

FAQ

Helpful Tips

- **To help prevent ear infections, after every practice & meet**, put a couple drops of half alcohol/half vinegar (or prescribed ear-drops) in each ear.
- To protect your hair, before practice put a little conditioner (less than you would use when washing your hair) in your hair; comb it in, then put on your cap.
- **To help prevent ear infections, after every practice & meet**, put a couple drops of half alcohol/half vinegar (or prescribed ear-drops) in each ear. (If it's here twice maybe it's that important)
- Your swim cap will last much longer if you dry it and rub baby powder (corn starch) on it after each use.
- Your suits will last longer if you rinse them well in fresh water and hang them up after each use.

General Information

Please be sure to eat healthy and try to get as much rest as possible especially during the intensive training phase. Be prepared for the weather!! You may leave home in shorts and 70-degree weather and the temperature can change drastically. When it starts getting colder, you need to dress in dry clothes and shoes to leave the pool and wear a hat if it is cold. Be sure to dry your ears after swimming or diving, try not to get sick.

Season Plan

Here is a general outline of what the team will do this season.

Phase of season	Weeks	Primary Emphasis
Before Classes Start	2	Evaluate needs and fitness levels.
Early Season	4	Improve skills and train while maintaining good habits.
Intensive Training	1	Increase training volume.
Late Season	4	Train at high performance level.
Championship Season	4	Focus on event specialty. Taper.

Practices

- Swimmers should wear 2 suits at all swim practices and arrive at practice ready to get in the water.
- If you need to ice or be taped see the trainer before practice starts in order to be ready on time.
- If you miss a practice that a skill you wish to learn was taught, the next practice will not be changed. Each skill will be presented more than once.
- If the group is performing a skill that you missed, watch the others, and imitate them.
- Unless otherwise designated, practices are closed. That means that spectators are not allowed at practice. Do not bring a friend, relative or acquaintance to practice; they will be asked to wait outside. Parents are always welcome to come in to speak with the coach. Please remember practice time spent with parents is practice time not spent with students.
- Practice times will be published in a weekly practice schedule.
- You want to bring a T-shirt, Towel and equipment bag on deck with you to every practice.
- When you arrive, sign in on the notebook provided. When you sign in your name must be readable! If you leave early, sign out by drawing a single line through your name. Do not sign in for someone else!
- In the event of a fire alarm grab your shirt & towel and exit the building – check in with the coach at far side of the parking lot.
- Everyone is responsible for the care and use of equipment.
- We are not the only people who use the locker rooms, so be sure your valuables are locked at all times.
- Anything you want to give to the coach should be placed in the folder marked "IN"
- Do not share cloths, equipment, shoes, flip-flops, Etc.
- It is recommend that you use a disinfectant wipe on your feet before putting on your shoes.

Varsity Awards

Varsity letters for swimmers will be awarded based primarily on your performance - the number of points you score. Your attitude and non-

scoring contributions to the team are also factors. Those who do not receive a varsity award may receive a freshman or JV award. All students will be extended the opportunity to compete in varsity events. This does not mean that all students will receive Varsity Awards. To earn a Varsity Award you need to score 15 points during the season or in the League or State Championship meet. Students involved in disciplinary actions might not receive awards regardless of points scored.

Varsity Letters for divers will be based on diving scores.

Practice Schedule

A practice schedule will be published weekly. The practice schedule will contain the latest information available regarding meet and bus times. You can view practice schedules and more at www.swimbuz.com/dgs.

Attendance

- You are expected to attend all team functions: practices, meets, and meetings.
- If you miss school and then miss practice the absence is excused.
- If you have a doctor's appointment you need to bring a note **from the doctor's office**.
- If you miss practice for any other reason the absence will be unexcused. (If you have a special circumstances see the coach!)

Issued Equipment

Students are financially responsible for the equipment that is issued to them. This means that if a student's equipment is not returned in good shape, that student will pay to replace the equipment.

