

## Attending a gala

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If you are new to competing in galas/meets/competitions (even the language can be confusing!) then the following information should help you ..... **GOOD LUCK!**

**Before the gala:** Make sure you read **all** the information about the gala which should have been sent to you beforehand. If you are unsure of anything, please look up the information under the 'Events / Galas' tab on the home page of the Club website. You may also visit the host club's website.

**Getting to the gala:** Plan your route, check out what parking is available, how far away it is and if it is not free make sure you have the correct change. Leave plenty of time and know what event(s) you have entered and in which sessions you are swimming in. Please note that when a swimmer is attending a meet, it is expected that swimmers will have a parent or guardian in attendance **at all times**.

**Arriving at the gala:** Make sure you allow plenty of time to travel to the meet and to find somewhere to park. **On arrival all swimmers must SIGN IN with the WWHSC Team Manager or Coach. If you fail to sign in on time you may not be allowed to enter that session** (some meets do not have sign in and in this instance you must let the Team Manager or Coach in attendance know that you have arrived).

On arrival, at the competition venue, swimmers are normally allowed into the changing rooms, swimmers should not loiter, you should get changed and wait on poolside for warm-up, however, swimmers must not be on poolside until a Team Manager or Coach is present and gives permission.

Most changing rooms have lockers that can be used if you have the correct coins, some require you to take/buy a padlock. Please note that big bags are not usually permitted poolside due to lack of space therefore it is a good idea to bring a small drawstring bag to keep the essentials in (such as goggles, hat, swimsuit, drink, snacks and towel; spare goggles and hat can also be a good idea). Please note that at some pools the changing rooms are shared with the general public. Please be mindful of this and ensure that swimmers are safe at all times prior to going poolside.

Spectators including parents must queue to enter and pay their entry fee and programme fee and will not be allowed on poolside at the event at any time.

**During the gala:** All swimmers must remember that they are representing Wantage White Horses Swimming Club and that they must treat all other swimmers, clubs, spectators, coaches and officials with respect. The standard of your behaviour should therefore reflect the standards that the Club expects.

**At all times during the gala, swimmers should:**

- Follow the instructions of host club volunteers, officials and others helpers.
- In the changing rooms and the shower areas behave in a quiet, orderly and responsible manner. Change as quickly as possible.
- Respect the property of the pool providers and other swimmers. Responsibility for personal belongings is with the individual concerned, not with the Club (e.g. money, jewellery, clothing etc.)
- Support and encourage everyone in your Club.

- Swimmers should behave in a "sporting" manner at all competitions. Accept winning or defeat gracefully. Do not make excuses for poor performance. Show sportsmanship at all times.
- Follow the warm-up/race instructions carefully.

The Team Manager or Coach will have a programme of events. Swimmers should familiarise themselves with which events they are due to swim before attending the gala. At the gala, the Team Manager or Coach will tell the swimmer which event(s) they are swimming and will advise when to go to the marshalling area (the area where swimmers wait prior to going to the starting blocks for their heat). **After each race swimmers should talk to the Coach for feedback on their swim.**

The swimmers remain the responsibility of the Coach/Team Manager until the end of the session; this includes periods when they are out of the pool i.e. for toilet break, evacuation or if they need to leave the poolside in order to go outside to get some fresh air or food. On all such occasions the swimmer should ask permission from the Team Manager before doing so. It is extremely important the swimmer keeps the Team Manager and/or the Coach informed as failure to do so could result in a swimmer:

- Missing their event/warm-up.
- Not receiving pre-race advice from the Coach.
- In the event of an evacuation, the Team Manager not knowing if a swimmer is still inside the venue.
- Swimmers should also check with the Team Manager or Coach when they think their swims are finished, before leaving the meet.

At the end of the meet, prior to leaving, respect the environment and either place all rubbish in receptacles provided or take it home with you.

**If at any time during a gala a swimmer is unsure what to do, PLEASE DO ASK THE TEAM MANAGER OR COACH!**

***Suggested Items to bring:*** When attending a gala it is recommended that all swimmers bring:

- WWHSC pool shirt (essential)/ hoody/track suit (if you have them).
- Swimming gear (including racing costume as well as warm-up swimwear. It is advisable to have additional swimwear if competing both morning and afternoon so you can change into dry clothes at lunchtime and if changing after warm up).
- WWHSC swimming hat (essential) (and a spare hat).
- Goggles (essential) (and a spare set).
- Drinks (ideally water), a packed lunch and snacks (fruit, nuts, etc.)
- Pool shoes (e.g. crocs or flip flops) and poolside clothing (ideally the WWHSC track suit if you have one).
- Small towel for poolside bag and another for when you are finished the meet.
- A small pool bag (large bags/rucksacks are not permitted poolside) to keep your belongings together.
- Something to keep you amused during long days (magazine, book, puzzle etc.). It is strongly recommended that swimmers do not bring phones, tablets or other electronic equipment poolside (water and electronic items do not mix very well).

