



Welcome New Fast Lane Families

On Behalf of all the existing Families, the Coaching Staff, and the Booster Board, welcome to Fast Lane Aquatics! Anything that we can do to make your transition into our program easier, please feel free to let us know by contacting an existing Parent on deck or the Booster Board at booster@fastlaneaquatics.com .

Our Swim Team is one of the Premier Clubs in the Southeast with a great Coaching Staff and tremendous Parental Support, so we are proud to have you become part of a great tradition.

The information below will help you understand the Sport of Swimming and the relationship between the Parent-Swimmer, Parent-Coach, and finally the Parent-Club. In addition, there is a detailed time line of what actually happens at a "Meet" so you will know what you need to bring, when to be there, and finally what to expect.

The Florida Swimming Website: www.floridaswimming.org has great parent information as well. Much of what you see in this letter came from that site.

Floridaswimming.org and our site, www.fastlaneaquatics.com will be the source for a majority of your information.

The Fast Lane Aquatics Team Website – www.fastlaneaquatics.com is updated at least once a week and will have meet information, meet directions, news about the team, meet results, and pictures. In addition, there is the Fast Zone Section which contains contact lists, breakfast schedules, practice times, board information, volunteer information and hotel block information. This section is protected by a password for Fast Lane members "only".

You can request the password by contacting team@fastlaneaquatics.com.

Now, let's move on to the important stuff. The information below should help you erase the "Rookie Parent" status and bring your knowledge up a few levels.

Thanks for your Future Support,

Fast Lane Board

Why Should My Child Be a Swimmer?

- Swimming is an outstanding activity for people of all ages.
- Swimming promotes fitness and teaches a child to strive for physical achievement. Many super-stars in other sports started out as swimmers and gained strength and coordination that helped them to excel.
- Swimming is an exciting individual and team sport.
- Swimming is a technical and specialized activity involving extensive skill development.
- Swimming is a healthy "lifetime" activity. Participants may be 1 or 101 years old.
- Swimming is relatively injury free in comparison to other youth sports.
- Swimming teaches the life lessons of sport and sportsmanship which include learning to deal with winning and losing, as well as working with officials, teammates and coaches.
- Swimming motivates participants to strive for self improvement and teaches goal orientation.
- Swimming cultivates a positive mental attitude and high self-esteem.
- Swimming can prevent drowning.

Parent & Athlete

Competitive swimming programs provide many benefits to young athletes including self-discipline, good sportsmanship, and time management skills. Competition allows the swimmer to experience success and to learn how to treat success and failure as two sides of the same coin, while becoming healthy and physically fit. As a parent, your major responsibility is to provide a stable, loving and supportive environment. This positive environment will encourage your child to continue. Show your interest by ensuring your child's attendance at practices, by coming to swimming meets and volunteering for your club at swim meets, or by participating in fundraising, etc.

Parents contribute to the success experienced by the child and the team. Parents serve as role models and their children emulate their attitudes. Be aware of this and strive to be positive role models. Most importantly, show good sportsmanship at all times toward coaches, officials, opponents and teammates. Remember that you are teaching your child at all times.

Be Enthusiastic and Supportive!

Remember that your child is the swimmer. Children need to establish their own goals, and make their own progress towards them. Be careful not to impose your own standards and goals. Do not over burden your child with winning or achieving best times. Let them know that first they are the child you love, and second, a swimmer. Tell them you will love them whether they swim well or not, and ask only that they give their best effort. Learning about oneself while enjoying the sport is the most important part of the swimming experience. The swimming environment encourages learning and fun, which will help your child develop a positive self-image.

Positive Parenting Tips

- Your child needs your emotional, physical, and financial support. Be liberal in providing this support.
- Support but do not push your child.
- Understand development – long-term development as an athlete, and growth and development as it impacts performance.
- Be realistic in terms of expectations; factor in age and skill level; be aware of your child's perception of your expectations.
- Emphasize performance and effort, not just outcome. The athlete only has control over his/her performance. Define and measure success as giving maximal effort and as personal improvement.
- Keep winning in perspective.
- Do not bribe.
- Give plenty of encouraging and rewarding statements. Criticize sparingly.
- View swimming as an arena in which to teach your child about commitment, hard work, and coping with adversity.
- 10. Work to form an effective Coach-Athlete-Parent Triangle

Let the Coach Coach!

The best way to help your child achieve goals and reduce the natural fear of failure is through positive reinforcement. No one likes to make a mistake. If your child does make one, remember that this is a learning experience. You and your child should learn to treat success and failure as learning experiences and not life changing situations. Encourage your child's efforts and point out the positive things. The coach is the one you have assigned to judge a swimmer's performance and technique. Your role is to provide love and support regardless of outcome. Coaching is about more than athletes, practices, and competition. As Mike Krzyzewski, Duke's hugely successful basketball coach said, it's also about "the other stuff." For coaches of club teams, that means parents.