Meet and Training Equipment

Lane markers, timer, touch-pads and other equipment are expensive – Treat them with care.

Meets

Home Meet Setup:	Arrive on time and be prepared to do your assigned tasks. For all away meets you will travel with the team to and from the meet. Be sure to be at the bus loading site at least 5 minutes before the bus is scheduled to leave.
Transportation:	If there are special circumstances that you would need to travel to or from with a parent, the parent must sign the form to transport the student. If the student does not travel with the team and the parent has not signed the form, the student will not be allowed to participate.
Warm-up:	Be on deck, in your suit, ready to swim when warm up starts. Enter the water feet first.
Sprints:	First whistle- "take your mark", second whistle- go! Freestyle and backstroke sprints- flip turn but don't push off! Check line-up, you can swim a maximum of 4 events and no more than 2 individual events. Tell us at once if you are not in the line-up or swimming too many events, etc. The coaches will decide what events you will swim at meets. You will be notified what you will be swimming the day of the meet. In general, you should expect to swim each of the events at least once during the year.
Line-up:	If there is an event you in which you would like to be entered write a note (full sized sheet of paper) and put it in the folder marked "IN". In most meets everyone will compete. There are some meets where entries are limited. When it is not possible to enter everyone, the coaches will determine who will compete. Students are expected to attend meets even when they will not be competing.
Team Uniform:	Team suits, warm-ups and parkas are all part of the team uniform. They should be worn on deck at meets only.
No Watches:	This is a NFHS rule. If you where a watch, fitbit, Etc. you will be disqualified. If you are not in the water swimming, on the board diving, you should be in the team area not wandering or showering in the locker room.
General:	No conversations (or text, Etc.) on cell phones. If you forgot something and need to call someone to bring it, ask the coach. All team members will cheer and watch there team during meets. Not listen to music, do homework, Etc.
Times and Splits:	Relay swimmers must exit pool immediately or it will interfere with the timing system and you won't get your splits. Check your times and splits when they are posted on the wall.
End of the meet:	Stay on deck in suit and warm up through the duration of the meet. Get together for the team cheer, shake hands with other team. Clean up team area; do not leave towels, drink bottles, trash etc. and help us clean up after guests. Same for the locker room throw; away shampoo bottles, DO NOT LEAVE FOOD OR WRAPPERS OF

ANY KIND or we will have little furry visitors. Be polite, whenever possible; let our guests through the food line first.

Smile!

Have fun, and take pride in your team and yourself. Everyone has the potential to make a positive contribution.

Dual Meets

Dual meets are direct competitions between two teams. The list of events is established by the National Federation of State High School Associations. The visiting team chooses the odd or even numbered lanes. The coach will assign swimmers to lanes and events. Typically, but not always the swimmers with faster times in the past are in the middle lanes. In each event points are earned based on the order of finish. The CAAC has determined that 6-lane scoring will be used in dual meets. That means that the top 5 (top 3 for relays) finishers in each event will score points. If the pool has 8 lanes the outer lanes are exhibition. Occasionally the coaches will agree to have exhibition heats of some events. Exhibition competitors do not score points. Coaches use exhibition give someone a chance to get experience, or to show the coach what they can do in a new event. Sometimes if their opponent is not strong a coach will enter better team members in exhibition to allow others to complete for points and not run up the score. Diving is usually the 5th event and each diver performs 6 dives. Final placing for diving is determined by the divers total score. Team points are awarded to the top 5 divers. Diving can be the first event if both coaches agree to do so.

Timed finals

A timed finals meet has more than 2 teams. Swimmers are seeded in heats from slowest entry time (also called seed time) to the fastest. The final places are assigned based on time. Diving at a timed finals meet might consist of 6 dives (dual meet format) or 11 dives (championship meet format).

Disqualification

If a competitor breaks a rule the consequence is disqualification from the event. That means that the competitor will not score points and cannot use the time to qualify for a cut-off based meet. There are some rules that if broken can disqualify the competitor from the rest of the season.

