



## Guidelines for Swimming Parents: promoting positive parental involvement

Swimming parents and GCSC want the same thing- the best for your children. Your child's swimming experience should be enjoyable, building their fitness, confidence and self-esteem. Your involvement in this is vital and can be enhanced using these guidelines.

### Parent/Coach/Athlete Team

To make the experience as enjoyable and successful as possible, each person has a role to play. If roles overlap it can become confusing and sometimes detrimental to the swimmer.

**Parents** provide the emotional and practical support for the athlete.

**Coaches** provide the technical expertise and feedback along with motivation, challenge and esteem support.

**Athletes** bring the desire to succeed, willingness to work hard and enjoyment of the sport.

### Parental Expectations

Swimming is something your child chooses to do, and their participation is for their own enjoyment. By working together, we can make sure they enjoy being part of GCSC for as long as possible.

- Focus on your child's efforts rather than "winning" or "losing".
- Measure your child's performance against their personal goals.
- Allow your child to take accountability for their swimming: their involvement, effort, "successes" and "failures".
- Separate your child's achievements from their value as a person. Provide unconditional love and support towards your child.
- Avoid putting expectations on your child- there is nothing heavier than trying to live up to "great potential".
- Never ridicule or shout at your child for making a mistake or losing a race or competition.
- Don't compare your child and their performance with their peers.

## What can you do?

**Let the coach be the coach.** A large part of your monthly fees pays for our highly qualified, experienced coaches. We are fortunate to be able to provide a professional coaching team to develop your children's swimming. All the training and competing is part of a plan for the long-term development of your child as an athlete.

It is important that parents do not provide technical or tactical advice to their swimmers, especially at competitions. You might think you are doing the right thing, but often the advice conflicts with the advice provided by their coach and your child will not perform at their best. Even if you were a swimmer as a child, the science and rules have changed over the years. Swimmers get advice from a coach before each race and are often given specific goals or told to try a new race plan, which will form the foundations of their future performance.

**Support the Coaches.** Children are perceptive and will pick up on any negativity about the coaching team. Public and private (at home) support of your child's coach is important. You should not contradict the coach's advice, encourage rule breaking or openly criticise squad movements or team selections.

The coaches devote a lot of time, both poolside and away from the pool, developing the programme and timetable, assigning swimmers to the most appropriate squad for their stage of development, and in picking teams for relays and galas. If you have concerns or questions about any of these decisions or the way your swimmer is being coached, you should contact the Head Coach or Chair.

**Be a good role model.** Your behaviour in the swimming environment will not go unnoticed and will influence how your child behaves and deals with success and disappointment. Deal with outcomes in a mature, controlled way.

Be polite and respectful towards the adults involved in your child's swimming- many of them will be volunteering fellow parents. Respect the decisions of referees. Follow the rules of the training and competition venues and be polite to staff.

Encourage the whole team, and show appreciation for good, skilful performance of all athletes including those from other clubs.

**Provide practical support.** Ensure your child arrives at training and competitions on time and with the necessary equipment. Check the [website](#), emails and Friends and Family of Gloucester City Swimming Club Facebook group for information about training and events, providing any requested response within the deadlines.

Check the competition calendar and ensure your child's meet entries are submitted on time. The deadlines set by our Competitions Secretary are to maximise the chance for all our swimmers to get the events they enter without scratches. If you are unsure which events to enter, your child's coach can advise.

Be aware of the club's policies including the Code of Conduct for swimmers and parents, Fees Policy, Changing Room and Collection Policy, and Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy. These are available on our [website](#) and are sent to you each year as part of the registration process.

**Show support for the sport they chose.** Get involved with the club and volunteer. Train as an official or a Team Manager; take on a committee role or support role; help on poolside or train as a volunteer coach (we will make sure you aren't asked to coach your own child so the roles don't get blurred).

### Parental Emotional Support

**Praise effort, hard work and trying new things.** Help your child focus on the process rather than the outcome. Praising qualities other than winning will ease the pressure on your child.

**Don't compare your child's performance with other swimmers'.** Encourage your child to focus on their own goals and achievements. Comparing their performance with others can lead to anxiety, which can negatively impact future performance.

**Accept your swimmer can't win all the time.** Remind them that they can't win every time they compete, and it will take years to reach their full potential.

**Be about more than swimming.** Don't make swimming the only topic of conversation with your child. Even if you are being positive, it can make your child feel under pressure and stressed.

**Be calm, dignified and cheer appropriately.** It is stressful and off-putting for a child to have their parent shouting instructions or criticism from the stands.