



City of Oxford Swimming Club

Headquarters: Temple Cowley Pools, Oxford

President: The Lord Mayor of Oxford

Affiliated to A.S.A. South East Region, Ox & N Bucks A.S.A



Affiliated Club

The Complete User's Guide to The City of Oxford Swimming Club

Welcome to the City of Oxford Swimming Club,
As a new swimmer or parent/guardian the sport of swimming can appear a little confusing and even a little daunting. In an attempt to point you in the right direction here is a guide to get you started on what can be a very rewarding journey.

Information

The Club uses five main routes of communication:

1. The Club website - www.oxfordswim.com
2. The Club newsletter – emailed to all those on the Club database (if you provide your email address on the membership form, it will automatically be placed on the database)
3. The Club notice board - at Temple Cowley Swimming Pool
4. Squad Reps – each squad has a parent who acts as a Squad Rep. They are there to offer you advise, answer any queries you may have and also forward any issues/suggestions you may have to the Committee (which meets monthly). Entry forms to competitions and other correspondence can also be handled through the Squad Rep.
5. The Squad Coach.

Club Philosophy

The main aim of the City of Oxford Swimming Club is to promote competitive swimming as a sport. However, we try hard with young swimmers to keep competition in the right perspective.

- In the early years the objective is to create and improve water skills, fitness, strength and flexibility.
- During this process there has to be a fundamental wish to improve, to swim more efficiently and to swim further and faster.
- That desire need not result from pressure imposed by teachers or coaches. It can come, and needs to come from within the individual. It is natural in most cases.
- The “young” swimmer trains with many other children of similar, but different abilities. Each swimmer, in an involuntary but willing way, competes whilst training.
- The individual judges the measure of his/her success. It may be that the swimmer finds he/she is achieving new skills, swimming further, using less energy, or swimming a certain distance faster than before.

- Please remember that City of Oxford is a competitive swimming club and that commitment to training and competition is part of club life.

Squads

City of Oxford Swimming Club uses a squad structure.

As swimmers progress through the Club they will move squads. Movement through the squads is based on ability and commitment to training. Squads are reviewed every three months and swimmers are moved when deemed appropriate.

Squad structure is something that is constantly monitored and changes are made to reflect ability levels through the Club. Currently, there are 8 squads:

Blue 1, 2, 3, Rising Stars, Juniors, Junior Nationals, Nationals and Senior.

Swimmers are expected to attend as many training sessions as possible. As they progress through the squads, the number of required sessions will also increase. In the Blue squads a swimmer should attend a minimum 2 sessions per week, in Rising Stars at least 3 sessions, in Juniors 4 and so on. Please talk to your coach about advice on your training schedule.

A timetable of training times and locations is available on the website and on the Temple Cowley Pools notice board.

Parental Involvement

Parental support should be positive and balanced. This is not always easy. The greatest challenge that parents face is encouraging and supporting the appropriate amount of commitment whilst not overly pressurizing the swimmer.

As a parent/guardian you will be taking your child to training and galas. As the Club is run entirely by volunteers it is vital that parents get involved in the Club. We rely on parents getting involved so please see your Squad Rep or coach for ways in which you can help. Alternatively look for adverts on the newsletter and posted on the website at www.oxfordswim.com.

Registration and Payments

On joining the Club, you will receive several forms from the Membership Secretary to complete. **These must be returned within 14 days of receipt with the correct payment.** You will need to fill in COSC membership forms for the swimmer and the parents, an ASA Category 2 form for the swimmer, and ASA Category 3 forms for each parent. No membership application will be processed without the full remittance. All fees are itemized on your membership form and are available on the Club notice boards.

Fees consist of:

A one-off joining fee (except from Development Squad),

An Annual Subscription to the City of Oxford Swimming Club per calendar year,

The ASA registration fee and

Monthly Squad fees

Initial payment is made by cheque and thereafter fees are paid monthly by Standing Order. The Membership Secretary will ensure you receive the relevant

form to make the correct payments. Parents will be responsible for altering their standing order instructions with their banks in the event of an increase in Squad fees through either a general rate increase or on the occasion of a Squad promotion. Failure to do so promptly may result in the swimmer being excluded from the club

Pre-existing medical conditions (e.g. allergies or chronic illness)

It is a requirement of ASA doping procedures for all swimmers taking part in competition who take regular medication for asthma to have this information included on their registration record. The Club needs to be informed so that these details can be registered with the ASA before the swimmer takes part in any competition.