Championship meets

A championship meet, also call a prelims/finals meet, has preliminary events and final events. Students compete in the preliminary events to qualify for the limited number of spots in the final events. Only final events score points. Preliminary swimming events are seeded in a pyramid (also called championship) format. The fastest swimmers are in the last 3 heats with the top seed in the last heat and the center lane. The second fastest seed is in the second to last heat in the center lane. The third fastest seed is in the third to last head in the center lane. The four fastest is in the last heat in the lane next to the fastest seeded swimmer. This pattern continues until all of the last 3 heats are filled. The remaining swimmers are seed slow-to-fast.

The top swimmers from the preliminary events are seeded slow-to-fast into the final events. They are locked into their heat for final places. This means that a swimmer who does well enough to be in the fastest heat of finals cannot drop to a lower place. If there are 2 heats of 8 lanes in the finals. The lowest place the swimmers in the fast heat can get is 8th regardless of their time. The highest place a swimmer in the slow heat can get is 9th.

Diving preliminary are the first 5 dives in an 11 dive list. After 5 dives only the top divers move on to the semi-finals. The number of divers that move to semi-finals is the number of final places plus 4. The divers then perform 3 more dives in the semi-finals. The top divers move on to the finals. The number of divers in the finals is equal to the number of places that will score in the meet. The diving finals, the last 3 dives, are usually held later in the meet; after the 50 freestyle.

Relay meets

Relay meets are meets with all relay events. There are only 3 official relay events. Additional relay events are added that aren't part of the official event list.

Cutoff times

Some meets require that swimmers qualify by having a fast enough time. The time needed to qualify is called a cutoff. The State meet and the MISCA meet are examples of cutoff meets.

Oscoda Invitational

The Oscoda Invitational is an early-season warm-up meet. It gives experienced swimmers a chance to see where they're at and helps to determine what needs work. For newcomers it is a chance to get experience in real meet. We tell them that their goal is to get experience and it is impossible to fail at this meet. They can make every mistake and still get experience (and so they have succeeded). We leave Friday after morning practice (around noon) and spend the rest of Friday at the beach in Oscoda.

The meet is timed finals on Saturday. The diving competition is held first. Then there is a short swim warmup followed by swimming competition.

We spend the night on Saturday and return Sunday between 11:00 and 1:00.

The DeWitt Invitational

The DeWitt invitational is a timed finals meet that is scored like a prelims/finals meet. The fastest swimmer from each team is assigned 1st - 8th place based on time. The second fastest swimmer from each team is assigned 9th - 16th place. This balances out big teams and little teams. The competition normally lasts about 3 hours.

Diving is 6 or 11 dives and is done Friday evening. The competition normally lasts about 2-3 hours.

Intensive training week

Our intensive training week is a long-standing tradition. There are doubles (2 practices a day), and lots of hard work. The focus is on increasing fitness levels. (We also have prizes.)

MISCA Meet

The MISCA Meet is an all-MHSAA-division (every team in the state is eligible) meet. To compete in the meet students must meet cut-off times. This is a timed-finals meet that includes some of the best swimmers and divers in the state. Team members who do not make cuts, but wish to attend to cheer on their teammates are welcome and should let Coach Brace know that they will be attending. Diving competition is held on Friday evening. Swimming competition is Saturday.

Okemos Diving Invitational

This is an 11-dive championship format and is usually a scrimmage meet. All divers do 11 dives and there are no cuts. Only divers who have 11 dives and are available this Saturday are entered. We will not have a bus for the rest of the team to attend. Anyone who wishes to attend is certainly welcome. This is the dive format that will be used at the CAAC championship meet, at the regional diving tournament, and at the MHSAA state tournament. This is a good opportunity for our divers to rehearse their championship dive list.

