deck unless they are serving in an official capacity. Similarly, all questions concerning meet results, an officiating call or the conduct of the meet, should be referred to the coaching staff. They, in turn, will pursue the matter through the proper channels.
- A heat sheet is usually for sale in the lobby or concession area of the pool. Heat sheets/programs usually sell for anywhere from \$2.00 - \$8.00. It lists all swimmers in each event in order of 'seed time.' When the team entries are sent in, each swimmer and his/ her previous best time in that event is listed. If the swimmer is swimming an event for the first time, he/she will be entered as 'no-time' or 'NT'. A 'no-time' swimmer will most likely swim in one of the first heats of the event.

### **When the meet starts**

- It is important for any swimmer to know what event number he/she is swimming (again, that is why they should have the numbers on their arm.) He/she may swim right away after warm-up or they may have to wait awhile.
- A swimmer's event number will be called, usually over the loudspeaker, and /or listed on a display board. Swimmers should report with cap and goggles to the starting end of the pool several heats prior to their scheduled event.
- Your swimmer should check-in with the lane timer prior to the event. Timers will call for and check the names of the swimmers prior to the heat, but seldom will the referee hold the heat to wait for a swimmer. Talking to the coach and getting to the block on time are the swimmers' responsibilities.
- The swimmer swims their race.
- After each race a swimmer :
  - a. Should ask the timers (behind the blocks at each lane) for his/her time.
  - b. Should go to a coach for any discussion.

- Things you, as a parent, can do after each swim:
  - a. Tell your swimmer what they did well! The coaching staff will be sure to discuss stroke technique with them. You need to tell him/her how proud you are.
  - b. Tell your swimmer to relax and look forward, together, to the next race.
  - c. This is another good time to check out the bathrooms, get a drink or eat (light).
  - d. The swimmer now waits until his/her next event is called.
- When a swimmer has completed all of his/her events, he/she and their parents can go home. Make sure to check with the coach before leaving to make sure your swimmer is through and is indeed free to go.

### **A disappointing swim?**

If a child has a poor race and comes to you feeling bad, talk about the good things. The first thing you say is, "Hey, you tried hard." Then you can go on and talk about the good things the child did. You never should have a discussion overemphasizing the negative aspects. If your child comes up to you and says, "That was a bad race," there is nothing wrong with a swimmer negatively evaluating a race. The important thing is for the child not to dwell on it. You should move your swimmer on to something good. "All right, you had a bad race. How do you think you can do better next time?" Immediately start talking about the positive things and the next race.

### **What to take to a meet**

- Most important: swim suit, goggles, cap and towel.
- More towels: your swimmer will be there awhile, so pack several.
- Something to sit on. i.e: sleeping bag, old blanket, or anything that will be comfortable to sit on. The swimmers and you will be spending a lot of time on it.
- Sweat suits or sweat shirts. Each swimmer may want to bring several because they can get wet and soggy.
- T-shirts: two or three. Same reason as above.
- Travel games, books, coloring books, video games...anything to pass time.
- Each swimmer should bring a small cooler. They usually need snacks at the longer meets.

### **\*\*SPECIAL PARENT'S NOTE\*\***

Indoor pool areas are usually very warm. Therefore, you need to ensure you dress appropriately. Nothing is worse than being hot at a swim meet. It makes the time pass VERY slowly! Dress in shorts and t-shirts. If cold outside for an indoor meet, put a pair of sweats over your pool outfit.

For outdoor meets, pack for all kinds of weather. It's not always sunny and warm. Weather can change quickly, so bring outerwear appropriate for rain or shine and tents, umbrellas, & folding chairs may be wise.

Good nutrition is necessary for optimal performance. Try to avoid sugary treats and focus on low glycemic carbs (grapes, apples, wheat bran, pasta) prior to the meet. It is very important that your swimmer stay well hydrated during a meet. Dehydration contributes to muscle fatigue, cramps and poor recovery. *If they wait until they are thirsty to drink, it is too late.* Bring healthy snack foods such as bananas, bagels, power bars, cheese and crackers in a cooler.

## Swimming Terminology

Like all sports, swimmers have their own language. This can sound like a foreign language for those new to USA swimming. Below are some of the more common words/terms and their meanings.