There are also medications used to treat other chronic illnesses such as diabetes, junior arthritis and growth problems, which are banned under FINA rules. If your child takes any medication on a regular basis for these or other conditions it is essential that you notify the club so that dispensation to swim in competitions can be obtained.

It is also very important for reasons of safety that the Club is made aware of a swimmer who has any medical condition or disability. This should be declared at the time of becoming a member or as soon after the illness has been diagnosed, if already a member. Please contact the Membership Secretary if you require a medical declaration form. Also, please note that these need to be updated annually.

Parent Registration

To be permitted to vote, parents/guardians must be registered with the ASA, and therefore Associate Members of the Club. For insurance purposes, Associate Membership is also required to sit at poolside during training sessions.

Resignation

When a swimmer decides to finish swimming with the Club, they must do so in writing and forward this along with any outstanding fees to the Membership Secretary. Until your resignation has been received you will be required to pay squad fees in full.

Equipment

Swimming is generally an 'equipment light' sport.

Below is a list of the basics you will need. These can be purchased either via the club's website or from any good sports retailer.

Swimming hats Club hats are available for purchase and can be personalized with the swimmer's name. They serve to keep your hair under control and they help to identify club swimmers, but most important of all they create less resistance in the water allowing you to swim faster (The Ox should be worn on the right side of the head.).

Costume Costumes should be one-piece, it is a good idea to have two or three in circulation. Costume life can be pro-longed by rinsing in tap water when you get home from training.

Goggles	Goggles need to be both comfortable and secure. Some swimmers choose different sets for training and galas. Handy Hint: wear goggles over the hat for training and under the hat for races.
Pull Buoy	This is a small 'figure eight' shaped float used to support the legs when working on upper body technique.
Kick Board	This is a slightly larger and more robust version of the traditional float and is used for leg kick drills.
Fins/Flippers	These are used in training to strengthen ankles and legs. They are also used to develop stroke technique e.g. butterfly.

Racing Suits (the basics)

Even non-swimmers have now heard the controversy surrounding racing suits and this has created confusion even at Club level.

Here are a few basics:

Are Racing Suits Necessary?

It is certainly true that a racing suit (a lightweight, close fitting costume) will affect times when compared to a heavier training suit that takes on more water and creates more drag. In deciding which suit to buy, the law of diminishing returns apply, and as a novice it is certainly not worth spending £100 plus for a suit that will probably last less than a year. £30 to £70 will get you a decent suit and it's always worth looking out for bargains on the web (there is a link on the Club website to SRS Leisure who give us a percentage of the sale). However, you really need to know your size and swimmers normally wear racing costumes one or two sizes smaller than training suits.

There are swim shops at most galas where you can get advice on size and fitting.

The Rules

Rules explaining what makes a legal competition swimsuit are published by FINA and can be briefly explained as follows:

Material – The material of the swimsuits will definitively be constituted only by textile fabric(s).

Shape – For men, the swimsuit shall not extend above the navel nor below the knee, and for women, shall not cover the neck, extend past the shoulder, nor extend below knee.

Furthermore, no zippers or other fastening system is allowed.

Use – In the regulation approved by the Congress, the swimmer can only wear one swimsuit and no taping is allowed.

Fina publish a list of approved suits on the following link:

http://www.fina.org/project/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2768&Itemid=49

Competitions

All swimmers in the Club will compete in events and meets of various kinds. Competing is a necessary aspect of developing the swimmers potential. The progress and achievements gained through competition are rewarding for both the swimmers and the coaches. Competitions can be divided into three categories: ***Inter Club Galas, Open Meets and Championships***

Swimmers new to competition may find it daunting at first, but every effort is made to make the experience enjoyable. Any swimmer (or parent) who is unsure of any aspect of competition will find the Coaches, Committee members, Squad Reps or “seasoned” Club members happy to help

Inter Club Galas

These are swum against seven other clubs, either at home (Temple Cowley) or away (at another club’s pool) to which we may have to travel (generally speaking on a team bus). More often than not galas take place on a Saturday evening and they take between 2 - 3 hours to complete. There are normally four different age groups of both boys and girls with up to six events swum by each age group giving some 48 events in the programme. Normally a team will consist of thirty-two swimmers dependant on the programme to be swum. Age groups vary from Junior (ages 10 - 13) or as is more normal 11/12, 13/14, 15/16.

