



## PARENT HANDBOOK





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# Welcome to the swimming community!

Sport in Australia is such a big part of our culture and community. As a nation surrounded by water, many Australian's have a great passion for the sport and countless children grow up with a swimming pool in their backyard or in their town or suburb. Because of this, swimming has become a way of life for many Australians of all ages and is the most popular Olympic sport in Australia

Swimming is a vital life skill, but it is also so much more. For us, club swimming has provided many opportunities not only in the pool, but also outside of it. As a swimmer in a club, your child is on the road to enjoying both the social and competitive side of the sport.

Training in a swim team will help to teach your child about health, enjoyment and determination as well as time management, satisfaction and confidence. These lessons will be invaluable both in and out of the water. They will also enjoy being part of a team while striving for personal goals. Healthy competition, mixed with social interaction is what makes club swimming such a terrific environment to grow up in.

This handbook is a guide to help you ensure that your child is learning from their experiences, regardless of whether they swim for fun and fitness or, like us, end up swimming for Australia. If you are after more details, please visit [www.swimming.org.au](http://www.swimming.org.au).

We wish you all the best as you begin the journey with your child and hope that you make the most of the swimming club experience by becoming involved. Remember, clubs are like big extended families and there are many rewarding roles that will help your child and your swimming club be the best they it can be.

See you on pool deck!

James Magnussen and Alicia Coutts



*James Magnussen*



*Alicia Coutts*



## ABOUT US

Swimming Australia is the governing body for competitive swimming. Each swimmer is a member of their swimming club, which in turn is a member of their state swimming association and is therefore affiliated with Swimming Australia.

Above all else, Swimming Australia and its stakeholders are about providing an opportunity to be involved in this great sport, in a fun, safe and supportive environment, enjoying sporting excellence and developing important life skills.

## Our Stakeholders

State swimming associations

- Swimming New South Wales
- Swimming Victoria
- Swimming Tasmania
- Swimming SA
- Swimming WA
- Swimming Queensland
- Swimming NT
- The Australian Swimming Coaches and Teachers Association (ASCTA)
- The Australian Swimmers' Association (ASA)

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## POSITIVE PARENTING TIPS

Sports Psychologist, Wendy Swift

### The triangle of success

A great way to understand how you can maximise your child's sporting experience is to use the 'triangle of success'. Children will gain most from a balanced focus on all three points of the triangle.



The **performance** focus is easy to understand. Everybody loves to win, but we understand only one person can touch the wall first.

That doesn't mean we can't talk about performance. Beating a personal best (PB) time is a great way to focus on self-referenced performance improvements. PBs give kids a lot of satisfaction and a great sense of achievement. However, PBs are not everyday occurrences for most kids. A better performance focus is on process. Process focus is all about how you swim the race. This is as simple as a race plan, for example 'explode off the gun, keep your stroke long, kick hard to the wall'. The reason this focus is so

fantastic for performance is that it is completely controllable. The child knows they can execute, it gives them the best chance of achieving a PB, and praise can be given when the process is achieved regardless of the time or place result.

It is also okay to talk about race outcomes with your child as this gives you an opportunity to teach sportsmanship no matter what place they achieve. Parents should never show disappointment over a race performance. You can always talk about effort, sportsmanship, process, and also ask about what the coach had to say.



Coaches will usually give a child some practical feedback on racing. This feedback brings us to the second point of the triangle – **development**. Technical improvement in both stroke technique and race strategy is critical to developing performance. As a parent, be interested in this area. Ask your child what they are working on, or what feedback they got from the coach. For example, a coach may be working on lengthening a short and choppy stroke. The child may race a slow time, but really lengthened their stroke. Therefore there should be celebration and interest in this achievement. The development point of the triangle gives your child an opportunity to show expertise to you. If you are interested, they can demonstrate knowledge of many different technical aspects of swimming. Being the expert on their sport will really make kids feel good about it.

And ‘feeling good’ is a large part of the third point in the triangle – **experience**. It has to be fun to keep children interested and coming back. If we only ever focus on performance and development, it doesn't take long for swimming to become ‘work’. So make sure you balance your interest and questions to include - who they made friends with, what funny things happened, and how much fun it all was. With these three areas of focus, your child will have a solid foundation for a long and happy involvement with the sport of swimming.

## Good questions to ask

- What were you working on today?
- Did you have fun?
- Did you try hard?
- How did you go?
- What did your coach think?

## Letting go

Part of the process of learning to be a swimmer is learning to trust the coach. For a child to be able to achieve this, as parents, you must be able to let go, and hand your child's swimming development over to the coach. Sometimes this is hard to do. Common worries parents might have include:

- the coach may not have enough time to fully pay attention to my child's development
- the coach may not understand my child and their needs
- the coach has missed something that I can fix.

Most coaches recognise that they are coaching the development of a whole person, not just a swimmer. They understand that children learn through working things out on their own. If you, as a parent, try to rush the technical development of your child, they may miss out on enjoying the fun side of the experience. It will become obvious to the child that the triangle is unbalanced and that your main focus is on performance.

