Ryde Swimming Club

A guide for parents and swimmers new to swimming competitions and racing

The different levels of swimming competitions

There are four levels of Meets, with each level being defined by the licensing set by Swim England. The highest grade being Level 1. Swimmers qualify for meets based on their Personal Best times. If you have never raced before and you don't have a personal best time for an event yet, you can enter Level 4 meets without a time. In this case, on the entry form, instead of an entry time you will put "NT" meaning "no time" this is also what 'NT' means against the swimmer's name on the list of entries.

Level 4

Entry level meets. These are the lowest level meet that can be licenced – these are normally 'closed' meets, which means they are run for our own club swimmers only whereas 'open' meets are open to other clubs to enter as well.

Time Trials and Club Championships are normally Level 4 Meets. The times your swimmer achieves at these meets are recorded on British Swimming Rankings (see also the section at the end of the guide on qualifying times and rankings). Times achieved at these competitions are suitable for getting qualifying times so you can enter Level 3 meets – the next level up.

Level 3

Level 3 meets can have upper limit and lower limit qualification times to reflect the standard at which the meet is aimed. These meets are suitable for obtaining qualifying times for other Level 3 meets such as Hampshire County Championships or for entry to Level 1 or 2 meets such as Regional Championships.

Level 2

Level 2 are held in 25m (Short Course) pools only. These meets might have upper limit or lower limit qualifying times. Their purpose is to enable athletes to achieve qualifying times for entry into National, Regional and County Championships in short course.

Level 1

Level 1 meets are the highest grade of meet – they are held in a 50m (Long Course) pool only. They always have lower limit (minimum) standard qualification times that your swimmer has had to achieve before you can enter. These meets are suitable for obtaining National or Regional Qualifying Times.

See also www.swimming.org/sport/licensed-meets/ for more information.

What is Long Course (LC) / Short Course (SC)?

Long course means the meet is swum in a 50m pool; short course is a 25m pool.

Swimming a race in a 25m pool is quite different to a 50m pool! As there are more turns in a 25m pool – so more pushing off - typically swimmers swim faster in a short course event (if they are good at turns!). As such the Swim England publish conversion factors which allow you to convert a time achieved in a Long Course event to an equivalent Short Course time and vice versa, an online convertor can be found here www.pullbuoy.co.uk/times

Qualifying Times

Most competitions, except for Level 4 meets have qualifying times that you need to achieve before you can enter.

Lower Limit times means you have to be at least as fast as the time published to enter the race. Eg 50m Freestyle 35.2 seconds – your swimmer has to be faster than this to get in.

Upper Limit times means you cannot be faster than this time to enter the event. Eg 50m Freestyle 35.2 seconds – your swimmer has to be slower than this to get in.

Most competitions are quite strict on the qualifying times and you have to be accurate to the hundredth of a second on your entry form. Do not falsify times on entry forms – there are electronic systems in place to check them so you will get found out and you could lose your entry fees.

NOTE - just because you meet the qualifying times does not automatically mean your swimmer will be accepted for a meet. There may be other faster children and if the meet is full they can reject (sometimes called 'scratch') entries based on their conditions of entry and their published process to do this. ALWAYS check the Accepted Entry file published after the closure date for entries to check your swimmer has been accepted for their races. 'SCR' next to their time means that they have been rejected for that event!

Individual Best times / Personal Best Times

When your swimmer is a member of Swim England all races they compete in at licenced events are recorded on a British Rankings database.

You can find out their personal best times for all the races they have entered in by entering their Swim England membership number or if you don't know it enter their surname and find them from the list of swimmers here. It will give you their Swim England number and you should keep a note of it for future reference as you will need it for entry forms.

https://www.swimmingresults.org/individualbest/

You will see the list of events they have swam and their best time shows on the front page like Figure 1 below. There will be both Long Course and Short Course Times. If you click on their best time in blue you will get a performance graph as shown in Figure 2 which shows all the times they have competed that event and their improvement over time in graph format.

Figure 1 – Individual Best Times

Individual Best Times (All Time)

