

Swim Meets

By its very name, the purpose of competitive swimming is to compete and that means attending swim meets! Individuals seeking membership in the Northern TRIBS Swimming club should understand that we are a competitive team, not a recreational team. Swimmers should be willing to accept the responsibility of membership and participate in meets.

For many new swimmers, taking the first step and going to their first competitive meet is a big undertaking. Our coaches understand this and are happy to share information about each meet and what meets may be good for beginners.

When you are notified of meets, you should read the meet announcement carefully and ask your child's coach whether that meet would be appropriate for your swimmer. If your coach suggests that your swimmer's friend participate in a meet but doesn't make the same suggestion to your swimmer, the coach surely has a good reason. There are appropriate and inappropriate meets for all swimmers.

NOTE: If a swimmer is attending a meet, that swimmer must have a parent or guardian in attendance; it is not acceptable to drop off a swimmer at a meet and leave him or her unsupervised.

TRIBS participate in the following types of meets:

- Intraclub meets
- Dual meets
- Developmental meets
- Invitational meets
- Championship meets

Intraclub meets are practice meets that acquaint new and old swimmers with the competitive process. They reinforce the skills necessary for meets and do not involve any non-TRIB swimmers. Intraclub meets are held several times throughout the season to assist swimmers at all levels to prepare for USA Swimming competition. They are meets at which TRIBS swimmers attempt to improve themselves or try events they have never swum before. Intraclub meets help our youngest and newest swimmers learn more in preparation for USA Swimming meets. They also provide an opportunity for our seasoned, more capable swimmers to mentor the newer swimmers. The intraclub meets are an excellent opportunity to nurture the abilities of all our swimmers.

Dual meets take place between two clubs. They are low key and informal. Swimmers sign them-selves up for events. There are no fees associated with dual meets. Ribbons are generally awarded to each heat winner.

A **developmental meet** is a USA Swimming meet, following all rules and regulations set forth by the governing body. Fastest swimmers are generally excluded. Swimmers who swim faster than the established cutoff time are typically awarded a certificate announcing their achievement. At USA Swimming meets, the swimmers' awards are given to the coach at the end of the meet. The coach will then distribute them to individuals at the next practice.

An **invitational meet** is for any swimmer, unless cutoff times are listed in advance. Swimmers are placed in heats according to their seed times, swimming slowest to fastest. The swimmers with the fastest six or eight times, without regard to heat assignments, win awards.

At a **championship meet**, events are first swum as preliminary heats for ages 11 and up. Heats are mixed, with the fastest swimmers in the same heats as the slower swimmers. The fastest six or eight from preliminaries will swim in a finals heat later in the day. Often, the next six or eight after those will swim in a consolation finals heat. Younger swimmers participate as in an invitational meet.

Participation in a **district championship meet** is restricted to swimmers who are members of that district. Cutoff times are established for championship meets. Adirondack typically offers a developmental championship meet and a Junior Olympic championship meet at the conclusion of the short course season in March as well as a championship meet for all swimmers at the conclusion of the long course season in July.

USA Swimming Registration Number

Each swimmer is assigned a personal USA Swimming registration number. This number is used to identify swimmers when they sign up for meets. The ID number is easy to remember. It is composed of:

- Swimmer's date of birth: (mm/dd/yy)
- First three letters of swimmer's legal first name
- First letter of the swimmer's middle name
- First four letters of the swimmer's last name
- Example of a registration number: 040991MOLEHOWL

About Entering USA Swimming Meets

Announcements for USA Swimming meets can be accessed by clicking the Meets button on the home page of the TRIBS web site. The TRIBS head coach establishes a TRIBS team deadline for signup for a meet. The head coach approves all meet entries. Entries will not be accepted from swimmers with accounts over 30 days past due.

Parents and swimmers should check the entries carefully to be sure the information is correct. Results of all meets are posted on the web site.

Coaches, not parents, sign swimmers up for relays. **Relays** consist of four swimmers of the same sex and age group. The coach will determine the swimmers for each relay, submit the entry form, and the club will pay the fee. When swimmers are chosen for relays, they need to plan to stay for the event. Swimmers who do not stay for relays may be excluded from subsequent team relays. It is very difficult for the other swimmers when one leg of their relay departs from the meet, leaving them unable to participate. Relays are usually same sex and same age-group swimmers. They are offered in distances of 100, 200, and 400 yards and meters. USA Swimming teams will offer both freestyle relays and medley relays, in which each swimmer is assigned a stroke as his or her leg of the relay. Relays can be very exciting for both the swimmers and the spectators.