CAAC Championship

The Sunday before the CAAC meet the pool where the meet is held is usually open to all CAAC teams. This is an opportunity for swimmers and divers to get a feel for the facility before the meet actually starts. Coach Brace will be on deck supervise any DeWitt team members who wish to take advantage of this opportunity. There will not be a predefined practice plan. Everyone is allowed to come in and swim a little bit just to get a feel for the pool. There is usually a seed meeting following this open swim session. At that time details of the meet such as where teams will set will be provided to us. If you would like to take up this opportunity you will have to provide your own transportation to and from the pool.

The CAAC diving prelims and semifinals are sometimes on the Thursday the week of the meet. Swim practice on that day will begin at the usual time. Swimmers who plan to attend diving preliminaries and semifinals should remember to get something to eat that evening. The top 16 divers at the end of semifinals will go on compete in the finals on Saturday. Diving on Saturday will take place after the 50 freestyle is swum.

The swimming preliminaries will take place on Friday. Everyone should eat a good breakfast that morning. Go to class in the morning at the normal time. Go to lunch and have a good lunch; remember it is going to be a long day. Swimmers will be excused from class Early. They will then shave in preparation for the championship meet. Divers will have practice at their normal time. We will have a registered massage therapist on deck to give the swimmers competition rundowns. Rubdowns are not required. The first people to get rundowns should be those competing in the 200 medley relay because they will be the first to swim. The next group should be those competing in the 200 freestyle and so on in order of competition. 36 of our individual swimmers and divers competing for a spot in the top 16 to swim for points on Saturday at the finals. We are allowed to enter exhibition swimmers beyond 36 who are not eligible to compete in the finals. We are also allowed to enter a B relay which is exhibition and is not eligible to score points. All team members need to remember to stay well hydrated. The fluid you drink on Friday will help you perform on Saturday.

Swimming finals will be held on Saturday. It has been traditional in past years to have a team breakfast Saturday morning before the finals. This is a potluck breakfast where everybody brings a dish to pass parents of students alike spend time socializing. When I have more information, I will be sure to pass it on.

During the finals, there will be three heats of each event. The first heat is a non-scoring heat with the swimmers who finished in places 17 through 24 on Friday. The second heat is the consolation finals and will consist of swimmers who finished in places nine through 16 on Friday. They will be racing for places 9th through 16th. They are locked in to those positions. That means that even if they swim faster than someone in the finals heat they will not move up beyond 9th place. The third heat of each event will be the final heat and will consist of swimmers who finished in first through eighth places on Friday. They are racing for places first through eighth. They are locked into those places. That means that even if they swim slower than someone in the consolation finals the lowest place they could get is eighth.

It has been traditional in past years for the girls to have a sleepover. I will send out more details when I have them.

It has been traditional in past years to have an adults-only gathering after the meet on Saturday. Details, when they are available, will be passed on.

After CAAC Championship

All swimmers will have normal practice on Monday following the CAAC meet.

Second Shave Meet

On Tuesday following the CAAC meet all swimmers will attend the second shave meet. This meet is a chance to swim shaved and tapered in additional events beyond what was done at the conference meet. Team members are allowed to choose their races and often choose to swim events they didn't swim the course of the season. The only restriction is that they may not swim an event she swam at the CAAC conference championship meet. This is the last swim meet for team members who will not be competing at the state championship meet.

Last Regular Season Practice

Wednesday following the CAAC meet is the last practice for team members who will not be competing at the diving regional or the MHSAA state tournament. Team members will vote for awards in turn in their parkas and return borrowed technical suits. Those students who will be going on to compete at the regional and state levels continue to practice as normal.

Diving Regional

The MHSAA diving regionals are held on Thursday following the CAAC meet. All team members and parents are welcome to come support our divers who are competing at the regional level. The top divers from this competition will continue on to the MHSAA finals tournament.

MHSAA Finals (State Meet)

Only competitors and relay alternates will travel to the state championship meet (also called the MHSAA finals tournament). Competitors who choose to travel with their parents and spend the night at a hotel may do so (see not riding the bus above). If all competitors spend the night at the hotel we will not get a bus for the meet.

