

An Introduction to Competing

We are proud that the British Down Syndrome Swimming Championships are as inclusive as we can make them. Whilst some of the competitors will have had experience of competing, some will not, so we thought we would produce this guide to ease you into the world of competition. Swimming and competing are above all about having fun, so here we go!

There will be highs and there will be lows. This might include disqualifications. These happen all the time even in major internationals and are just part of competitive swimming. As a licensed Meet the event has to follow the rules of racing. Swimmers and their parents need to understand why DQ's have happened, learn from them and move on to the next race. It will be disappointing, but it is in the past. Please do not get annoyed with the referee, officials or the swimmer. Ask any volunteer if you need help.

There is a summary of the basic rules for swimming each stroke at the end of this document.

Now here we go – planning out your race day:

The day before

Go through the races you have entered and think about them – how many lengths, which strokes. Do you have your poolside pass notification? Passes will be issued on arrival. Maximum ONE per swimmer. NB ALL swimmers must be accompanied poolside. No unaccompanied swimmers will be allowed.

Pack your swimmer's bag

- Swimming costume (two if you have an extra)
- Well-fitting goggles (plus spare pair just in case?)
- Swim cap if used
- A small poolside bag for your hat, goggles, drink and towel is useful
- Filled water bottles (no fizzy drinks) – staying hydrated is very important. NO GLASS allowed poolside. There is a water fountain near the squash courts to refill your bottle.
- Small, healthy snacks to keep up energy. Easy to eat and not messy (e.g. banana, flapjack, cereal bars, raisin, rice cakes. NO NUTS PLEASE. NO chocolate – it will melt!)
- Two towels – one for poolside, and a dry one for changing
- Sliders or other clean poolside shoes are a good idea
- Poolside top or robe to keep warm after swim
- A pound coin for the changing room lockers
- **Please make sure all personal belongings are named!!**

Planning food

- Will you be buying food from the café at the pool or are you taking a packed lunch?
Best prepared the night before if you have an early start.



- It is important to keep up the swimmers' energy. Packing food that you know your swimmer likes and is familiar with would be a good idea and will be available when you need it.
- There are plenty of tables and seats around K2 to use. However it is important to avoid eating too much between sessions and to allow enough time to digest, to avoid feeling unwell when you are competing. There will be about an hour's break between sessions, and you may have longer depending on the events you are swimming.

Timings

Check what time you have to leave the next day. When is your warm-up session?
All timings we will on the event website. Have an early night!

The morning of the event

Eat a good breakfast, not too heavy, and have a good drink.
Fill your drinks bottles and put in your swimming bag. Remember your packed lunch in a cool bag if you are taking one. Check the traffic. Leave in good time.

Arriving at the event

- Arrive at least 30 minutes before your warm-up. If you are going to be late, please let us know so we can sign you in britishdsswimmingchamps@gmail.com
- When you arrive, go to the DSS-GB desks in reception, sign in and collect your poolside pass for whoever is accompanying you poolside (**must be worn at all times**), your accreditation on a lanyard (which shows who you are so that the officials know you are the right swimmer that they are expecting in that race) and your goodie bag.
- If you would like to pull out of a race, let the DSS-GB reception desk know BEFORE the warm-up for that session starts.
- Go to the changing rooms. We suggest you go to the loo BEFORE you put on your costume! Change into your costume, poolside top or robe, and clean flip flops /sliders/trainers.
- Put your accreditation on its lanyard round your neck. You will need to wear this at all times, only taking it off before a race. Remember to collect it after each race. Put your kit bag into the locker (with £1 coin) and take your small poolside bag with goggles, hat, towel, snacks and drink to the pool. Find where you will be sitting and say hello to the volunteers who are there to help you!

Warm-up

- Before the start of racing, there will be time to swim a few lengths in a warm-up. The announcer will let us all know when the warm-up is about to start. They will make a safety announcement first. Please listen to this!
- The warm-ups are usually divided up into 2 or 3 sessions according to age and gender. When it is your turn, go to one of the ends and carefully jump in or climb down the steps. Be careful to avoid the yellow boards at each end. These are the

timing pads which you touch at the end of a race to stop the clock. They are quite fragile so we have to avoid them when we jump in.