If you have concerns, make a time to speak to the coach away from training and away from your child. Jumping in early to ‘fix’ things is interfering with the coaching process. Remember you want to encourage, not undermine, the trust in the coach. Give the coach an opportunity to answer the concerns you have.

## The PB error

Many parents believe that if they only speak about PBs then they are safely keeping pressure off their child. But if we think about it – a PB by definition is something the child has never done before. So even though it is self-referenced it can still carry a considerable amount of pressure. So don't expect them all the time. However, PBs are fantastic goals when equally balanced with a focus on fun, and skill development. They are all the more enjoyable when they don't happen every day.

In summary, children enjoy challenge in a supportive, fun environment. Keep the triangle balanced and enjoy what swimming has to offer to you and most importantly, your child.

# THE AUSTRALIAN JUNIOR EXCELLENCE (JX) PROGRAM



The Australian Junior Excellence Program (JX) recognises, rewards and encourages junior swimmers who, through their development of aquatic skills and fitness, achieve a high standard of swimming excellence.

Swimmers aged from nine to 13 years who accomplish times set by Swimming Australia qualify at Gold, Silver, Bronze or Green standard, depending on their best performance/s during the season.

For doing so, qualifiers receive special recognition by way of:

- a distinctive JX swim cap (nine and 10 year-olds) or JX shirt (11 to 13 year-olds)
- a JX certificate of achievement
- a JX motivational poster featuring elite Australian swimmers
- their name on the Swimming Australia website
- a JX DVD for qualifiers aged 11-13

Australia is one of the top swimming nations in the world and by achieving the Green, Bronze, Silver or Gold JX standard, junior swimmers are on the pathway to international success.

For qualifying times and more information about the JX program, visit [www.swimming.org.au](http://www.swimming.org.au)

The 2010-11 JX season saw a record number of swimmers achieving qualifying times. JX prize packs for 2010-11 have now been delivered to over 13,000 deserving swimmers around the country since the program's inception.

A full list of all JX qualifiers can be found at [www.swimming.org.au](http://www.swimming.org.au). If you think your child might be interested in the JX program be sure to look out for the 2011-12 JX qualifying times on the Swimming Australia website.



## COACHING AND TRAINING

Dr Ralph Richards

### The triangle of success

Your child should be acknowledged for who they are – not simply for what they accomplish in sport. Naturally, the person they are will impact upon every aspect of their life, including swimming.

Real progress in swimming comes not from size, strength, or training alone; it also comes from their development as a person – their character, values, behaviour, etc.

We will all celebrate if your child eventually becomes a champion, but every day, in many ways, we can all benefit from your child's involvement in this great sport – if they happen to also swim fast, that's a bonus.

### Letting go

Coaching is a tough business: early mornings, long weekends, late evenings, and spending time with athletes and alone developing coaching strategies and plans.

Coaches have the capacity to change lives – swimming is just the vehicle they use. Great coaches possess superior communication skills, empathy, and compassion, as well as technical understanding of sport and human performance capacities.

Your child and their coach will form a team; and with any team, achieving common goals is dependent on all members of the team working together and trusting one another.

Parents must choose their child's coach carefully. Meet the coach, talk with them and regularly communicate outside of training times. Give the coach the same support you give your child.

There are a number of qualities that experts believe contribute to effective coaching. The strength of any one characteristic, and the number of characteristics that each coach displays, will determine that coach's individual effectiveness.

Those qualities include the ability to:

- organise a program into a logical progression that satisfies both shortterm and long-term goals and provides a challenging, interesting, and enjoyable sporting environment;
- carefully observe how athletes respond to the program and then continually provide appropriate feedback;
- understand and apply the basic principles of swimming and sport in general;
- analyse performance in the context of an athlete's potential, commitment, and aspirations;
- communicate with a wide range of individuals (athletes, parents, swimming officials, etc) to facilitate reciprocal understanding;
- empathise with athletes (and parents), keeping their welfare in the forefront of all decisions;
- implement strategies and create an environment that will promote improvement.

### Coach accreditation

The link between learn-to-swim programs and participation in swimming as a sport is provided by qualified professionals who understand competitive swimming techniques. ASCTA has developed training courses that prepare your child's junior squad teacher/coach to deliver a program that is appropriate to their needs.

The coach should hold a recognised accreditation and an annual coaching licence from Swimming Australia (as a member of ASCTA). Don't be shy about asking the coach to produce their current licence card as proof.

Swimming coaches must become knowledgeable in a number of areas and it takes years of experience for the coach (as well as the athlete) to achieve their potential.

There are three tiers of accredited swim coaches.

**Bronze Coach** – This is the 'club coach' standard in Australia. A Bronze Coach has been trained to plan, conduct, evaluate and modify swimming programs that will enable swimmers to compete at club/district and state level competitions. The Bronze Coach will work with a wide range of ages and abilities within a club or squad environment.

