

USASwimming.org Q&A

Q: Q1. What are the specific health benefits of swimming?

A: Physical activity has always been a natural part of children's lives. As play became organized into competitive sport for children, scientists began to investigate the impact of participation on the children. Many areas such as physiology, growth and development, psychology, and motor development/control are affected by regular physical activity. Psychomotor skills appear to develop more rapidly in children involved in sport activities. Regular physical activity has a positive impact on various cardiovascular, respiratory and metabolic diseases. Exercise may also reduce the risks associated with the development of future diseases. Training for sport appears to be beneficial to both physical and psychological development.

Q: Q2. What is a novice swimmer? Why is my child called an "Age Grouper"?

A: Swimmers who are new to the sport are generally called novice or development swimmers. They may also be referred to as "Age Groupers." In USA Swimming swimmers have traditionally been grouped by age. "Age Grouper" is a common term to refer to those swimming in age classified competition verses senior level competition.

Q: Q3. How can I ensure that this club program is best for my child?

A: First, ask yourself, 'why do I want my child to join a swim club?' Most parents respond to this question with comments such as to have fun, to learn how to swim, to be with friends, and to learn skills such as setting goals, teamwork, and dealing with success and failure. We know that mere participation in sport does not build character or teach these skills to your children, but rather participation in sport has the potential to do so. It is important for you to talk with the coach to see if your reasons for having your child in swimming are consistent with the coach's philosophy, goals, values and the team's mission. It may also help to observe a few practices to assess how the training environment is structured to determine if it will be a fit for your child.

Q: Q5. My child shows some natural ability in swimming and I want to encourage him to develop these abilities. What is the best way to push my child to excel in swimming?

A: While your child may show some talent in swimming, early talent is not necessarily indicative of later success or that he will continue to have an interest in swimming. What is most important at this age is for your child to have fun with swimming and to focus on the development of basic swimming skills. One of the primary reasons kids swim is because it is fun and one reason kids quit swimming is because it is no longer fun. Therefore, coaches and parents need to try to keep the fun in swimming. So, in your role as a parent, point out the progress he is making and how much fun he is having, and avoid placing any expectations about "how good he could be." Instead of approaching the situation as how best to push your child to excel, approach it as how best to help your child have fun and learn swimming skills. View the early years as "foundation building" and time to develop a love for the sport that will be a basis for a successful career.

Q: Q6. I thought swimming was an individual sport. Why is there so much emphasis on a team atmosphere?

A: The reason the “team” concept is emphasized is that it is important for children to learn to work together with their teammates. Relays and dual meets are both great examples of how our sport has a “team” aspect to it. Children learn to rely on their teammates while working together to achieve a common goal. The camaraderie formed through your child’s participation on a ‘team’ is an experience few children realize. Additionally, the team atmosphere of swimming is considered fun. Your child will reap the benefits of learning to function within a team for the rest of his life. The friendships and relationships he forms will have an impact on him forever.

Q: Q1. Should I be concerned if my daughter gets DQ’ed at the meet?

A: It is important for both you and your daughter to realize that her coach would not be entering her in an event for which he does not think she is ready. Does this mean she won’t get disqualified? No, that’s part of a learning process that every swimmer encounters. Taking risks is part of the sport. While learning to master the skills of proper stroke and turn technique, there is a chance your daughter will get disqualified. If this happens, it is a great learning experience. It will teach her how to deal with failure and how to improve her technique the next time so it doesn’t happen again. Let her know that it happens to all swimmers. Perhaps the coach can have one of the senior swimmers share a ‘DQ’ story with her.

Q: Q2. Why does it seem that my child’s swimming is so inconsistent? One meet she drops 5 seconds a swim and the next meet she adds time? In addition the coach keeps telling her that her times are not the most important thing, it’s how you swim the race.

A: Times at this stage are not a true indication of your daughter’s abilities. In fact, it is not unusual for your daughter’s times to fluctuate as she learns to maintain proper technique.

Perhaps your child’s coach has asked her to maintain a certain number of strokes per length and she accomplished that goal. Although the time was not what you expected, this is an outcome while the coach is focusing on the process of swimming efficiently. Be patient and supportive during this developmental stage of your child’s career. Times will improve once your child is more consistent with her technique.