The meet normally cycles between Eastern Michigan University, Oakland University, and Holland Aquatic Center. Check the MHSAA website to learn where the meet is this year.

On Friday the swimmers will get up eat breakfast and go to the pool. We want to arrive early enough to be assured of having a place to set. Teams that arrive late often end up sitting on the wet floor. Swimmers will warm up, have a box lunch, and swim in the preliminaries. Swimmers who finish in the top 16 will go on to swim in the finals on Saturday. Our divers will arrive later in the day and warm-up after swimming preliminaries are over. Swimmers will return to the hotel then get something to eat. When diving preliminary and semifinals are over the top 16 divers will move on to the finals on Saturday. Divers will get something to eat Friday night after preliminaries and then return to the hotel. Many years Mr. Kocher has put on a magic show for the team Friday night at the hotel. He may do so again this year.

On Saturday everyone will travel to the pool for the finals. The process will be similar to Friday except that divers will arrive in the morning with swimmers. The diving finals will be held after the 50 freestyle finals. The format of the finals will be similar to that of the CAAC championship meet. There will be two heats: the consolation finals competing for places nine through 16 and the finals competing for places first through eighth. Again they are locked into their heats. Oftentimes parents wish to take students home before the end of the meet. If you wish to do so, please remember that school policy requires that you complete the form (see riding the bus above) that is available on the DeWitt school website.

Masters meet fund raiser

On the first Saturday in December we host a Masters Swim meet. This is a fundraiser for the girl swim team. Adult swimmers pay an entry fee to us to swim in this meet. We run the meet and provide them with a lunch afterwards. We need people to coordinate lunch. We need people to help set up the pool at 8:30 AM. We need people to work in the office starting at 9 AM. We will need a full set of timers. The meet starts at 10 AM. We will need the food set up in the hallway at 11 AM. The meet usually goes for a couple of hours in the last people are usually gone by 2 PM. We will need people to help clean up.

Technical suits

It is common for swimmers compete in special "technical suits" at championship's meets. Some of our more experience swimmers may already have their own technical suits. Any swimmer who has not yet made an individual state cut is welcome to wear a technical suit at the conference championship meet and at the second shave meet. Technical suits are expensive, and many swimmers do not have their own technical suit. I have 20 to 30 technical suits that I will bring in and lend to any swimmer who would like to borrow a technical suit for the championship meet. At practice swimmers will have an opportunity to try on and test different suits to find one with which they are comfortable. If two swimmers determine that they would like to borrow the same suit we will coordinate a sharing situation. Suits should be returned on the Wednesday following the second shave meeting. Borrowed suits do not need to be laundered because Mrs. Brace will wash all of the suits before they go back into storage. If a swimmer would prefer not to use a technical suit they are welcome to use their team suit. If you wish to purchase a technical suit please be sure that it is Fina approved. All Fina approved suits have a sticker on the back hip indicating that it is approved.

Here is an example of the Fina sticker:



Awards Banquet

The awards banquet is usually the Sunday after the Masters Meet. The seniors are in charge of setup and decoration. The freshman will bring beverages, cups, small paper plates and napkins. The sophomores and juniors will bring dessert and non-dessert finger food snacks. The banquet is usually held in the Junior High Cafeteria. Here is a tentative timeline:

4:30	Seniors:	Setup and decoration
5:30	Freshman:	Bring beverages, cups, small paper plates and napkins
	Juniors:	Bring non-dessert snacks (finger food)
	Sophomores:	Bring dessert snacks (finger food)
6:00	Everyone	Eat
6:30	Everyone	Awards Presentation
7:30	Everyone	Clean-up

Questions

Question: My child doesn't have a physical yet. Can she practice until we get it?

Answer: No. The MHSAA requires a sports physical before students may participate in practice.

My child had a physical last winter. Is it still good.

My child had a physical at the school at the end of last school year. Is it still good?