**Silver Coach** – This is the 'performance coach' and is the first level where the coach is evaluated based on the performance of their swimmers. The Silver Coach must complete an advanced course covering the theoretical aspects of coaching and athlete performance. The Silver coach will have demonstrated the ability to coach swimmers competing at state and national age competitions.

**Gold Coach** – This is the 'high performance coach' and is an advanced coaching qualification that includes a theory component, independent study and research, as well as demonstrated high level coaching performance. The Gold Coach will have demonstrated the ability to coach swimmers competing successfully at national open championships.





## The right amount of training

I'm frequently asked by parents, "How much training should my son/daughter do?". This core question is linked with two important elements of training. Firstly the type of training, as this determines the overall stress placed upon the individual. Secondly, the ideal length of each session, the number of sessions per week and weeks per year, as this determines the total training volume.

Whilst there is no single right or wrong answer, and no single formula for all cases, two general rules that parents, swimmers and coaches can apply are:

- commit to a training program the swimmer can recover from (i.e. feel rested enough to train effectively during the next session);
- maintain a level of training that allows the swimmer to feel enjoyment in their effort and achievement.

Prior to puberty the paramount objectives of any program should be to instill a love of the sport, teach quality technique, and develop fitness. Training programs must be well thought-out and have goals that include skill development as well as an adequate emphasis on physical conditioning.

Questions regarding volume and intensity of training and type/number of competitions during childhood are complex issues. Both over-exposure and under-exposure to these variables may detract from achieving one's full potential. Age-group training and competition should be seen as a means to an end (i.e. long term participation in sport), not an end in itself. Careful attention must be given to individual needs and motivations, as well as the traits that affect sporting development.

It's part of our cultural heritage for children to be exposed to a range of aquatic experiences at a fairly young age. The formal process of learn-to-swim instruction provides the basis for life-long skills and confidence in and around the water. There may be several years of 'learning' or consolidation of basic aquatic movement skills before any type of 'systematic training' commences.

Training is a term that is hard to define during early childhood because the learning process itself relies upon repeated practice. However, training generally involves these broad performance objectives:

- the acquisition of complex skills such as tumble turns and racing starts that are specific to competition rather than required for safety or recreational pursuits;
- improvement in physical capacities that allow sustained swimming;
- improvement in technical capabilities that allow more efficient propulsion in the water.

Naturally, the achievement of these objectives means that a swimmer is able to move further, faster, and more skillfully.

Training should produce fatigue, but this fatigue should be short-lived enough that the young swimmer is ready (physically and mentally) to participate in the next scheduled session. If the swimmer is not ready, then analysis of the type, duration, and frequency of training sessions should take place.

All models for sporting development should embrace the principles of childhood growth and development. It's important to understand that skills and physiological capacities acquired while young will impact upon later stages of development. For

example, stroke technique is much harder to modify after many years of application. Muscle endurance and strength development will naturally show steady improvement during childhood as long as the child remains active.

Due to activity being linked to interest (i.e. motivation to participate) there is a strong case for progressively increasing training demands in a logical manner throughout childhood. Therefore, swimming programs should not offer the same number and type of training sessions to, for instance, both eight and 12 year-olds. The training requirements at these two ages are fundamentally different, and this should be reflected in the programs being offered.

It's also true that every child will mature at a slightly different rate. Child development research tells us that any two 10 year-old swimmers may be one to two years apart in their biological maturity. Research also suggests that physical training is absorbed differently because of many environmental and biological factors. These points are made to emphasise the fact that variation between individuals must always be considered – don't compare the volume or frequency of training your child does with another child of the same age.





# Who is looking after your star?

Choose an Accredited Coach for your swimmers.

For more information:

Swimming Australia  
[www.swimming.org.au](http://www.swimming.org.au)  
(02) 6219 5600

ascta  
[www.ascta.com](http://www.ascta.com)  
(07) 5494 9649

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR PARENTS AND CARERS OF SWIMMERS WITH DISABILITY



Swimming Australia is committed to a philosophy of swimming for all, and endeavours to integrate participation of people with a disability in all aspects of swimming from grassroots through to elite. Swimming Australia believes in putting the swimmer first by recognising and developing the individual abilities of each swimmer.

Your child will develop confidence, satisfaction, social skills and overall physical health while being included in a unique nation-wide community. They will learn dedication, perseverance and goal setting as well as developing a valuable life skill.

### Tips for parents

#### Allow your child to be a swimmer

Your child needs the chance to succeed and fail, face and overcome challenges, learn sportsmanship and grow positive relationships within the club. From this swimmers gain confidence, self esteem and independence all because they succeed through their own abilities.

#### Support the coach

The coach's role is to make decisions about teaching and training your child. Assist the coach by encouraging your child to value the coach's knowledge and expertise. Discuss with the coach ways in which you may be willing help accommodate your child's specific needs.

#### Contribute to your child's team and club

Volunteer to help out with your child's team and club activities.

#### Know the rules

Learn the rules, regulations, and guidelines for swimmers with a disability and help to constructively educate others who may not be fully aware of swimmers with disability (SWD) considerations.

