

Gala Guide

Your first gala might seem daunting, but please don't worry or panic. The coach and team managers will be there to guide you through and help you all they can. Everyone wants you to have a good time!

We've tried to include everything you need to know, but if you aren't sure of anything, please ask. We like questions. Everyone was new to this once. If something isn't clear, that's our fault, not yours.

The most important thing is... to remember, it is supposed to be fun!

On a practical note, if you need to drop out of a gala at the last minute, or are running very late, please tell us. Otherwise we will worry about where you are.

Timings

1. All but the smallest galas are divided into sessions, generally with two sessions per day. Each session has a warm-up, then several events. You need to be there at the start of the session, otherwise your child won't get a warm-up, but can leave when they have swum their last event. Sessions are numbered consecutively throughout the gala: day 2, session 3 will be the first session of day 2, sessions 1 & 2 having been on day 1, not the third.
2. Remind yourself what your child entered, then look at the gala timetable to see what session(s) their events are in. A list of confirmed entries and the gala timetable should be under the "Competitions" section of the website. That will give you a rough idea of when you need to be at the venue. The second session of the day will generally follow straight on from the first session so will have a "not before" starting time.
3. The heat sheets and warm-up details come out a day or so before the event. The warm-up details tell you when you need to be there (see para.5 below). In theory, the heat sheets tell you exactly when and in which lane your swimmer will be competing. Don't rely too heavily on them – they may change at the last minute – but do bring a copy along with you as very few events provide printed programs.

On the day

4. What to take:
 - (1) Swimsuit, hat and goggles (ideally two pairs).
 - (2) Any medication your child will need. Please tell the team manager about this.
 - (3) T-shirt and shorts for wearing poolside. TSC T-shirt if you have one, otherwise

any T-shirt (preferably dark).

- (4) Two towels: one for poolside, one to stay dry in the locker.
- (5) Poolside footwear, such as flip-flops.
- (6) Water bottle with water.
- (7) Enough food to last the time you will be at the pool, including snacks for between races. No crisps, nuts or sweets.
- (8) Something to keep you entertained between events – e.g. music, a book, schoolwork.

Please:

- DON'T take glass bottles or containers poolside. If glass breaks and goes in the pool, the pool has to be drained and all swimming for the day is cancelled.
- DO ensure your child's name is on all items.

- 5. Aim to arrive in time for your child to be changed and on poolside a comfortable 15 mins before their warm-up starts. Allow extra time for finding your way around.
- 6. If at the Life Centre, allow LOTS of extra time for parking if you've been told Plymouth Argyle are playing at home.
- 7. Lockers: most pools ask you to leave all large bags in lockers and take only essential items poolside. Lockers at the Life Centre are worked by a reusable wristband bought from the front desk. Cost £6.50 at the time of writing, refundable on return if you still have your receipt. It can be kept as long as you like; no need to return it the same day.
- 8. When you get to the pool, your child should get changed, then go poolside to where TSC are sitting. Parents are allowed in the changing room but not poolside. If it is your child's first gala (or first gala at the Life Centre), we will have made a plan with you for someone from the club to link up with them to show them where to go.

Swimmers

- 9. Pre-warmup (poolside): there will be a poolside mobility session before your warm-up, directed by the coach/ senior swimmers. This will help you get the most out of the pool warm-up.
- 10. Warm-up: your coach will have told you what to do but ask if you aren't sure. The warm-up is for warming up your muscles properly to avoid injury, preparing to race and getting the feel of the water.
- 11. After the warm-up and before your race.
 - (1) Have a drink. You need to drink regularly, so make sure your drink is with you and topped up. Isotonic sports drinks are permissible but water should be your

main drink.

- (2) If there is more than one hour between the warm-up and your first race (ask your team manager) try to have something to eat from the snack guide below. The best approach is a little as and when. You want to race on a fairly empty stomach; if you eat too much, you'll feel heavy and lethargic.
- (3) Keep warm. Wear a T-shirt and shorts plus your poolside footwear, even if it is hot and humid on poolside.