Jacob Jenner - (1280579) - Ryde Swimming Club - 50 Freestyle - Long Course

Performance Graph

Drag to Zoom, right click to reset.
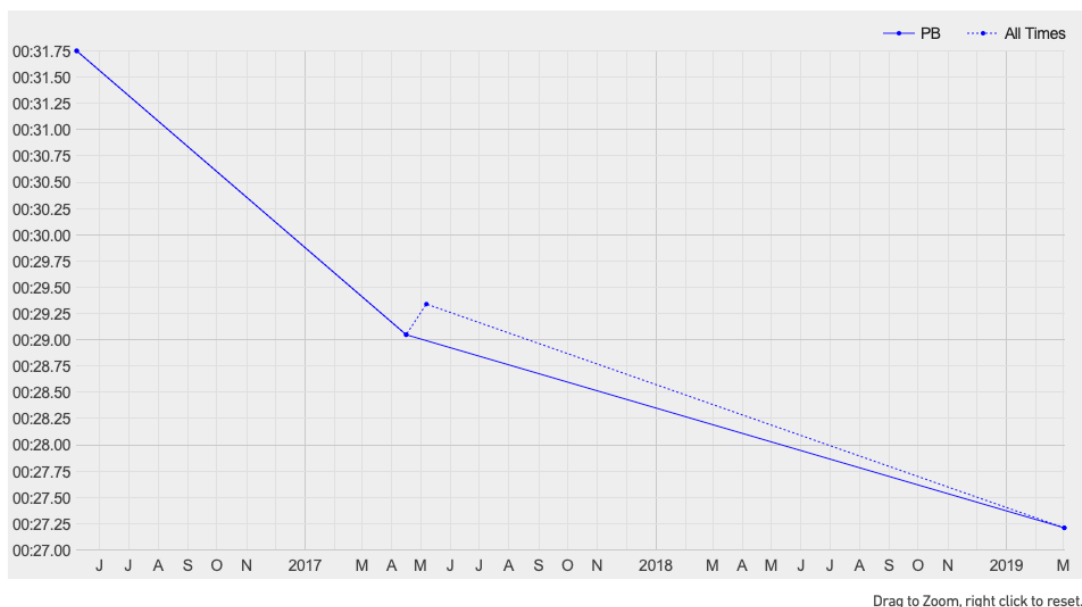
Swims in Time Order

Time	FINA Pts	Round	Swim Date	Meet	Venue	Club Swam Under	Level
27.21	453	H	02/03/19	Rushmoor Royals Regional Qualifier Open Meet	Aldershot Garrison	Io Wight	3
29.06	372	H	16/04/17	PNSC Easter Meet	Portsmouth	Ryde SC	1
29.34	361	F	07/05/17	Portsmouth Northsea LC Sprint Meet	Portsmouth	Ryde SC	3
31.75	285	F	08/05/16	Portsmouth Northsea LC Sprint Meet 2016	Portsmouth	Ryde SC	3

Rankings

Figure 2 – Performance Graph

If you wish you can see where your swimmer ranks against other swimmers around the Country by looking at the British Rankings. The database gives lots of different search options – you can compare swimming results from all time or just for swimmers that have competed in the same age group over the past 12 months. You can also view rankings per club, per County or Region.

See figure 3 below.
You can find the rankings database here https://www.swimmingresults.org/12months/

Figure 3 – British Rankings Search Page

Which swim meets shall I enter?

When we publish the meet information we will advise which squads the meet is targeted for to help you know if the meet is suitable for your swimmer's squad.

Your coach should be able to advise you on which events (races) your swimmer should enter at the meet to align with their ability – the next section is to give you some general guidelines only:

Which races (events) shall I enter at the meet?

As a very general rule - young swimmers should aim to try 25m races first at their very first swim meets (time trials) and then progress on to the 50m, 100m, 200m events etc when they are ready.

Young swimmers should try every stroke! Do not pigeon hole your child too quickly! As your swimmer grows you may find their best event changes. Over time, let them try everything, all the strokes and all the distances. They should not be focusing too much on one stroke in particular until they are a very established competitive swimmer.

When choosing events at a meet for your swimmer to race in, first always take a look at the programme of events. The meet itself will be split into a number of sessions (normally 2 or 3 sessions per day) with each session comprising specific events. Check which events make sense to race in one day based on the Programme of Events.

You then need to ask yourself some questions;

- if you enter your swimmer for every race in every session do you both really want to be at the pool from 7am to 7pm and/or the whole weekend?
- are there some sessions/events which for whatever reason they aren't ready for or don't need to swim this time?
- is there a combination of events which might compromise their performance in a single session for a specific event?
- is your swimmer up to swimming all the events chosen it in terms of fitness and stamina? Is there enough rest time between their races?

If you need any advice you should discuss it with your Coach before submitting the entry.

Relays

Swimming is often thought of as an individual sport. However, the further you develop in swimming you will learn that there is a lot of team spirit as swimming clubs. At some meets your swimmer may be picked to swim for your team in the relays. It is a privilege to be picked and the club does expect you to swim if you are lucky enough to be chosen. Swimmers should always be prepared to swim for their team!

Promoters Conditions

You MUST always read the conditions of entry to each meet. There are some rules and regulations for every meet and it is better to read through these to fully understand the terms and conditions beforehand.

Age up date

Your swimmers calculated age on the day of a meet can be either:

- Age on day – this the age your swimmer will be on the last day of the meet itself.
- Age at 31st December – this is the age your swimmer will be by the last day of the year, so they could be shown on the programme as the year older than they actually are (eg it shows they are age 12 when they are still 11)

You need to pay special attention to this as it could change who they are swimming against in any competition.