#### Utilise this handbook

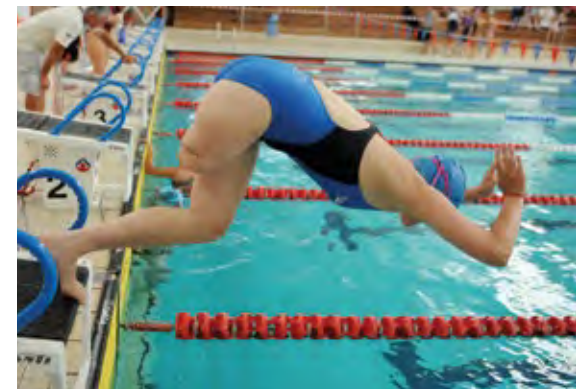
The tips and information included in this handbook apply to parents of all swimmers and will assist you in helping your child get the most out of swimming.

*"Whether your child swims for fun and enjoyment, health and fitness or aspires to be a Paralympic champion, swimming provides the opportunity for your child to fulfil their potential and grow as an individual."*

**Brendan Keogh**

Australian Paralympic Head Coach

Visit [www.swimming.org.au](http://www.swimming.org.au) to view information and resources developed for swimmers with disability.







## HEALTHY SWIMMING

Sports Physician, Dr June Canavan

Swimming causes a few specific illnesses and early treatment means your child will not miss much training. It is important that children do not play any competitive sport including swimming, or train intensely, if they are sick and have a high temperature. There is a risk of serious medical consequences when a virus infects the heart muscle.

I hope the following information and advice about sickness in swimmers enables you to ensure your child maintains excellent health and is able to fully enjoy the swimming experience.

Ear infections are common in young children because the ear canal is narrow. Swimmer's ear (otitis externa) is an infection in the ear canal caused by contaminated water or debris such as wax or dry skin harbouring germs which thrive in moisture. Children complain of a sore ear and it hurts when tugged or pressed. Usually the doctor will prescribe some antibiotic drops. You need to see a doctor to make sure there is no debris in the canal which will lead to a recurrence. Ear plugs may help an early return to swimming.

Sore ears associated with upper respiratory tract illness are not caused by pool water. This condition is called otitis media or middle ear infection. The cause is usually a virus which does not need anti-

biotics but your doctor can examine the ears, nose and throat before deciding whether medication is needed. Viral infections cause high temperatures and general malaise and should be treated symptomatically with pain killers and rest.

Viral infections also cause the 'common cold'. Once again children require rest and should not go to swimming training if they have a temperature and runny nose or cough. Virus particles are easily transmitted to other children by coughing and are highly contagious. Typical symptoms of a respiratory viral infection are unusual tiredness, irritability, headache, runny nose, sore throat, sore muscles and after a couple of days a cough develops. If your child wakes up feeling tired and grumpy, put them back to bed and wait a day to see whether they have recovered.

Our immune system fights viral infections. If children have late nights, or stress from exams or assignments, or family problems, the immune system does not cope as well and children catch infections easily. One or two days in bed with some paracetamol will usually be all that is required. It is important not to get up early to go to training when you are sick. Viral respiratory tract infections may precipitate asthma symptoms.

Swimmers who have hayfever and asthma are prone to respiratory infections unless their asthma is well controlled. Children need to take their medication regularly even when they are well, and always have a Ventolin puffer in their swimming bag in case they have trouble breathing.

Swimmer's shoulder is the most common injury from swimming and needs early treatment. Swimmers complain of pain in the shoulder while they are swimming. A sports physician or a GP with an interest in sport medicine should diagnose the cause of the pain and arrange appropriate treatment. Ice is not helpful as the tendons are located under muscles and bones.

Sometimes medication may be required to reduce inflammation and allow the tendon to heal. It is important not to swim with sore shoulders as the condition will get worse. Sometimes swimmer's shoulder is related to posture and physiotherapists can prescribe some exercises to do at home.

Swimmers who have a lot of sickness may become chronically tired and irritable and find it hard to swim good times. Some of these children may develop a depressed mood and parents may notice that the child is not enjoying swimming as much. Teenagers are more prone to mood disorders. Unhappy swimmers may start to worry about their weight and change their eating habits and will not have enough energy to swim well.