"All that craziness," is how Monica Teuscher describes the rituals of other parents who nervously follow their children's swimming development. Teuscher, mother of Cristina, a 1996 and 2000 Olympian, never owned a stopwatch and rarely bought a meet program. She didn't track her daughter's times, yell during her races, or seek out her coach after practices for private chats. During swim meets, she went off by herself to read or knit, only to be amused when other parents gave her a rundown on Cristina's swims, complete with split times.

"I thought it was important that I was there, but for support, not for coaching or to add pressure," Teuscher explains. "My job was to take my daughters (older daughter Carolina also swam) out for a good meal after they raced. The last thing we talked about was swimming."

You and Your Club

Parental involvement is crucial to every club. Regardless of the organizational model of the club, parents play key support roles. Parents are needed in leadership roles as board members and committee leaders. Regardless of structure, clubs are looking for volunteers to help with swim meets, coordinate social events and organize fundraising. Volunteering to help your club is a great way to get involved, meet other parents and be a positive role model for your child. Contact the coach or an involved parent to find out more about what you can do and how you can be a positive force in your club. If you have already attended a meet, you have probably been approached to be a timer. This is a great way to begin to help run meets. In fact, this is how many officials get started. Officials are a necessary part of every type of competition.

Here is a list of the officiating positions:

- Stroke and turn judges
- Clerk of course
- Computer operator
- Starter
- Referee
- Safety Marshal

If any of the jobs interest you, check with your coach or LSC official's chair

Physical Growth & Maturation

During childhood kids grow on average 2.5 inches in a year and gain five pounds per year. Athletes of the same chronological age can vary by as much as five years in

biological maturation! So, with two 13 year old swimmers, biologically one may be 10 years and the other 16 years - - what a huge difference.

Girls generally reach peak growth around 11-13 years old, and boys generally reach peak growth around 13-15 years old. Hormonal changes in males and females cause different and often drastic changes in body composition.

Once a child reaches puberty, scientists and coaches feel more serious training can begin. This can be a particularly frustrating time for swimmers. During this transition from age group to senior swimming and from childhood to young adulthood, an athlete may experience a plateau in performance. Best times can be few and far between, while training commitments increase, requiring more time and dedication. Hopefully the coaches have prepared swimmers for this change, but many parents may begin to question whether a child's swimming career is over at this point. These factors, coupled with the other normal difficulties of puberty, can sometimes lead a swimmer to leave the sport prematurely. It is critical that parents and coaches be cooperative and very supportive during this period of adjustment, realizing that it will pass and the rewards will be even better.

10 Commandments for Swimming Parents

I. Thou shalt not impose thy ambitions on thy child.

Remember that swimming is your child's activity. Improvements and progress occur at different rates for each individual. Don't judge your child's progress based on the performance of other athletes and don't push him based on what you think he should be doing. The nice thing about swimming is every person can strive to do his personal best and benefit from the process of competitive swimming

II. Thou shalt be supportive no matter what.

There is only one question to ask your child after a practice or a competition - "Did you have fun?" If meets and practices are not fun, your child should not be forced to participate.

III. Thou shalt not coach thy child.

You are involved in one of the few youth sports programs that offer professional coaching. Do not undermine the professional coach by trying to coach your child on the side. Your job is to provide love and support. The coach is responsible for the technical part of the job. You should not offer advice on technique or race strategy. Never pay your child for a performance. This will only serve to confuse your child concerning the reasons to strive for excellence and weaken the swimmer/coach bond.

IV. Thou shalt only have positive things to say at a swimming meet.

You should be encouraging and never criticize your child or the coach. Both of them know when mistakes have been made. Remember "yelling at" is not the same as "cheering for".

V. Thou shalt acknowledge thy child's fears.

New experiences can be stressful situations. It is totally appropriate for your child to be scared. Don't yell or belittle, just assure your child that the coach would not have suggested the event or meet if your child was not ready. Remember your job is to love and support your child through all of the swimming experience.

VI. Thou shalt not criticize the officials.

Please don't criticize those who are doing the best they can in purely voluntary positions.

VII. Honor thy child's coach.

The bond between coach and swimmer is special. It contributes to your child's success as well as fun. Do not criticize the coach in the presence of your child.

VIII. Thou shalt be loyal and supportive of thy team

It is not wise for parents to take swimmers and to jump from team to team. The water isn't necessarily bluer in another team's pool. Every team has its own internal problems, even teams that build champions. Children who switch from team to team find that it can be a difficult emotional experience. Often swimmers who do switch teams don't do better than they did before they sought the bluer water.

IX. Thy child shalt have goals besides winning.

Most successful swimmers have learned to focus on the process and not the outcome. Giving an honest effort regardless of what the outcome is, is much more important than winning. One Olympian said, "My goal was to set a world record. Well, I did that, but someone else did it too, just a little faster than I did. I achieved my goal and I lost. Does this make me a failure? No, in fact I am very proud of that swim." What a tremendous outlook to carry on through life.

X. Thou shalt not expect thy child to become an Olympian.

There are 250,000 athletes in USA Swimming. There are only 52 spots available for the Olympic Team every four years. Your child's odds of becoming an Olympian are about .0002%.