As a club we currently enter three league competitions:

- **The National League Southern Section** (three rounds Oct, Nov and Dec). This is the premier competition that the club competes in and selection is based on the best swimmers (in the opinion of the coaching staff) eligible to swim for COSC. This will include swimmers from other Oxfordshire Clubs who swim for COSC as a second claim swimmer (their club doesn’t compete in the league, so they are able to nominate a second choice).
- **The Home Counties League** (three rounds Jan, Feb and March). In this league we give preference in order to: COSC swimmers who have not been selected for the National League; COSC swimmers who only swam relays at National League; second claim swimmers; COSC National League swimmers.
- **Milton Keynes Junior League** (three rounds Jun, Jul and Sept). This league is for our very youngest swimmers aged 9, 10, 11 and 12 years, with the aim of developing gala experience. In this league we give preference in order to: COSC swimmers who have not been selected for the National League; COSC swimmers who only swam relays at National League; COSC National League swimmers.

Swimmers are selected to represent the Club by the club coach and their names appear on team lists displayed on the Club Notice Boards. They also receive a selection letter giving details of venue start times and transport detail. If swimmers are unable to swim then they must let their coach know as soon as possible. With a published fixture list it is hoped that swimmers will make their non-availability known prior to team selection. It is an honour to represent the City of Oxford. It is therefore vital, that all swimmers make every effort be available when selected.

Open Meets

Open Meets are very much for individuals competing against other swimmers with similar abilities. Races are seeded on submitted entry times. This inevitably means very close races, and on a large number of occasions improvements on the entry times. Because swimmers are not specifically representing their clubs, they have the opportunity of competing in as many events as their age group permits. Increasingly, this type of event is becoming more popular, but they do require a lot of commitment from swimmers, coaches, and parents. Often they are all day events if not all weekend events.

The ASA use a licensing system to ensure that there are Meets suitable for every level of swimmer.

- **License or Level 4** These are aimed at novices but seem very rare. At the club, coaches organize time trials for swimmers in the Blue and Rising Stars squads, every six weeks, during one of the scheduled training sessions. The swimmers can use these times to register for Level 3 and 4 Open Meets (but not for higher or county competitions).
- **License or Level 3** These meets have “upper qualifying times” (no faster than) but not necessarily a “lower qualifying time” (no slower than). The Cut off can be anything up to National standard! Times achieved at these Meets can be used for qualification to County competitions.
- **License or Level 2 Meets** These Meets have both “lower qualifying times” and “upper qualifying times” although this is usually much faster than a national qualifying time and are therefore not normally a restriction to entry. The “lower qualifying times” however can vary considerably from Meet to Meet. Times achieved at these competitions can be used for qualification to Nationals, Regional and County competition.
- **License or Level 1 Meets** These are the highest grade of open Meet designed for swimmers of National Standard and above. There has to be “lower qualifying times” (no slower than) but there is no “upper qualifying times” (no faster than). Times achieved at these Meets can be used for qualification to Nationals, Regional and County competition.

In addition to “upper qualifying time” (no faster than) and “lower qualification time” (no slower than) a third term is now being used – “consideration time”. As this phrase infers this is the slowest time that may be considered for entry but it carries no guarantee! In effect it gives a promoter (the Meet organiser) more latitude to ensure the events are full. It’s important therefore to make sure when entering, to note the terms being used and the times involved to avoid being disappointed due to an unexpected rejection.

Another method of selection that is also becoming more popular is “first come first served”. This is used in conjunction with a lower qualification or consideration time and has an advantage in that a full Club entry will either be accepted or rejected. This type of Meet may well become more common in the future.

Coaching Staff will advise on which Open meets swimmers should enter. Open Meets are included on the club’s fixture list. At least one Club coach or representative will be present poolside at these Meets.