Zones

USA Swimming divides areas of the country into small units for organizational purposes. TRIBS Swim Club is a member of a Local Swimming Committee (LSC) known as Adirondack Swimming. The Adirondack swimming district is defined as that portion of New York State east and north of Oswego, Onondaga, Cortland, Broome, Sullivan, Orange, and Dutchess counties. The Adirondack district is one of 12 districts in the eastern zone.

Each of the 12 districts conducts a championship meet at the end of the short course season. The fastest two swimmers in each age group, each sex, and each event from each district are chosen to compete against each other at a location within the zone for the Eastern States Zone Championship Meet. (Long course zones are also conducted. Entry requirements are slightly different, so swimmers should check with their coach.)

To be eligible for zones, it is necessary to sign up in advance and qualify for the team by meeting all the minimum criteria. In the past, some swimmers have been excluded because they, or their parents, underestimated their ability or rate of improvement. If you think that your swimmer may be close, it is always best to take a chance and apply.

Signing Up for a Swim Meet

1. Announcements for USA Swimming meets can be accessed by clicking the Meets link on the TRIBS web site.
2. Read all the information carefully. Some meets exclude fast swimmers, and some meets exclude just developing swimmers. Pay attention to things like cutoff times, how many events are allowed per swimmer, the fees for each event, the \$1 per person surcharge. We prefer that you pay online via credit card or direct withdrawal from your bank account, but if you write a check please make it out to Northern TRIBS Swimming, not the club sponsoring the meet. We collect the checks for entries, make a deposit to our account, and send one check for our team's meet entries.
3. Swimmers may sign up only for their own age group with the exception of any swimmer being able to swim events labeled "open" or "senior." Swimming in these groups when not your own age group should be done only by experienced swimmers and with the coach's recommendation. Most swimmers should only enter events in their own age group.
4. All entries must have seed times and the web site will automatically fill in a best time if your swimmer has competed in that event in a prior USA meet. If this is your first time, ask the coach well in advance to give your swimmer a timed trial before or after practice to get a seed time. Failing that, the head coach will provide a seed

time prior to submitting all of the entries. Do not guess at seed times, and always enter your swimmer's best time. Seed times are entered as minutes, then seconds, then tenths of seconds, as follows: 1:52.06.

5. **Never sign up for a relay.** Relays are chosen by the head coach after collection of all meet entries. When four or more swimmers are available, there will be a relay. Swimmers who fail to stay for their relays without prior notice will not be given further opportunities to be a member of a relay team. Relay fees are paid by the club.

6. The total meet fee will be calculated automatically based on the # of events entered. You'll be billed for that meet fee (and any other meets entered that month) at the first day of the next month.

7. Keep the meet announcement. It is your source of information regarding warm-up times and meet start times, and it may have directions to the pool.