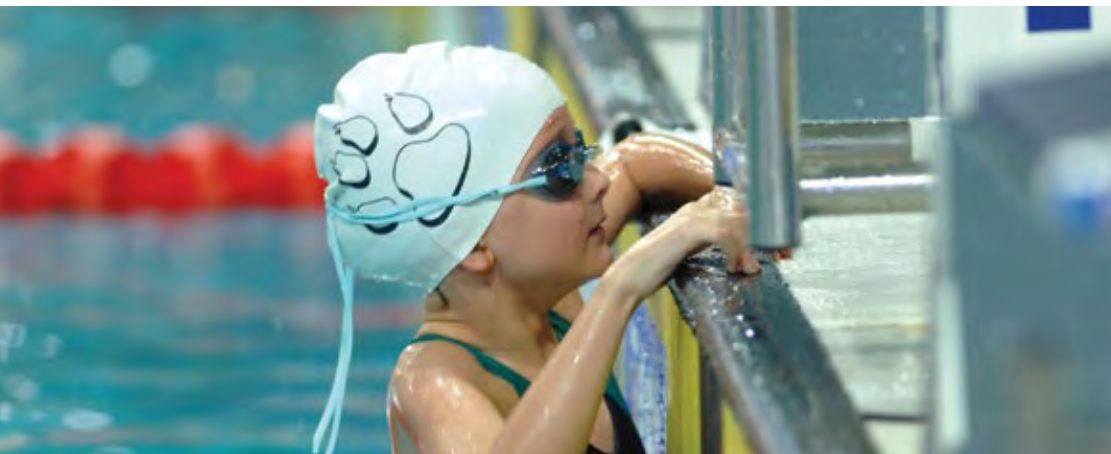
The recipe for healthy swimming is simple: get a good night's sleep, eat healthy foods, drink plenty of fluids and stay happy and have fun at the pool. And the formula for doing well in all sporting endeavours is equally straight forward: peak health + peak fitness = peak performance. Those golden rules apply not just to our elite swimmers, but to the juniors as well.

"Dr June Canavan was tragically killed in an air crash in New Guinea in August 2009 en route to the Kokoda Trail to raise money for the impoverished school of St Jude in Tanzania.

Dr June was a brilliant, dynamic physician dedicated to the health and welfare of athletes and the community in general. She held a strong affinity for swimmers, serving the sport of swimming as the Australian Swim Team doctor and Swimming Queensland as its honorary sports physician.

Dr June is dearly missed by everyone privileged to have known her as a friend and by the countless people who experienced her exceptional medical skills and extraordinary warmth and kindness".

CEO Swimming Queensland, Kevin Hasemann



# MELBOURNE VICENTRE SWIMMING CLUB

## Empowering swimmers to be champions in life

Chief Executive Officer, Nikki Burger, manages Melbourne Vicentre Swimming Club (MVC) and works in unison with Head Coach, Ian Pope. Nikki holds a Graduate Certificate of Business (Sport Management). MVC won Champion Club at the 2012 Australian Age Championships. MVC conducts squads from junior level to high performance and manages its own learn-to-swim school; the club is a Swimming Australia Centre of Excellence. Nikki, a parent of two swimmers (age 11 and 17) and masters swimmer, outlines the philosophy and practices used by MVC to develop and support its junior swimmers.

The smooth transition of swimmers from their learn-to-swim programs to a club environment provides a very important foundation to the formative years of young age group swimmers. Swimming is a very healthy sport, whose benefits are widely known. These include; cardiovascular fitness, endurance, muscle strength, coordination and flexibility. Swimming is a sport for life.

Along with the physical benefits, the sport of swimming builds independence, confidence, resilience, self discipline and friendships. It keeps our children busy, focused and provides an excellent and healthy outlet in their teenage years: "Swimming provides a wonderful environment for young people to develop life skills and values that will empower them for the rest of their life. It's not just the medals, but the transfer of skills from the sport into life outside the pool. One of the things I often hear from retired swimmers is that they are successful because of the things they learned through swimming; they learned to take setbacks, challenge themselves to higher levels, to be more organised with their time and more structured with managing all aspects of their lives." (Ian Pope)

## OUR ROLE AS PARENTS

At MVC, we provide a "Take your Marks" presentation twice a year, for parents new to the sport. One of the topics we cover is our role as swimming parents. As parents, we provide;

- support
- transport
- clothing
- equipment
- funds
- help to our club – there are many opportunities to donate our time and skills to our club community

Another vital role we play is in helping our children learn independence through their sport. At MVC, we recommend parents to encourage their children to;

- Pack their own swim bags
- Keep their own record of their racing times and personal best times
- Set their own alarm clocks and get themselves up for training
- Communicate and develop a rapport with their coach

## THE MVC DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY

MVC provides a pathway from learn-to-swim to elite swimmers at national and international level. From the start, swimmers are provided with both wet and dry sessions that focus on the development of technique across all strokes, strength, coordination and flexibility. Swimmers are also taught to read the pace clock, train as a team and are introduced to racing. As swimmers progress in their training, racing and overall development, they are offered a place in the next squad. Here is a guide to our junior progressions:



## DEVELOPMENT SQUAD

- Squad Focus: To develop and foster skills and abilities in four strokes
- Age: seven - 11 years
- Commitment: Two-three sessions per week
- Racing Goals: Monthly; including Club meets, Winter Interclub, Metro 7-10 Meet, All Junior Meet

## STATE DEVELOPMENT SQUAD

- Squad Focus: To develop and foster skills and abilities in four strokes
- Age: nine - 12 years
- Commitment: Three-Five sessions per week, plus two mini gym (after swim)
- Racing Goals: Monthly; Club, VIC Short Course, Metro 7-10 Meet, VIC Sprint Meet, All Junior Meet

## STATE JUNIOR SQUAD

- Squad Focus: To further skills and abilities aimed at developing performances at State Championships
- Age: 10 - 12 years
- Commitment: Five-six sessions per week, plus three gym sessions (after swim)
- Racing Goals: Monthly; including Club meets, VIC Short Course, Victorian Championships

## MEMBERS AND CHILD WELFARE

The Member and Child Welfare Policies are an essential part of Swimming Australia's proactive and preventative approach to tackling inappropriate behaviour. We are committed to ensuring that everyone associated with Swimming Australia complies with the Member and Child Welfare Policies and ask all members and stakeholders to assist us in promoting these policies wherever possible.