Answer: No. The Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) is very clear about this:

"18. Athletic equipment should not be issued and students must not be allowed to try out or practice until an acceptable signed statement of physical examination and consent has been provided.

19. A statement for the current school year is interpreted as any physical examination given on or after April 15 of the previous school year."

The physical form has multiple places for parent and student signatures. Be sure to get them all. If any are missing the student cannot participate in practice.

There are options for those who don't have a physical yet. The district will offer sports physicals from time to time.

Sports physicals are typically available at Urgent Care.

The physicals offered by the district at the end of last school year are still good.

Question: We won't be attending the kick-off meeting. Can we just bring the forms to practice? Can we turn in the forms at the main office? Can we mail you the forms?

Answer: Parents and students are expected to know and abide by the information that will be presented at the kick-off meeting. "I didn't know" will not be an acceptable reason for failing to abide by the team agreement.

Paperwork that is supposed to be turned in to Coach Brace may be turned in at practice.

Paperwork that is supposed to be turned in to the Athletic Office (or on-line) must be turned in and verified before participation.

NOTE: The Athletic Department is very strict about completed registration before participation.

Competitive Advantage
A Swimmers Guide to Mental Toughness

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If you really want to maximize your potential as a competitive swimmer and reach the goals you've set for yourself, then you have to start today to train yourself mentally as well as physically. Without the right head set and mental strategies you'll always swim slower than your capabilities. In order to gain the Competitive Advantage and swim like a winner, you've got to first think like one. Understand and practice the following ideas and steps and they'll help you on your way to becoming a champion! Remember you can't go fast without using your head, and you can't develop mental toughness without consistent practice.

#1 Keep your Swimming Fun. Do not wait until you win before you start having fun. Champions go fast because they are having fun! When you enjoy yourself you'll be physically looser and will swim much faster. Make your practices and meets fun! This doesn't mean to play games instead of work, but if you're too serious and turn your swimming into all work and no fun you will definitely run into performance difficulties and be a candidate for burnout. Remember, fun and speed to together. If you find yourself dreading your meets something's wrong.

#2 Have Clear Goals. You can't get to where you want to go unless you know exactly where that is. Your success as a swimmer starts with a dream, a goal of how far you'd like to go in the sport. The more detailed a picture you can paint of this goal, the better your chance of turning your dream into reality. Saying you want to be as good as you can or go faster are goals that are general and too vague to be useful. Qualifying for Senior Nationals, or going 50 flat in the 100 fly are clear, specific and more reachable. Your goals are like magnets which pull you in their direction. The more specific and detailed you make them and the more time you spend thinking about them, the stronger they pull. Try to have your goals broken down from long term to intermediate to short term so that even on a daily basis you will have specific goals for practice. This will help you stay motivated over the long haul.

#3 Make Your Practices Important; Use Simulation in Practice. Most swimmers spend the same amount of time practicing weekly. However only a small fraction of athletes improve to their potential. The reason behind this lies in your practices. Practice does not make perfect, perfect practice makes perfect. Too many swimmers go through the motions in practice. They put their time in but not their minds or their emotions. They daydream during sets or wish they were elsewhere. During difficult sets they look for ways to dog it. You will compete the way you practice. Practice just like meets, mentally as well as physically, that is, make your practices important, use your imagination to simulate meet or race conditions. Take a few of those long, boring, painful sets and pretend you're actually competing. Practice race turns, finishing fast, getting your pain to work for you, etc. The more important you can make your practices and the more similar to actual meets, the more you'll get out of them. Every chance you get, set up specific race scenarios in your head and then swim as if everything was on the line. If you consistently practice this way, the way the champions do, you'll soon find your meet times dropping.

#4 Focus on Your race On Stroke at a Time. Not on Winning or Qualifying. You will swim your best when your concentration is on your race, one stroke at a time. You will choke and swim badly when you get caught up with outcome thoughts (i.e. winning, losing, qualifying times, etc.). The outcome of your race, which is in the future is totally out of your control! Swimmers who get distracted with this kind of future focus almost always swim tight and feel heavy. Stay in the now as you race concentration on what you are doing, while you are doing it. If you find yourself thinking "What if..." that's a reminder that you are mentally in the future and need to change focus.