Going to a Swim Meet

- Find out where you're going. Most meet announcements will have directions. Consider carpooling, convoying, and so on.
- Find out what time warm-ups begin for your swimmer and when the meet begins. Most meets are held in two sessions—morning and afternoon. You need only attend the session in which your swimmer swims. Allow for plenty of time to get where you are going.
- Wear something cool because pool areas are usually beastly hot. You should also bring a sweater because the bullpen (the area in which you hang out until your swimmer swims) is usually a gym or cafeteria and may be chilly.
- Some meets require that swimmers check in, a procedure called "positive check-in." Make sure your swimmer checks in with the clerk of the course when you arrive. This is usually right inside the entrance to the meet. Failure to check in at a "positive check-in" meet usually results in the swimmer being disqualified from his or her first event or possibly all events.
- Purchase a meet program. You will find all your swimmer's entry information listed in the meet program along with that of all other participants. Use a highlighter to mark all your swimmer's events, as well as those of other TRIBS.
- Locate the TRIBS' assigned area of the bullpen. This is the area where you and your swimmer may stay between events. Swimmers roll out their sleeping bags and parents set up lawn chairs in this area. (Occasionally the swimmers are asked to stay on deck with the coaches.)
- Parents assist with timing. USA Swimming meets are timed electronically with the assistance of two backup human timers. Each swim club represented at a swim meet is required to provide timers for the entire meet. For large meets, parents will get timing assignments in advance; they will be notified of these assignments by phone or e-mail, and the assignments will also be posted on the web site. At smaller meets, parents present at the meet informally decide on timing shifts to cover the assignment. All parents are expected to participate. It's the best seat in the house. Don't worry about lack of experience. It's simple, and stopwatches are provided.
- Parents should make sure their swimmer warms up. The swimmer should go down on deck prior to the beginning of the warm-up session and consult with the coach. It is important to follow the recommendation of the coach. After warm-ups, your swimmer should dry off and keep warm. Find out where events are being seeded. Seeding means preparing the swimmers in their correct order. Swimmers should always have their cap and goggles handy.
- When your swimmer's event is called for seeding, he or she should report to the seeding area, where the swimmer may be given a card with name, seed time, and heat and lane assignment. Swimmers keep these cards and, at the start of their meet, present them to the timer at the end of their lane. At some meets, cards may not be distributed; swimmers are told their heat and lane assignments. Swimmers may have to check posted sheets for this information. Parents do not go to the seeding area but rather to the pool to find a seat to enjoy the race.
- After the race, the swimmer goes immediately to the coach for feedback. If the coach is with another swimmer or watching another swimmer compete, your swimmer needs to be patient while waiting. A printout of the electronic results will be posted in a specified area near the pool, usually within 15 minutes of the race. Check the results and record your swimmer's time in your program. Later you can record it in your swimmer's logbook.
- About the coach: At all USA Swimming Adirondack district meets at which five or more swimmers per session are in attendance, there will be every effort made to supply a coach. It is a rare experience that a TRIBS coach is not available to coach a meet. Remind your swimmer to talk with the coach after the swimmer's events.
- Swimmers are occasionally disqualified (DQed) during their event. Reasons for a DQ range from false starts to performing strokes, turns, or finishes incorrectly. DQs are judgments made by the USA Swimming officials. The official will explain to the swimmer the reason for the DQ. The coach will reinforce this judgment. Parents

should not question the judgment of an official. DQs can be difficult for swimmers and parents to accept, but they do happen to every swimmer sooner or later. It is helpful if the parent accepts the fact that USA Swimming has high standards and that the same standards apply to every swimmer. Performing the skills of swimming in accordance with USA Swimming standards is part of the discipline process that makes swimming a character-building sport.

Writing on a Swimmer's Hand

By writing information in waterproof ink on the back of the swimmer's hand, the swimmer can watch and listen for his or her events to be seeded and remember what the events are. This also allows the swimmer to check whether he or she is in the correct heat and lane.

The information on the hand represents the swimmer's individual events at the meet the swimmer is attending. Make up your own shorthand; for example, "4/3/5 100fr" might mean 100-yard freestyle: event #4, heat #3, lane #5.

Stuff to Bring to the Meet

Experienced TRIBS parents recommend bringing the following:

- Team suit
- Goggles—well-adjusted and leakproof
- Extra goggles just in case
- Team swim cap—or two in case one rips
- Sweatshirt and sweatpants—maybe two sets
- Team jacket, if you have one
- Towels—two or three are needed because the swimmer dries off after warm-ups, between events, and when changing to go home
- Plastic water bottle and/or drinks in containers other than glass
- Sleeping bag
- Pillow (optional)
- Folding lawn chair for parent
- Quiet activities: homework, books, Walkman, playing cards, and so on
- Highlighter to mark your swim program
- Ballpoint pen to write on your swimmer's hand
- Stopwatch (optional)
- Food (almost all meets sell inexpensive concessions: coffee, juice, soda, hot dogs, pizza, sandwiches, baked goods, and so on)
- Money for a program (\$2 to \$10)—they're helpful, but you're not obligated to buy them; equipment is usually for sale
- For summer meets: sunscreen, insect repellent, hat, sunglasses
- Good luck charms!!!

Some of these items may seem unnecessary, but when you arrive at your first meet, you will soon understand the value of each and be glad you brought them.

Officials

All USA Swimming meets have swim officials on deck. These are the people you see wearing white shirts and shorts. They start the events and also walk up and down the sides of the pool watching the swimmers. They are all volunteers, trained by and registered with USA Swimming. Most of them are parents just like you. If you are interested, the procedure for becoming an official is simple:

- Attend a three-hour training clinic.
- Complete a take-home, open book test on USA Swimming rules and regulations.
- Perform an apprenticeship with an experienced official for four meets.

Training clinics are usually held each fall. For more information about becoming an official, please contact the TRIBS' officials coordinator.