**Age Group Championships:** Championship meet that is held twice a year in March and July. This meet requires qualifying times. Swimmers must make the qualifying times in order to swim in the meet.

**Age Group:** Division of swimmers during meets according to age. Groups are usually divided into 8 & Unders, 9-10, 11-12, 13-14 and Senior. Senior is typically open to all age groups. Even though your swimmer may be in the same heat with another age group, s/he will actually only be competing against his/her own age peers.

**Blocks:** The starting platforms located behind each lane.

**Circle seeding:** In meets with prelims and finals, seeding for the last 3 heats of an event is "circle seeded". This means that the fastest entered time is in the middle lane of the last heat, the second fastest is in the middle lane of the next to the last heat and the 3rd fastest in the third to the final heat. The 4th fastest is then placed in the last heat, 5th in the next to last, etc. This allows a larger number of swimmers to have someone to pace off.

**Deck seeding:** For longer events (400 yd/m), heats are established the day of the meet based on a positive check-in that day. This helps ensure that there are no empty lanes, shortening the time for the event. There is usually a penalty for the swimmer who does not swim in a deck-seeded event in which s/he is checked-in. The swimmer will usually be disqualified from swimming his/her next event.

**Disqualification (DQ):** A swimmer may be disqualified by performing the start, stroke or turn of a race illegally. The swimmer will be told what s/he did wrong by an official and the coach. Always encourage your child and *do not* let your swimmer be upset by a DQ. It has happened to ALL swimmers at one time or another, including at the Olympics. It is a learning experience.

**Event:** A race or series of races in a given stroke and/or distance.

**False Start:** A DQ declared by the starter and referee if there is a problem with the start of the race. A false start will be declared if a swimmer leaves the block early in either an individual or relay event. In an individual event the swimmer may be disqualified for movement (e.g., rocking) once set on the block before the start of the heat. If a false start is called, there may be multiple beeps or whistles to alert the swimmers to stop the race. A race may be continued even if a swimmer has false started. The disqualification will occur after the swim is complete.

**Fly-overs:** Most USA swim meets use "fly-over starts" to shorten the meet. When these starts are used, the swimmer completing the previous race stays in the water while the next heat swimmers "dive over" their heads. The swimmers must be aware that they will be called to the block while swimmers in the previous heat are still completing their event and that after their swim they need to stay in the water, against the wall, until the following heat is in the water.

**Heat:** Since each event can have many participants, swimmers are divided into "heats" according to their entry time. Swimmers with no previously established times are entered as "no time" (NT) and will swim first. In general, unless noted or circle seeded, the progression of the heats is from slowest to fastest. Distance events (400 yd/m or over) are often swum fastest to slowest to allow the faster swimmers to complete the session earlier. While heat ribbons may be given to swimmers who win their heats, the overall awards in USA swimming events are based on the fastest times for the whole event, not just the heat.

**IM (Individual Medley):** An individual swimming event using all 4 competitive strokes. The order of events must be: butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke and freestyle. The distance of an IM may be a 100 yd/m (25 yd/m each stroke), 200 yd/m (50 yd/m each stroke) or 400 (100 yd/m each stroke).

**Lap counter:** For all events longer than 400 yards/meters swimmers may use a counter (person) at the turn end of the pool. Counters use large boards with numbers that correspond to the number of laps that the competitor has swum. The boards are lowered into the swimmer's lane to aid the swimmer. A bell will be sounded by the referee or starter over the lead swimmer's lane as s/he makes the final two laps. The swimmer is ultimately responsible for swimming the correct distance.

**Lap:** One length of the course.

**Leg (relay):** The portion of a relay event that is swum by a single team member.

**Long Course Pool:** A 50 meter pool. When swimming a 100 free, the swimmer will need to complete 2 laps of the pool.

**Mile:** Slang for the 1500-meter or 1650-yard freestyle event.

**Official Time:** Final time for a swimmer in a meet event. Times from automatic timing devices are deemed the official time unless there has been a malfunction. Secondary timing systems, including automatic buttons or stopwatches, may be used to calculate official times.

**Qualifying Time:** Many championship meets require a qualifying time, or 'cut', in order to be eligible to swim in the meet.