You should also note the age groups for medals and awards to set expectations for your swimmer. Specific events at the meet will be run for specific age groupings and gender and each event will have qualifying times specific to that age/gender.

Some meets will use single banded age groups e.g. awards are given to swimmers age 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 years old.

Other meets may have double banded ages (e.g. 9/10, 11/12, 13/14 years old – in these cases it will be harder for them to achieve a medal if they are only age 9 and there are 10 year olds in their category – so make sure they understand this beforehand so they are not disappointed.

Filling in Entry Forms

1. All entry forms MUST be handed into reception (Waterside Pool) by the closing date which is published. We always get parents who are late with their entries! But remember as you get to higher grade meets the entry closing dates get very strict and then your swimmer will miss out if you are late. Try and get in a good habit of looking what meets your swimmer is targeting for the season – the swimming calendar is published annually – and put it on your own calendar to remind yourself when entries are due.

2. The correct entry fee must be paid with entry form - entries will be rejected without the correct fees. There may be an additional admin fee which goes towards the fees the club has to pay to enter the races, purchase passes for the coaches so they are allowed poolside at meets and also for their time and travel costs. Please keep your receipt from reception, in case there are any discrepancies.

3. Entry forms MUST be completed correctly with all the information requested, including your swimmers date of birth and Swim England membership number and their personal best times for each event you wish to enter.

4. Do not enter a swimmer for a meet if they have not gained the qualifying time for or alternatively do not enter them if they are too fast (upper limit meets), you may lose your money.

Accepted Entries

It is *your* responsibility to ensure correct times are entered on the entry form and then to check the Accepted Entry file for the competition as soon it is published. You need to make sure your swimmer firstly has been entered and secondly their details and times are correct. Nearly all swim meets are run by volunteers and they have lots of organising to do – therefore checking they have input the entry properly is your job! If you find mistakes you must notify us straight away. It will probably be too late telling us on the day of the race to make the changes! We often get angry emails demanding to know why we have made a mistake – please remember the volunteers are

doing this work for your swimmers benefit for free, so a polite email pointing out the error will suffice.

NOTE - just because you meet the qualifying times does not automatically mean your swimmer will be accepted for a meet. There may be other faster children and if the meet is full they can reject (sometimes called 'scratch') entries based on their conditions of entry and their published process to do this. ALWAYS check the Accepted Entry file published after the closure date for entries to check your swimmer has been accepted for their races. 'SCR' next to their time for any event means that they have been rejected for that event! You might find they have been rejected for most of their races, in which case you might want to decide whether it is still worthwhile going to the meet all day for one or two events – check the Programme of Events to see which sessions the races your swimmer has been accepted to see if it makes sense. If you have one event at 8.30am and the only other race they have been accepted for is at 6pm and it's a three-hour journey, you may want to re-think it.

Preparing for the Meet Before the meet

Give your swimmer a sensible meal the night before they swim. They shouldn't eat anything too heavy or completely out of the norm. The best plan is to eat something simple and easy to digest, similarly for breakfast.

Make sure you know the venue and how long it will take you to get there.

Also, check online for the parking locations and whether you will need to pay and have change for it etc. Leave plenty of time spare so that your swimmer has time to change and prepare without rushing.

Check carefully the FINAL published session times. These can be subject to change from the original published times when you originally entered due to the number of entrants and how long the racing will take – check the website the day before just in case any changes have been made last minute.

Be aware that there is a "warm up" swim at the beginning of each of the day's sessions, your swimmer will be expected to swim in each of these. Note - if the boy's races are first on the programme then they will warm up first / vice versa for the girls.

If your child has special needs please send all details to your coach on email before the meet so they can make sure they are properly catered for on the day. If you feel that they will need 1-2-1 assistance poolside please let us know.

Signing in / Out

For some competitions you need to sign in your child when you arrive at a meet – check the Promoters Conditions to make sure you know if this is a requirement and if it is find the signing in book on arrival. If you don't your swimmer may not be able to participate.

For most competitions if your swimmer needs to withdraw from a race they will operate a signing out procedure – you must tell your coach if your swimmer isn't going to compete and they will do the signing out for you. If you do not tell your coach the club may be liable for a fine and this will be passed on to you. This is always detailed in the Promoters Conditions.

What to bring to the meet

1. Swimsuit, cap and goggles – and then a spare of everything! Swimsuits for racing should be reasonably tight fitting (you don't want them filled with water to drag your child down) but you do not need a special racing swim suit until you are at a high level. Girls should wear a training type costume, without any frills etc. Boys should wear jammers – not shorts.