- 12. Event Marshalling. Your team manager will let you know when you need to queue up for your event. If you haven't been to a gala before, someone will show you what to do and where to go. Don't worry, they'll remember what it's like be at a gala for the first time! There will be several marshalling points. At each, the marshal will ask you for your name and tell you which lane you will be swimming in. You go from one marshal to another until you get to the start. The marshals are other mums and dads who are there to make sure you are OK and in the right place at the right time. Everyone wants you to have a good time.
- 13. When you get to your lane, the timekeeper will ask your name and check it against their list. There's no risk you'll end up swimming in the wrong lane because they will make sure you are in the right place.
- 14. The race. Simply do your best! Afterwards, go and see your coach. He will give you feedback on your swim, then tell you where and how to do your swim down.
- 15. Between events. You will be looked after by the team manager. Please don't leave poolside without their permission. If your parents are there, you can go and sit with them but you **MUST** check with the team manager first.
- 16. After your last race. When you have finished all your events, please speak to both the coach and the team manager before you leave. Do not wander off without telling anyone, even if your parents are there.

Heats and "HDW"

- 17. You are swimming for the fastest possible time, not the best placing in your heat. Each heat contains swimmers of similar speeds, regardless of age. Results are worked out by comparing the times of the swimmers in each age group, regardless of where they came in their heat. This is done by the computer once all the heats have been swum and all the times recorded.
- 18. In most galas, there are only heats, with no finals. This is referred to as "HDW" or "heat declared winner". County and regional championships are an exception, but if you've got that far you aren't likely to be reading this guide.

19. Some galas complicate things with “hot heats”. These are heats chosen at random in which a spot prize (e.g. a bar of chocolate) is given to the swimmer who comes first in that heat. In the Life Centre, they are announced on the scoreboard immediately before the heat.

Notes for parents

20. Your child will be looked after on poolside by a team manager and the coach but is your responsibility under you have handed them over. For children of primary school age, at least parent/ carer should stay on site.
21. When primary school aged swimmers have finished and wish to get changed, you should come to where the changing rooms open on to poolside; your child will be handed over to you there by a senior swimmer or team manager.
22. If your children are young and there are long gaps between their heats, it may be sensible for them to sit with you for some of that time to break up the wait. Please make sure the team manager knows if they are doing this. Discuss it with the team manager if you aren't sure of the likely timings.

Food and drink

Morning of the event

1. Don't swim on empty. Even if you feel nervous, make breakfast happen! Stick to easily digested foods such as cereal with milk, porridge, banana with yoghurt, some fruit or toast with jam.
2. If you're really struggling, try liquid meals such as milkshakes, yoghurt drinks or a smoothie.
3. It's a good idea to rehearse your competition meal routine in training so you know exactly what agrees with you.

Food & snacks between heats

4. Eat as soon as you can after your swim to give yourself as long as possible to recover if you have to swim again.
5. Right before an event, it's best not to snack or drink. You don't want to start swimming with a stomach full of food!
6. High fat and simple sugar foods will do you no favours in competition. Instead, search out the complex carbohydrates.
7. If you are still feeling nervous try sports drinks that will help replenish your energy

supplies and assist the recovery of aching muscles.

8. Ideas for snacking on in and around training and competitions.
 - Pasta salad
 - Plain sandwiches, e.g. chicken, tuna, cheese salad, banana
 - Dried fruit, e.g. raisins, apricots, mango
 - Bananas, grapes, apples, plums, pears
 - Crackers and rice cakes with banana and/or honey
 - Mini-pancakes, fruit buns
 - Cereal bars, fruit bars, sesame snaps, popcorn, Jaffa Cakes, jelly cubes
 - Yoghurt and yoghurt drinks
 - Prepared vegetable crudités, e.g. carrots, peppers, cucumber, celery
9. Drinks: sip little and often, and for each sip of sports drinks, take a sip of water.

Recovery after competition

10. Have something to drink and eat immediately after your last swim. Water, a sports drink or sports bars are best.
11. Avoid the fast food chains on the way home: their high fat foods will delay recovery.
12. Eat enough! The worst thing you can do is wait a couple of hours, then have a little snack. This will not be sufficient, especially if you have an event the next day. A high carbohydrate meal with protein is best.

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