It is the responsibility of everyone involved in swimming to be aware of these policies as they are applicable to all Swimming Australia stakeholders, directors, employees, contractors, volunteers and members whether they are in a paid, unpaid or voluntary capacity.

The Member and Child Welfare Policies assist in ensuring that every person involved in our sport is treated with respect and dignity, is safe and protected from abuse.



## FREE ONLINE MEMBERS AND CHILD WELFARE COURSE

Swimming Australia is proud to lead the way in ensuring safe and harassment-free sport for all members and provide a free online course to assist in educating all swimming personnel.

The purpose of this course and the new Member Welfare Policy is to define acceptable behaviour, and what we can all do if unacceptable behaviour does occur.

Visit [www.swimming.org.au](http://www.swimming.org.au) for your free online member welfare training

## INSURANCE

As a parent it is important that you know what level of coverage is provided in the unlikely event of something going wrong around pool deck.

Swimming Australia in partnership with JLT Sport is committed to ensuring quality ongoing protection for its members. For information on all insurance policies visit <http://swimming.jltsport.com.au>.

## SUN SMART



## PROTECT YOURSELF IN FIVE WAYS FROM SKIN CANCER

As swimming pools are usually outdoors, it's important that parents ensure their children adopt the following five easy steps recommended by The Cancer Council:

**Slip on sun protective clothing** cover up as much of the skin as possible.

**Slop on SPF 30+ screen** make sure it's broad spectrum and, water resistant and reapplied at least every couple of hours.

**Slap on a hat** make sure it's a brimmed hat that covers the face, neck, head and ears.

**Seek shade**

**Slide on some sunglasses** close fitting, wrap-around styles offer the best protection.

And remember to take extra care between 10:00am and 3:00pm when UV radiation is most intense.





# FEEDING YOUR SWIMMER

Sports Dietitian, Ruth Logan



The goals of good nutrition for any active child are simple – maintain good health, optimise performance, ensure adequate growth and development occurs, and help them to continue to enjoy their sport by maintaining energy levels and staying well hydrated.

## Maintaining good health

Keeping kids healthy takes more than just eating good food, but establishing healthy eating habits from a young age will offer your child the best opportunity to maintain a healthy body weight, and ensure that all the necessary nutrients needed for growth and development are consumed on a regular basis. Making good food choices is a very confusing science for parents partly because of the huge array of choices now available. My suggestion is to keep things as simple as possible and use a mix of fresh, processed and convenience foods to ease the burden on 'time poor' parents. Healthy food, fast and frequently, is the recipe for success.

## Growth and development

With the obesity rates in children escalating and much discussion occurring related to this topic I certainly encourage parents to keep their kids active and enjoying their sport. Daily activity combined with healthy food choices to provide the fuel needed to support the energy demands of swimming will ensure your child grows at their

normal rate. Swimmers are notoriously 'always hungry' and it is important to top up their fuel supplies regularly with healthy snack options. Active kids need regular snacks but please encourage healthy low fat, low salt alternatives that will satisfy their needs without a surplus of kilojoules (energy) being consumed.

If your child is constantly hungry, try including more Low Glycemic Index foods such as oats for breakfast, low fat dairy foods, wholegrain breads and cereals, and fresh fruit for snacks. Kids require a daily mix of carbohydrate rich foods (for fuel), protein foods (for growth and muscle development), a small amount of healthy fats, along with plenty of fluids (mainly water). For more details regarding these nutrients please refer to my booklet Feeding Active Kids – The Junior Swimmer, which is available from Swimming Australia.

## Achieving energy balance

It is difficult to predict exactly how much food will be enough for your child as their energy requirements are very individual and continually changing due to growth spurts and changes in activity patterns. Appetite and regular growth checks will guide parents as to the amount required.

Encourage your child to understand the difference between 'need' and 'greed', as overeating is a possibility especially when at carnivals. I see kids snacking excessively on energy dense foods while waiting for their turn to swim – often not really hungry, but simply filling in the time. On the other hand, please make sure your swimmer has suitable breakfast foods ready to eat following morning training as this meal is critical to their performance during the day at school. A tired swimmer has a tough time maintaining concentration in the class room, as well as then not having enough fuel in the tank for afternoon sessions.