Championships

- **City of Oxford Club Championships.** *This is the ideal gala for swimmers new to competitions.* These are held in the Autumn each year and offer a full programme from 50m events right through to 1500m (The 800 and 1500 metre events are offered to those swimmers who have been judged by the coaching staff to have performed to a relevant standard in the 400m Free). The aim of this event is to gauge progress early in the season and to try and obtain County Championship qualifying times. In recent years we have shared the Championships with other

Oxfordshire swimming clubs. Although the races are shared, Club awards are given to the top three placed COSC swimmers in each event.

- **Oxon & North Bucks ASA County Championships and Age Group Competitions.** These are held in the spring and offer a very full programme from 50m events right through to 1500m. They also incorporate various team relays for the 14 affiliated clubs. For the vast majority of swimmers these competitions are the highlight of their swimming year.
- **South East ASA Championships and Age Group & Youth Competitions.** The Long Course (50m Pool) events are held at Crawley or Aldershot between in November each year and the age group and Youth Championships are held in May and June. Between twenty and thirty of our swimmers have normally achieved times for entry each year.
- **National Championships.** The Long Course Championships are held in March each year and we normally have between five to ten swimmers qualified for entry. Currently these Championships take place in Sheffield.

Single Age Bands from age 12 to 13 for girls and ages 12 to 14 for boys are included in National Age Group Championships. Swimmers over these ages swim in the **National Youth Championships** competing in double age bands. These events take place at the end of July/ early August and are usually held at Ponds Forge in Sheffield. Entry times for all major Championships are very tough in order to preserve standards and control numbers. The submitted entry times must be obtained at a designated meet in the previous eight to twelve months.

Qualification Times for the above championships (there are none for the Club Championships) are published annually on:

The Oxon & North Bucks ASA website www.onbcountriesasa.org.uk

The South East Regional ASA website www.southeastswimming.org

The British Swimming Website www.britishswimming.org/ (changing to WWW.SWIMMING.ORG)

There are links to this website on the Club website.

How and When to Get Started In Competitions

This is very individual. Some Blue 1 swimmers are keen to enter competitions straight away, whilst others prefer to wait a few months to build up stamina and improve technique. If in doubt, ask your coach for advice. Once you decide you would like to compete, here is a brief guide of what to do next:

1. Choose a gala from the published Fixtures List. The City of Oxford Swimming Club Championships in Autumn or any of the Level 3 Open Meets organized by clubs such as Maxwell Swimming Club (based in Aylesbury) or Bletchley & District (also held in Aylesbury) are ideal.

2. Go to the club's website and download the Event Entry Pack. Fill in the entry form for the events the swimmer wishes to compete in. 4-5 races are sufficient for a 'novice'. Please note that each race will consist of many heats, so there will be sufficient rest times between events. Also, if races are over-subscribed, you may not be picked for all your choices.

4. On some entry forms a swimmer will need to enter a qualifying time for each race entered. For Level 3 and 4 competitions, these can be times gained at Squad Time Trials, or recorded at a previous competition.

5. Once you have completed the forms, please hand these in with full payment to either your Squad Rep or the Event Co-ordinator (check the notice board for details).

6. A couple of weeks prior to the competition, you will receive 'cards' for the events you have entered. You will need to take these cards to the competition. Some races may be oversubscribed so you may not get all your races. You will be refunded for those.

Entering Competitions

A few Do and Don'ts:

- **Don't compete too often.** The ASA states that a swimmer should compete no more than 12 times a year. Your Coach will advise on the best Meets to attend and the events to enter. Remember that a swimmer is unlikely to swim faster from one weekend to another. For a real improvement to take place at least a month and in many cases up to 3 months of good training is necessary.
- **Plan ahead.** Look at the competition schedule the Club is supporting (<http://www.oxfordswim.com/fixtures.htm>) and anticipate the meets you are likely to want/need to attend and make sure you keep these weekends free. Check with your Coach be more certain and remember that Counties requires entry times that are verifiable and achieved within a certain period (usually up to 8 months before the entry date).
- **Don't enter Meets not supported by the Club.** Meets supported by the Club are selected to offer a range of competition for all ages and abilities.

Ensure that only legitimate times are entered. It can be tempting to "massage" a swimmers time to try and ensure acceptance to a particular Meet however this practice is not acceptable for a number of reasons.