2. Bring two towels as they will be drying off between races and will want a dry one at the end as well for changing.

3. RYDS swimmers should have a RYDS club top to wear poolside at competitions. They should also bring shorts / joggers to wear whilst waiting. Make sure your swimmer also always has flip flops / poolside shoes.

4. Enough food and snacks appropriate for the meet length; a packed lunch with sensible options and plenty to drink. Your coach can give you guidance.

5. Parents you need to bring money – most meets have a spectator entry fee (this varies per meet but often around £5 per day per person for a Level 3 meet). Some meets will charge for a programme as well, which is really a necessity if you want to follow the events and not miss your child's swim.

6. Be prepared to queue for entry to the spectator's gallery! Leave plenty of time for this!

7. Parents should bring some pens to record times and maybe a highlighter pen so you can find your swimmers races in the programme easily and be ready for their race.

8. Some meets can be uncomfortable in very hot spectator galleries and have very long waits between your swimmer's events – make sure you dress appropriately, bring things to keep you occupied and perhaps a cushion to sit on.

What to expect during racing

Your swimmer will be expected to find their own way to their races – at all ages! Nearly every meet there is a child who misses their race. It is very upsetting both for them and the meet organisers! It is very, very difficult to change the order of events once the racing is underway and so often if they have missed their race we cannot do anything about it.

Race process

To help make sure they don't miss their race you can make sure your swimmer, especially the younger ones, understands the process beforehand:

- Swimmers should report directly to their coach poolside on the day. They should stay with their squad poolside except for races and toilet breaks. They can leave poolside when their session/races have ended and only when they have checked with their coach.

- Parents are not allowed poolside at meets unless you have been allocated a poolside job on the helpers list, please respect this.

- Their coach will tell them which events they are swimming in and will call their name when it is time to queue up for their race.

- The swimmers will then be sent to the marshalling area (known as whipping area). If they need to go to the toilet at this time they MUST tell the marshal and they will tell them if there is enough time. If they wander off we can't just stop everything to wait for them!

- The marshals will call out the names of the swimmers and get them into order. They will then line up in the order of the lane that they will be swimming in. Make sure your swimmer listens out carefully for their name to be called – remember if their name is difficult to pronounce they might need to be extra careful.

- When it is your swimmers turn to race they will be sent to their lane behind the blocks. By this time they need to get their hat and goggles on ready.

- When your swimmers heat is ready to start, the referee will give several short whistle blasts (three or four) – that is their cue to stand behind the blocks with their hat and goggles on ready to race.

- The announcer will then announce the details of the race – the Event Name and the Heat. Example this is Event Number 1 – the 50 metres freestyle, this event is swam over 10 heats and this is heat number 1. They will then hand over the race to the referee.

- The referee will then give one long whistle blast. The swimmers then should step onto the block and get ready. If they are not diving in they should enter the water after the long whistle blast.

- The starter will then say "Take your mark" – this is the time to grab the block - then there is a short pause and they go at the loud beep!

- At most meets the swimmers times will appear on the score board when they have finished their race. The yellow pads in the pool are touch sensitive and they need to touch them with both hands together (except for backstroke). Sometimes the swimmer doesn't hit the pad hard enough for the time to register or the pad doesn't work. Don't worry! The timekeeper (official in white) at the end of the lane always takes back up times. When there is a discrepancy it will be checked so there is no need to panic if the time doesn't come up on the board.

- Remember races (events) are organised into heats and then swam in order of the swimmer's entry time, slowest to fastest normally. This means that swimmers that are competing with your child in their heat might not actually be in their age group – they might be older or younger. So your swimmer might win their heat against the 7 other children they were racing against in the water, but not actually win a medal. You will need to check the published results to know where they have come overall in the race in their age category (see also the section on age up dates).

- After each race the swimmer should return to their squad, where the coach may provide feedback or support. The swimmer should towel down and put on their club top.

- Results – at most meets the results will be published in the spectator area soon after the event. Some competitions use a mobile app called Meet Mobile which publishes live the results of the races. This has a small annual subscription fee but is very useful.

When things go wrong – they often do!

- Keep calm!

- If they miss their race it isn't the end of the world! Please put it in perspective if this happens, there will be lots and lots of other opportunities. Remember the marshals are volunteers and are other kid's parents who might be new to this too – please treat them kindly even if they make a mistake.

- It is a fact of life that swimmers may well be disqualified (DQ) when racing. Like all sports, competitive swimming has its own set of strict technical rules which are there to make sure that races are run completely fairly. Whilst it is obviously upsetting when DQs happen the club has to get the swimmers used to these rules from the start.

It is very rare for disqualifications to get overturned. Please do your swimmer a favour and help them to accept the decision. It is good to understand the reason for the disqualification so they can learn from it and your coach will discuss that with them, but getting upset or angry about it will not help your swimmer.

More information on disqualification codes can be found here.

http://www.fina.org/content/disqualification-codes-2014-2017