Swimmers need to learn about active recovery from an early age, especially once they start doing double training sessions in a day. This involves replacing the fuel used during activity as quickly as possible after training to ensure their body is ready for the next session.





## Hydration

Keeping swimmers well hydrated is an ongoing concern for parents and coaches. It seems this group of athletes are particularly at risk of dehydration due to the fact that their fluid losses during activity are difficult to notice. It is important that swimmers take a drink bottle with them to each training session and to use during the day at school. Kids taking water from the bubblers are at risk as it is difficult to accurately assess intake. Some simple hydration checks include getting kids to check the colour and frequency of their urine output – dark, infrequent urine is a sure sign of insufficient fluid intake. Remember that if your child is taking a vitamin supplement this can also affect the colour of their urine.

Water is always the preferred every day hydration fluid; however, there is a place for sports drinks. The ideal time to use these products is before, during and after activity, particularly when your child is competing in multiple events at a carnival, or doing extra heavy training sessions. Often a mix of water and sports drink will provide the ideal re-hydration formula for swimming.

Milk drinks and fruit juice are good fluids to consume for snacks or with meals but are not the best choices to use during activity. Other flavoured fluids should be kept for special occasions only.

At all times it is important to remind your child about healthy dental hygiene habits too.

## Optimising performance

What your swimmer eats and drinks each day is more important than what is consumed the night before or during a carnival. Healthy every day eating will provide the fuel and nutrition needed to keep kids training well, which in turn helps to produce their best performance during competition times. Special attention paid to recovery and refuelling after activity will give your child their best chance of producing their best results. Some extra hints for coping with carnivals are provided in the booklet mentioned previously. Ensure your swimmer has a healthy pre-event meal and takes appropriate quality and quantity of snacks and fluids on carnival days. It is not always possible to rely on the canteen to provide suitable alternatives, so plan ahead and be self sufficient if possible. After a big day of competition is a good time to allow some treat foods and will help to add fun to eating.

Remember that swimmers who eat well will feel great and therefore can perform to their potential in all aspects of their lives. An early investment in establishing a healthy relationship with food will last your child a lifetime.

## WHAT OFFICIALS DO

**Time Keepers** – use watches or automatic timers - depending on the facilities at the venue - to record the official time for the swimmer in their lane.

**Turn judges** – observe from each end of the pool to ensure that the turns comply with the rules applicable to each stroke.

**Judges of strokes** – observe the swimmers, alongside the pool, ensuring that each rule relating to the different strokes is complied with.

**Starter** – takes control of the swimmers from the referee to start the race by saying 'take your mark', waiting until there is no movement from any swimmer on the blocks, and giving the start signal.

**Referee** – has overall authority of the competition and ensures that all rules are followed. They instruct all officials and have any violations of the rules reported to them for action.

## HOW TO GET INVOLVED

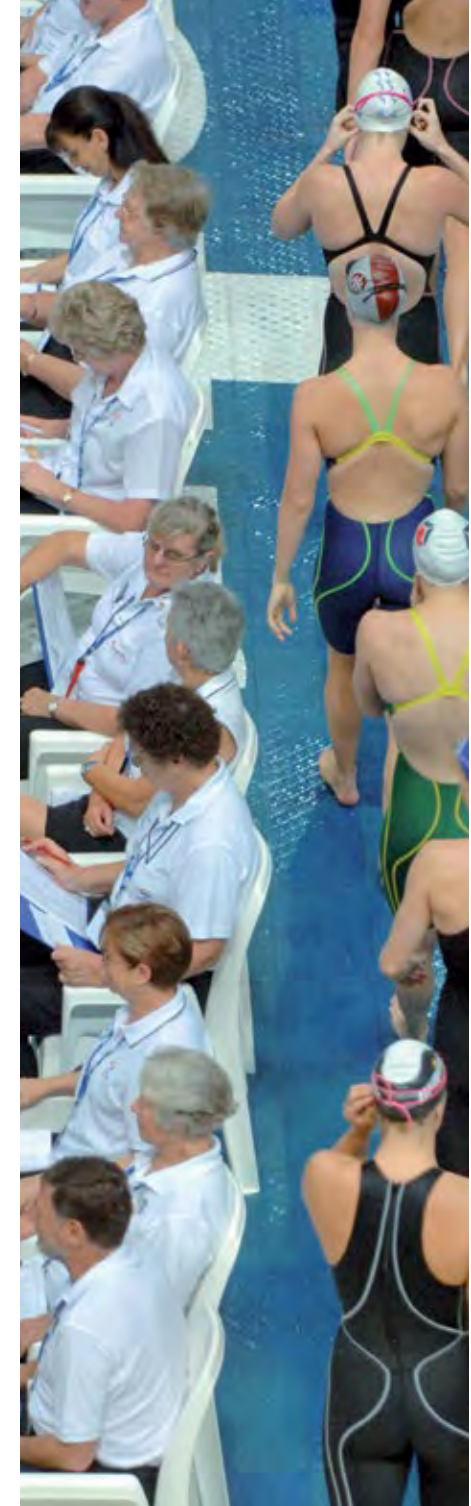
Parents are one of the main secrets to success in the world of swimming.