**Relays:** There are freestyle and medley relay events. Each relay team is composed of 4 swimmers. In freestyle relays, all swimmers swim freestyle. In medley relays, all 4 competitive strokes are swum. Each swimmer swims one of the strokes, e.g., backstroke, breaststroke, etc. The order of the strokes in medley relays is backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly and freestyle. The distance of relay events may be 100 yd/m (25 yd/m each stroke), 200 yd/m (50 yd/m each stroke), 400 (100 yd/m each stroke) or 800 (200 yd/m freestyle).

**Scratch:** The act of withdrawing from an event (usually with forfeit of entry fee).

**Seeding:** Assignment of the swimmers' heats and lanes according to their submitted times.

**Short course Pool:** A 25 yard/meter pool. When swimming 100 freestyle, the swimmer will need to complete 4 laps of the pool.

**Split:** A portion of an event, shorter than the total distance, which is timed. Splits can be part of a longer event (for example a split for the first 100 in a 400 event) or can be the individual's performance in a relay. The swimmer's splits may be displayed on the score board during the event for a short period of time before continuing with the aggregate time. Splits are not considered official times and cannot be used to qualify for meets *unless* they are the splits of the lead-off swimmer on a relay team or the first segment of a longer event (such as the first 200 in a 1000 free).

**Taper:** The resting training phase of swimmers prior to important meets.

**Timed finals:** Competition where events are only swum one time and results are determined by that swim.

**Touch pad:** The removable pad that is connected to the automatic timing device. The swimmer must touch these pads firmly to stop the clock and register an official time. Younger swimmers frequently do not touch them hard enough to register so their times are then based on back-up times.

**Warm-up and Warm-down:** The practice of swimming before and after events in order to loosen joints and prepare working muscles. Warm-ups usually last 1-1½ hours prior to the start of the meet. Warm-ups and warm downs significantly improve the swimmer's performance over the course of the meet.

**Warning Flags:** Located 15 feet from each end of the pool and strung across the pool above the water, indicating to backstroke swimmers that they are nearing the end of the pool.

## Competitive swim strokes

It makes a swim meet more interesting if you know what is going on. There are two basic categories of races: Relay and Individual. All recognized relays involve four swimmers on each team. The most common relays are medley and freestyle. In the medley, each of the four swimmers does an equal distance of their specific stroke. The medley order is: Backstroke — Breaststroke — Butterfly — Freestyle. In a Freestyle relay, each of the four swimmers swim an equal distance of the freestyle. The individual races ('open events') are broken into five categories: freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly, and Individual Medley (IM). The IM consists of four equal distances of all the strokes in the following order: Butterfly — Backstroke — Breaststroke — Freestyle.

At each meet, you will see Stroke & Turn judges on each side of the pool. These judges are determining that the rules for each stroke are being followed. Their main objective is to determine that no swimmer gains an unfair advantage by violating the rules. If a swimmer violates the rules, they will be disqualified from that race.

Stroke and Turn judges are looking primarily at the following:

**Backstroke:** The primary rule is that the swimmer must be on his back. The swimmer is allowed to roll onto the chest before turning.

**Breaststroke:** This is the most formalized of the strokes. On starts and turns, the swimmer may pull in any fashion that keeps the arms underwater at all times and is a simultaneous movement of both arms. The kick must sweep out, then end with a 'frog kick' motion in a simultaneous movement of both legs. The swimmer is not allowed to flutter or dolphin kick (except one dolphin motion is allowed during the underwater pull). When touching the walls for turns and finishes, both hands must touch at the same time.

**Butterfly** The butterfly is similar to the breaststroke in that all movements must be simultaneous. The swimmer must bring his arms over the top of the water when recovering from the last pull. The kick must be a simultaneous, up and down movement of both legs and both hands must touch the wall at the same time.

**Freestyle:** In most cases, there are 2 rules to follow

1. You must touch the wall with some part of your body when making a turn. When executing a flip turn, the feet must touch the wall in the push-off.
2. You may do anything you like to get yourself from one end of the pool to the other, Nothing is barred, except pulling along lane lines, grabbing another swimmer or pushing off the bottom of the pool.