

# Swimming lessons at school



The crowd glowers down at you. Their eyes pierce into every muscle of your body as they study every move you make, looking for a simple mistake.

When you're in the pool you don't think about how your hands are positioned. You don't think about how your feet are kicking the water around you. You don't even think about the buoyancy of your body and how your body doesn't move as well as it could. You especially don't try to push your body to the extreme to stop yourself from breathing.

On the day of a meet you wake up with trillions of butterflies lining your stomach. You begin the day doubting yourself even though you've been training five days a week for the past four to six weeks. Your body has gotten used to the cold water from the Y and all the techniques the coach has taught you, but still your abdomen clenches in fear and all you can think about is that you'll choke or better yet, drown. Your heart races as the morning announcements excitedly invite the school to come and watch your team. The last thing you can think about is school work when you're carrying a large gym bag equipped with a towel, your suit, two pairs of goggles, and little snacks. Still, you're expected to do all that and more.

As classes roll to a stop for the day, you go meet up with your team to see where your coach placed you. This all depends on your what your forte is. You could be amazing in one of the four styles of swimming: back stroke, breast stroke, butterfly stroke, and freestyle. Some people can be good in multiple, but obviously, your coach knows which one is best. Another factor that plays into this decision is how long the body can endure the physical exertion of doing a stroke and holding ones breathe in. One out of the four styles of swimming are used for competition per person or if your coach puts

you into an individual medley, or IM, then you're required to do all four strokes. The length of each medley can range from 50 meters to 800 meters.

Before going to a meet there are essential things you must do and buy.

You're required to have a swim suit, usually if you belong to a team your coach will provide or help you choose one that best fits you. Another thing that is required is goggles. Now, with goggles it can be a bit difficult because not everyone has the same shape of their face. They should be perfect and fit your face firmly to avoid getting heavily chlorinated water in your eyes.

There are other things that are recommended but not required. For example, a cap. A simple silicone cap, something that keeps your hair in place, is very annoying to wear, and makes you look like you belong in the movie

Coneheads is not required, but very recommended. It keeps your hair from looking like a broom from how dry and stringy it will get from the harsh chemicals they put in the pools. Also, caps keep hair from straying in your face and disorienting you, or in worse situations it can avoid you from accidentally swallowing your own hair when you turn your head to breathe.

Bringing an extra towel is something that most people think is important. At least for high school swim meets, swim season begins around August and ends in the last few weeks of November, making the water very cold.

Once you're at a meet there is not much you can do other than wait your turn. You spend the following minutes or hours stretching and cheering on your teammates at the side of the pool. Swimming is an amazing sport and sometimes you don't realize that until you're there, on the sidelines watching someone try their hardest to make their body glide through the water faster than the six or seven other people competing against time.

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“ Take your mark, beeeep.” The lights flash and the horn startles you into action as you dive head first into the pool. For the first ten meters, you must keep your head under water and your feet kicking as far as possible to try to get ahead at least a little. Once you start your strokes you have make sure they meet guidelines. If you’re doing breast, your feet must be below the water always or the judges of strokes will take off points. If your poison is back stroke, then you ought to make sure to keep enough time between each individual hand touches the water or that is points taken off. If you kill yourself doing fly, then it is essential that you’re going up every two kicks of your feet, or that is more points taken off. Every single twitch and angle of your body is important.

When in the water, though, nothing matters. Your thoughts are yours, and yours alone. You can’t hear the crowd. You can barely see the people next to you. You can’t even hear your arms quickly hitting the top of the water making noises that could resemble thunder. All you hear is your heartbeat and your thoughts. You can’t help but try and push yourself harder. You try to remind yourself of what your coaches taught you. You try to remember to breathe less and move more. Coaches even recommend that in this time you sing songs in your head to keep you entertained. It’s an amazing place to be. Nowhere else do you get that overwhelming feeling of serenity. Once you finally get to touch the edge of the pool and everyone else touches as well, you get the opportunity to see where you placed, and all that worry that you had before is gone. Nothing matters. Even if where you placed wasn’t exactly where you wanted, you probably still did better than the last time.