#5 Concentrate = Recognize (Step #1) + Bring yourself back (Step #2) In order to swim as fast as you can you've got to have your mind in the right place. Concentration is the key mental skill to swimming excellence and mental toughness. Here's how to do it! Step 1: Recognize that you are mentally in the wrong place, i.e. in the future worried about an outcome or a swimmer in the next lane. Step 2: Quickly and gently bring yourself back to a proper focus. You learn to concentrate by catching yourself when you're not concentrating! This is the heart of championship concentration.

#6 Learn to Quickly Let go of your mistakes and failures. Champions do one thing better than everyone else. FAIL! When a champion has a bad race they not only use this failure for feedback ("What did I do wrong... How can I improve") But just as important, they let it go quickly. In other words, they don't dwell on the past. When you hang onto your bad races and mistakes in a meet, the one thing you can count on happening is the you'll get more of them! Learn to recognize when your mind is in the past and quickly & gently let it go. Telling yourself things like "Here we go again", "Why does this always happen to me" are indicators that your focus is stuck in the past. Only go into the past if your past is a positive, self-enhancing one!

#7 Stay within yourself, Swim Your Own Race, Stay Mentally in the "Here" You will swim your very best when you can learn to mentally stay within yourself, focusing on what you have to do and are doing. Psych-outs and intimidation can only occur when you choose to start focusing outside yourself, on another swimmer. Staying within yourself means that you have to want to mentally stay in your own lane when you compete. Thinking about someone else's best times, hoe fast they finish or how awesome they are will only make you choke and swim tight. Stay in the "Here" by recognizing when you're in the wrong mental place and bringing yourself back right away to what you're doing.

#8 Control your Eyes and Ears for Championship Meet Performances. Related to #7, learn to control what you look at and listen to, both before and during the race. That is, only visually focus on things that keep you calm, composed and ready to perform well. If looking at the gallery, or other racers, makes you uptight... don't do it! Instead look down at the blocks, or at a spot across the pool, or one on the water which keeps you relaxed. Similarly, make sure any things you "look" at in your mind's eye are positive and confidence enhancing. If you are using imagery and keep seeing a false start, either change the image or actively look at something else. Controlling your ears means that you only want to listen to things that will keep you calm, composed and confident. If your self-talk is making you uptight change it! Or block it out by listening to a Walkman. Control your eyes and ears for mental toughness.

#9 See what you want to have happen, not what you're afraid will happen. Winners in and out of the pool have learned to use their imagination (mental rehearsal and imagery) to help them reach their goals. Make it a practice to focus on exactly what you want to happen. Not what you're afraid will happen. Focusing on positive images will calm you down, raise your confidence, and increase your chances of achieving your goals. Practice mental rehearsal 5-10 minutes at a time, preceded by relaxation in area free from distractions. Make your pictures (sounds, feelings) as vivid and detailed as possible, seeing, hearing, and feeling yourself performing just the way you'd like to.

#10 Let it happen = speed. When you swim your fastest there is an automatic, effortless quality to your performance. You are working hard without trying hard. It feels easy, yet powerful. When you get into a meet situation you have to remember that in order to swim your best, you have to relax and let the race happen. If you make your race too important, you'll get into trying too hard and will swim slower. Trust that you've done everything you need to, your body and muscle memory knows what to do, and then just let the performance happen. Swim with effortless effort.

#11 Swim with No-Mind to go fast. A corollary to #10, if you want to go fast you've got to keep your conscious mind and all of its' thoughts out of the pool. In your best races, not only did you swim on autopilot, but most likely there was a no-thinking quality to your race. Conscious thought slows you down and distracts you. You want to swim unconsciously with no mind. In baseball Yogi Berra once said, "a full mind is an empty bat" the same applies to you and your swimming. The more you think, the slower you'll go. Practice in practice, doing "no-think" swims.