- When you have swum a few lengths to get used to the pool and warm up your muscles, climb out using the steps.
- Towards the end of each warm-up session, people who have passed their competitive start awards (see FAQs on website) can practise a few dives when the Announcer says it is time to do so. We expect quite a few swimmers to be starting their races in the water, and not with a dive. This is perfectly acceptable and will ensure your safety.
- Go back to where you were sitting, dry yourself off and put on something to keep warm until your first race. Have a drink and maybe a snack. **Keep hydrated!**

Racing and Results - how it works

- When the warm-ups are all done, the Announcer will introduce the Referee and Officials who are running the event, starting the races and timing you (as a back-up to the electronic timing).
- Each event will be swum in “heats” according to swimmers entry times, not age. The fastest heat will be the last heat.
- Once everyone has swum that event, the swimmers will be ranked in their age groups (T21 or Mosaic) (Juniors (16/Under), Seniors (17-24), Masters 1 (25-34) and Masters 2 (35/Over)) by their times swum in the heats. Your age will be how old you are on the last day of the events (17/11/24).
- The fastest 3 swimmers in **each** age group - without disqualification - will be given an age group medal, which you collect from the medals table on poolside. Results will be posted on the wall near the showers, and up on the balcony, **and on the results site listed on the website.**
- The three fastest swimmers **overall** (T21 and Mosaic) will be presented with a Championship medal on the podium at the breaks.

Marshalling area

- This is where you line up for your race. The race schedule will be on the back of your accreditation. Heat sheets showing who is in which heat will be available online.
- Swimmers are needed in the marshalling area ahead of the time of their race so we can make sure everyone is present and in order.
- Listen for announcements to go to the marshalling area, which will be about 4 heats before your race. Put on your goggles and hat and make sure you are wearing your accreditation and walk to the marshalling area. The marshal will ask you your name and line you up in the right order for your race.
- There will be up to 8 of you in each heat. Sit on the chairs set out for you to wait your turn. Once you are with the marshals, your poolside parent/helper can go back to where you were sitting. You are now ready to race! There will be 4 sets of 8 chairs, and you will move along as the previous heats are swum. When you are in the final



set of chairs, the marshal will check if you are in the right seat and remind you what race you are about to swim – which stroke and how many lengths.

- At the start of the heat before yours, you will be asked to stand behind the diving block of your lane. Keep really quiet whilst the race before yours starts. Once they have started it will be your turn.
- The timekeeper will check your accreditation to make sure you are the swimmer they are expecting according to the heat sheets. Take off your accreditation, shoes and poolside top/robe and put them in the plastic box at the end of your lane. Volunteers will move the boxes to the side when you have started your race, ready for you to collect your belongings when you have finished. The timekeeper will help you if you need it. Check your goggles are on securely. Listen to the starter for instructions. Check the start procedure on the DSS-GB website <https://www.dss-gb.org/sign-up/>

The Race itself

- The referee will signal it is your turn by blowing their whistle a few times. When everyone looks ready and everyone is silent (including the spectators), the referee will give a long whistle blast. Jump in if you are starting in the water and hold onto the side ready for the signal to start. If you are diving, climb up onto the blocks. When everyone is still, the starter will say “take your marks”. Keep really still. They will then sound the start signal. When you hear this buzzer, start swimming, either with a dive or water start.
- If you go too early, before the buzzer, you will unfortunately be disqualified, and your time won't count. Even though this is disappointing, focus on your next race, and do your best!
- At the end of your race, stay in your lane until everyone has finished. The race officials will then indicate for everyone to clear the pool: move to the poolside and climb out using the steps – don't climb over the timing boards. Collect your accreditation and belongings and go back to dry off. Have a drink and maybe a small snack if you need it, but make sure there is enough time to digest before your next race. You don't want a sugar low.

Good luck!

**Most importantly, have a great day and enjoy the experience!
Please ask the volunteers if you need assistance or information - they are
there to help!**



A very brief guide to the basic rules of the 4 strokes

As this is a licensed meet under the rules of Swim England, the official rules of swimming will apply to every race. There are rules for starting, for how the strokes are swum, for how turns are done and for how swimmers finish. Below is a short summary of them. This is NOT comprehensive and is just a summary of a few basic rules to explain some of the most common reasons for disqualification. For more detailed rules, see the link at the bottom of the page:

The start – if you go before the buzzer, that is a false start – you’ll be disqualified. Any movement after the starter has said “take your marks” may lead to disqualification, so don’t jiggle, touch your goggles or look around. Keep really still!

Freestyle - the simplest! Any stroke / style will do, although this event is usually swum front crawl. You can finish however you like, you just need to touch the end!

Backstroke – you must finish the race on your back. When you see the flags across the pool, it means it is 5m until you reach the wall.

Breaststroke – when you touch the end at a turn or the finish, you must touch with both hands at the same time. In the stroke, the movement of your arms must be simultaneous and the movement of your legs must be simultaneous. At some point during each stroke, your head must break the water. You must have a cycle of one arm stroke to one leg kick.

Butterfly – when you touch the ends at a turn or the finish, you must touch with both hands at the same time. In the stroke, the movement of your arms must be simultaneous and the arms must be brought forward above the surface, and then back below the surface. The movement of your legs must be simultaneous and downwards, not outwards.

Individual Medley – this is a race of all 4 strokes, so all the stroke rules apply to each stroke as you are swimming them. You swim in the order butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, freestyle. You must finish each stroke in accordance with the finish rules for that stroke.

If you want to find out more, you can read the (very detailed!) World Aquatics regulations [here](#)