1. It can mean that swimmers with legitimate times are rejected due to restrictions on numbers.
2. It's of no benefit for the swimmer, the reason for submitting times is so that each heat will be a "race" that pits each competitor against their peers of similar capabilities.
3. The Club (via an Official) has to confirm that the times are correct and verifiable. If these are subsequently found to be incorrect (and the rankings are on the web site for all to see!) then it could be censured by the ASAP.

The only exception when times may not be required is for 9/10 year olds attending a Meet for the first time or for longer distance events. The swimmers Coach will advise on such occasions.

Fill in and submit the entry form on time.

Make sure that the entry form itself is properly filled in with legitimate times and that you keep a record of the events entered. Submit the form to the Open Meet Secretary with a cheque (payable to COSC) for the correct amount – failure to submit with payment will mean the swimmer is not entered.

Preparation for Competition

- In the lead up to competition read and follow the guidance given in 'Preparation for Competition' by Lindsay and Dr. Nikki Meston.
- Check that you know the date time and place of the competition . Swimmers need time to prepare if they are to swim well, turning up late and in a rush is not good preparation. It's a good idea to look at the host club's website to check out locations and parking arrangements. Speak to parents and coaches who have been to the venue before.
- Check the warm-up time for the session, the swimmer should be at the pool, changed and report to the coach 15 minutes before the start of the warm-up.
- Ensure you have confirmation of entry. This generally takes the form of a card. Competitors will be sent a card (via the Club) for each accepted entry.
 - The card generally carries:
 - The competitor's name
 - The competitor's number (where they are ranked in the entry, 1 is the slowest entry time)
 - The event name
 - The event number in the programme
 - The session in which the event is being swum
 - The starting time for that session

Always remember: Keep these cards safe, they will have to be posted (placed in the entry box to confirm the swimmers presence and intention to swim). It is important to remember to take them with you on competition day.

Some meets will be card-less and use a 'signing-in' system (where you sign in at a table); or an 'active-withdrawal' system where it is assumed you are swimming unless you declare via your coach that you have withdrawn.

Competition Day

- Prepare your bags the night before. Use a small bag to carry drinks and snacks (you may need a top-up supply kept in the car). Both swimmer and parents will need plenty to drink (pools are generally hot places). In addition to a swimsuit, hat, goggles, t-shirt, flip flops and a towel, it is useful to have a spare set of each in case hats/goggles snap, and fresh towels and t-shirts to keep dry between races. Some venues allow the use of lockers, so you can store spare clothing.
- Eat a proper breakfast. Follow the nutritional advice in the website presentations. Get (and keep) lots of fluid on board. Don't try anything new on a competition day.
- Look forward to the competition. Swimming and competing is both serious and fun. Everyone wants to do well but it should never be at the expense of enjoyment. It's vital that swimmers are supported and encouraged. Competitions are places to socialize and make friends, but also to learn. Listen to your coach's advice, and try to apply it in your race. Also try and watch (and talk to) more experienced swimmers.

- Get to the pool in good time, get changed, post your cards and report to your coach 15 minutes before the start of your warm up.
- Follow your coach's instructions for warm up. After warm-up get changed into your racing suit (not a requirement especially for novices).
- Remember gala etiquette: Be quiet at the start of the race, cheer your team mates during the race.
- Speak to your coach prior to reporting to the marshalling area: Listen to instructions and ask any questions you might have. Make sure you take a drink and spare goggles with you to report.
- Race hard and enjoy the experience: This is your opportunity to perform.
- If warm down facilities are available use them: Your coach will give you warm down instructions.
- Speak to your coach to get a debrief on your race: Listen to what they say; make sure you are warm and dry and have a drink and a snack. Get some rest.
- Prepare for your next race: if it the last race of the session get changed and get something to eat. Remember to follow the nutritional advice from the website.
- Preparing for Competition (A Parents Guide)
- Make sure you know where and when the gala is taking place: Ask other parents and coaches about the venue and the gala. Check the parking arrangements and the session times.
- Wear layers: Swimming pools are generally hot and humid places even in the middle of winter. Also take plenty of drinks, and a cushion (pool seating isn't always that comfortable).
- Sit with other parents from the Club: It makes the day a more social occasion and creates a focal point for supporting the swimmers. Don't have the swimmers sitting with you, encourage them to sit with their team mates.
- Think about training as an official or team manager: It helps the Club and makes the day go quicker.