#12 GIGO - you swim the way you think. The difference between your best and worst swims is usually related to your mental "strategies" just before and during your race. That is, what you think, say to yourself, and imagine both before and during your race determine whether you'll go fast or slow. If you program garbage into your computer (brain) before a race ("what if I false start," "what if I blow my turn," or "he'll probably catch me at the finish and win") you will get garbage back out in your performances. Learn to "program in" good stuff and that's what you'll get back out.

#13 Be positive - nothing good comes from negativity. When you're negative or down on yourself you sap energy, drain your confidence, and insure that you will swim poorly. Practice being positive about yourself, teammates, and coaches, NO MATTER WHAT. A positive attitude will help you overcome hardships and setbacks and keep you going. A negative attitude will trick you into giving up too soon. Winners in and out of the pool are positive. "Can't," "Never," and "Impossible" do not exist in the dictionary of their minds.

#14 Reframe adversity. Learn to look at obstacles and setbacks as a way to get more motivated and to increase your confidence. Most swimmers complain bitterly about pool temperature, lane assignments, rain, and fatigue. The great swimmers use any kind of adversity to help them get the competitive advantage over their opponents. For example, you can do 1 of 2 things with the pain and fatigue of a race you can dread it, fight it, complain about it and consequently tighten up and back down from it-going slower; or you can reframe it. You can say to yourself "everyone in this race has to deal with this pain, and I'm mentally tougher to handle it than everyone else... pain and fatigue is an indicator that I'm going fast, that my body's working well, and a signal for me to move towards it, stretching it out and lengthening the stroke." Learn to think like a winner by reframing. When your swimming gives you lemons... make lemonade out of them.

#15 Act as if. If you want to become a winner, first you have to learn to act like one. Acting as if is the master strategy of champions. If you act the way you want to become, you'll become the way you act. Acting as if has to do with your posture or how you carry yourself physically. Watch swimmers after they've had a bad race and you'll see some interesting stuff. Their heads will be down, shoulders drooping, facial expression down, and they'll be dragging their feet. If you act this way physically, like a loser, you'll perform like one. A winner's fall back position is to act as if. If you're totally intimidated and freaking out before a race, act as if: act calm and confident. Have your head up, put a smile on your face, pick your shoulders up and put a spring in your step. Even if you're dying inside, show your opponent someone who on the outside looks in control.

#16 Learn to be your own best fan. It's real easy to be nice to yourself and supportive when you're winning. Champions, however, separate themselves from everyone else because they've learned to be supportive to themselves when things are going badly. Being down yourself for bad performances will not help you in the long run. It will kill your motivation and make you an unhappy camper. Learn to be your own best fan; someone who is here to share the success and to help out through the tough times. After all, that's when you need support the most, especially from yourself.

#17 You are not your races. Learn to separate who you are as the athlete and person from how you do in your meets. You are not the results of your races. If you have a great meet this does not make you a great person. More important, if you have an awful meet, this does not make you the scum of the earth. If you get caught up in putting your ego on the line whenever you compete, you can be sure of one thing, you'll take a fall a whole lot. A swim meet should never be viewed as a measure of self-worth and respectability. By you, your coaches, or your parents!!

#18 Learn to relax. In order to stay within yourself and swim your own race you need to have the ability to handle competitive pressure. For many, this ability does not come naturally. You can learn to stay composed under pressure by practicing one or two of the many relaxation techniques available to athletes. Probably one of the best is to learn to slow and deepen your breathing. By taking a few slow diaphragmatic breaths you can very quickly calm yourself down pre-race. Practice at home sitting for 5 minutes at a time, inhaling slowly through your nose to a count of 4 then exhaling to a count of 7-8 and continuing this process for the allotted time. Every time you drift you can practice recognizing that you've lost your focus and then bring yourself back.