**Please remember** that swimmers are responsible for their own belongings. If they have been involved in packing their bags before the meet, it will help them not to forget to bring it all home with them. It is recommended that names be on clothing, footwear and bags.

***Information for parents:*** When you arrive at a competition you will usually be asked for

payment to enter and watch the races. A programme may be charged for in addition to the entrance fee. It is advisable to also to attend a competition with:

- Food and drink - some pools have a good cafeterias, but that can be expensive. Some pools have very limited eating and drinking facilities, so it is advisable to go prepared.
- A good book! You should be prepared for waits! Often a session can be between 2-3 hours, during which your child may only be in the water for a couple of minutes.

Parents may not be permitted in the changing rooms at some swim meets. However, at some meets parents may be able to accompany their children where changing rooms are open to the public. However, unless in dedicated spectator areas, parents are usually not permitted poolside. Parents who are not identified as support volunteers will be asked to vacate poolside areas. Failure to do so could result in your child/club being disqualified from the meet. Only Team Managers and Coaches are permitted poolside.

Photography/videoining is not permitted at many venues, at some venues you may be allowed to use a camera or video-camera at meets/galas; however you will be expected to declare your intention to carry out any form of photography when you enter the pool and to provide your name and address. This includes using mobile phones/iPod touch/iPad etc. with in-built cameras. This is primarily for child protection as well as Health and Safety reasons.

**Supporting your child:** Be prepared for your child not to swim their best. Attending competitions is all part of the development process and is there as a learning experience for your child as well as providing opportunities to win medals and to achieve personal bests and qualifying times etc.

Supporting your child through a disappointing swim is as important as when they swim well. It is important to make sure all swimmers **focus on the positive aspects** of a race, not just the time achieved. Sometimes parents might not be aware that a swimmer may be focussing on a particular part of their race (for instance the start or their turns) rather than the time. So always find out from the swimmer what they thought they did well before criticizing their finishing time or position.

Encourage your child to discuss aspects of their races with their coach during training sessions and the warm-up for at the gala. This will help them focus on the process of racing as well as the time they might achieve.

Sometimes a swimmer records a time that is too fast for the level meet they have entered. When this happens they can get a **speeding ticket!** Speeding tickets are a good thing! Your child may get upset at not achieving a medal, but this means that they are too fast for this level of meet, explain this to them and encourage them to go collect their speeding ticket, if they are available.

**Your child might get disqualified.** Due to the technical nature of the sport, this happens to all swimmers at some point. Recent changes imposed by British Swimming prevent clubs to display reasons for disqualifications. This does not mean the swimmer will not know why. It is not always possible for a Coach/Team Manager to check the results posted at a meet so they can be reliant on the swimmer informing them. The Coach (swimmer can be present) will speak with the Referee at the meet to get feedback. Parents if you learn that your child has been disqualified before they find out consider your actions.

During a gala, the first and last person your child should speak with before/after their race should be their coach. They will remind your child of the important lessons learnt during the hours of training and provide your child with the strongest 'mind set' they need to perform to the best of their ability.

**Problems at galas:** The most common two problems are: **goggles break and hats tear!** The

moral to this is always carry spare goggles and hats as they may be needed at the last minute.

**Disqualification** - usually occurs if the swimmer does anything illegal e.g. incorrect turns, incorrect kick/arm action, false starts etc. Don't worry; this happens to everyone at some point.

If a swimmer encounters a **problem during a race**, such as losing goggles, then it is best to continue swimming the race. However, clearly problems such as asthma attacks may require the swimmer to stop immediately and unless an emergency, the swimmer is expected to stay in the water at the end of their lane, until the race has finished and they are told to leave the pool.

In the event of an **evacuation at a pool**, the pool must be evacuated according to the centre's policy. All members of the group must be aware of the meeting point in advance and must report to the Team Manager at the meeting point. Those swimmers present should remain at the meeting point until released by the Team Manager to a responsible adult or returned to the centre.

Any incidents should be reported to the Team Manager at the first opportunity, these may in turn be required to be reported to the Welfare Officer for recording and action if necessary. The Team Managers and Coaches are duty bound to ensure they are aware of the child protection policy and the procedure required in the event of an incident.

Finally and equally important all swimmers are encourage to:

**ENJOY IT, HAVE FUN!**