Volunteering means that you not only have another avenue to have a great impact in your child's athletic environment, but it also gives you a fun setting in which to meet other adults and make new friends. Here are a few simple ways to get involved:

- join the club committee;
- become an official, timekeeper or announcer;
- maintain equipment or facilitates;
- raise money;
- cook the BBQ;
- write the club's newsletter;
- be a car pool driver;
- sell programs.\*

As a volunteer, you can be instrumental in strengthening swimming in Australia.

Thank you to all parents who dedicate their time and efforts to their child's swim club.



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## Where do I buy goggles and what type do I buy?

As we all come in different shapes and sizes, there will be different goggles for everyone. You can buy these most likely at your local pool, and also at any sports store. Goggles should fit snugly around the eye, and you should feel a slight suck. You may need to try on a number of different goggles until you find ones that are both comfortable, and watertight on you.

## What is the best way to choose and care for swimwear?

Swimwear is probably the most personal choice a child gets in swimming. They can choose any style, colour, and material they want, as long as it is comfortable and suitable for training. Some brands of swimwear use an 'endurance' type material, which can withstand the chemicals of chlorine for much longer than the usual lycra material. They are more expensive, but in the time you have one pair of endurance, you could go through three or four pairs of lycra bathers.

Caring for your child's swimwear will increase the life of the apparel. The best way to look after swimwear is to rinse them with cold water after training, and hanging them out to drip dry in a shady place.

## Swimming in the winter

As with any skill, not practicing swimming can be detrimental to both the skills and also fitness levels. It is important that swimmers do not lose this simply due to the climate.

As a general rule, indoor pools are heated, and therefore if your child is training at an indoor pool, the weather should have a minimal impact on their swimming development. It is, however important to make sure that your child has clean and dry underwear and clothes to change in to after a pool session. Always keeping a spare pair of underwear and socks in their sports bag may be a way to ensure they never walk out wet into the cold weather.



# SWIMMING LINGO

**Bilateral breathing** - Most common in freestyle. Breathing to the left side then swimming three strokes and breathing to the right side, then swimming three strokes and breathing to the left side, and so on.

**Blocks** - The starting platforms located behind each lane. Blocks have a variety of designs and should only be fitted where there is a safe diving depth. Blocks may be permanent or removable, and incorporate a bar to allow swimmers to perform backstroke starts.

**Breaststroke** - Arms are moving simultaneously under the water horizontally, with legs doing a frog kick.

**Butterfly** - Legs move up and down together, and arms move together in an 'up and over' motion.

**Circle Swimming** - A way of avoiding collisions when there is more than one swimmer in a lane. Swimmers stay to one side of the lane, for example always staying on the left side of the lane, similar to driving.

**Pace clock** - The big clock on the wall or deck is used for interval training. The red hand goes around every 60 seconds. Swimmers who can read the clock and know their times find it easy to monitor their own progress. Your child's coach will be happy to explain the clock to you.

**Deck** - The area around the swimming pool. During a meet, only authorised people may be on deck. This includes swimmers, coaches and officials.

**Flags** - These are suspended over the width of each end of the pool approximately five metres from the wall, they allow backstroke swimmers to determine where the end of the pool is.

**Four beat kick** - four leg movements per arm stroke in freestyle. Similarly two and six beat kicks may be used.

**Freestyle** - Another name for the 'front crawl'. It is called freestyle, as there is no set technique.

**Lane ropes** - The dividers used to set out the lanes in a pool. These are made of individual finned disks strung on a cable, that turn on the cable when hit by a wave, dissipating the wave.

**Lap counter** - The large numbered cards (or the person turning the cards) used during the freestyle events 800 metres or longer. Counting is done from the non-starting end.

**Long course** - Events swum in a 50-metre pool.

**Medley** - All strokes are used. This can be an individual event, with one person swimming all strokes, or it can be a relay event with four people, each swimming a different stroke.

**Open water swimming** - Swimming in water other than in a pool, for example the ocean or a lake.

**PB or personal best** - The best time a swimmer has done so far in a particular stroke or event.

**Pull** - A drill in where you swim using your arms only. A pull buoy is often used to keep a swimmers legs together while they pull.

**Referee** - The head official at a swim meet. Short course - Events run in a 25-metre pool.

**Touch pad** - The removable plate (on the end of pools) that is connected to an automatic timing system. A swimmer must properly touch the touch-pad to register an official time in a race.

**Tumble turn** - Used in freestyle swimming, similar to a somersault under the water upon reaching the pool wall. Is faster than 'touch and go' once technique is mastered.

**Warm down** - Used by the swimmer to rid the body of excess lactic acid generated during a race. Warm-up - The practice and loosening session a swimmer does before the meet or their event. The blood flow to the muscles warm up creates is essential to avoid injury.





## **Swimming Australia Ltd**

[www.swimming.org.au](http://www.swimming.org.au)

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