

# Guide to Galas

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## 1. What is a Gala?

This is a swimming event (usually held on a Saturday evening lasting between 2½ and 3 hours) where GCSC will put a team of swimmers together to race various events against other clubs. Some galas are local and 'friendly' such as the PGL League galas. The different clubs take it in turns to host the galas. These galas are a great introduction to competitive swimming. Swimmers do not have to dive or tumble turn if they are not able to and younger swimmers are only expected to swim 25m. Swimmers compete for points for their club rather than for themselves and the coaches pick which race they swim in which may be an individual race or a relay. Swimmers are normally expected to make their own way to the galas, but the club occasionally organises a coach for a small fee. The team selection list will also have a warm-up time on it and it is important to be there 15-30 minutes before warm up to get changed and get on poolside. Swimmers will go into the changing rooms without parents so look out for older swimmers who can show them where to go. Parents generally need to queue (and sometimes pay) to enter the spectator area.

Swim England (SE) requires swimmers to be 9 years plus to compete. If your child is selected for a gala, please do your very best to ensure they can attend. You will normally hear whether your child has been selected by e-mail and there will be a sign-up list either outside the Twyver pool or sent to you electronically.

## 2. What is an Open Meet?

Open Meets are held to give swimmers the chance to choose events they want to swim. Swimmers need to be 9 years plus to enter. Open meets are split into sessions of up to 3 hours each. Depending on the number of races your child enters, you could be there all weekend! Again, swimmers will need to enter the changing area without parents and parents will need to go to the spectator area or can enter poolside if they are volunteering. It is very important to arrive about 30 minutes before warm-up time. There is usually a sign-in desk where swimmers must sign-in when they arrive. Failure to sign-in may mean your child won't be able to swim, so please let them know how important it is. Luckily, there will be Team Managers (parent volunteers) on poolside to help children remember!

There will be qualifying times needed (i.e. the swimmer will have needed to achieve a certain time in order to enter an event). Each event costs a few pounds so start budgeting (more events entered = more money!). Some Open Meets are held at GL1 but others will be held elsewhere. You will receive notification of Open Meets via e-mail. Check the entry conditions to see if it is suitable for you child and ask your coach or the Competitions Secretary if you are unsure.

### 3. Licensed Meets

Licensed Meets are swimming events licensed by Swim England. This means they must meet certain standards to ensure fair competition. Swimmers must be 9 years old to enter a licensed meet, although they have to be 10 or 11 to enter certain events.

- **Level 1** Meets are long course (50m) only and cover National, Regional and County Championships. Their purpose is to enable athletes to achieve qualifying times for entry into National, Regional and County Championships.
- **Level 2** Meets are short course (25m) only and cover National, Regional and County Championships. Their purpose is to enable athletes to achieve qualifying times for entry into National, Regional and County Championships in short course.
- **Level 3** Meets are long and short course events. Their purpose is to enable athletes to achieve times for entry into Regional and County Championships and other Meets at Level 1 or Level 2.
- **Level 4** Meets are entry level events in pools 25m or greater. They are for inexperienced athletes and swimmers seeking to compete outside their club environment. If their times are good, athletes progress to Level 3 Meets.

Swimmers will generally start at level 4 or 3 and work their way up but please talk to your child's coach if you are unsure which is a suitable meet to enter.

### 4. Championship Competitions

There are progressive minimum ages for each tier of Championship swimming:

- 13/14 at British level
- 12/13 (girls) and 13/14 (boys) at Home Nation level
- 11/12 at regional level  
(Summer LC = April & May, Sprints = July, Winter SC = November)
- 10/11 at County level (January & February)

Age is at 31<sup>st</sup> December in the year of the competition.

LC – long course (50m pool)

SC – short course (25m pool)

## 5. Internal Entry Forms

When an Open Meet is targeted by the club, it means that it is suggested that swimmers enter if they have the times. Coaches will go along to give coaching advice and Team Managers will also be present to help look after the swimmers and make sure they go to the correct races at the right time.

If a Meet is targeted, you can enter via the club. You will receive notification of the Meet via club communications along with an entry pack and qualifying times. You will either need to complete an internal entry form or choose the events on Activeworks (depending on which computer programme the swimming club running the open meet uses). Entries will have to be completed by a date earlier than the Meet closing date to allow the Competitions Secretary time to compile the entries and send them off.

You can either pay by cheque (add 65p to cover our bank costs), by bank transfer (details on the internal entry form) or via Activeworks.

### 5.1. Ages for Galas and Open Meets

Please note that some events have age restrictions. This will usually be indicated on the meet pack. Sometimes the age is age on the date of competition, and sometimes it is the age on 31st December of that year. The meet pack will specify which it is.

### 5.2. How to find your child's SE number

All members of GCSC are also members of Swim England (SE). You will find your child's number by going to the following internet address and entering your surname:-

<https://www.swimming.org/swimengland/club-member-check/>

### 5.3. Times for Open Meets

If you do not have times from a previous licensed meet, please speak to your coach and they will advise if the meet is appropriate and if so, they may estimate times if that is allowed within the meet conditions. Some meets will state that times cannot be made up and must be taken from national rankings.

If you do have times from a previous licensed meet, they must be higher than the lower qualifying time and lower than the upper qualifying time. Some meets just have an upper or a lower qualifying time, so check carefully.

Occasionally the club runs time trials where swimmers are timed for particular events. These do not count towards national rankings but can be used for most level 3 meets and can help you identify if a particular meet is appropriate.

Some galas, such as those in the PGL League, will not count towards national rankings, but can be used for most level 3 meets.

#### **5.4. How to find your child's times**

When you enter licensed meets, the swimming times achieved will be entered onto the Swim England National Rankings database and can be found here:

<https://www.swimmingresults.org/individualbest/>

Only times achieved at licensed meets can be used for level 2 or 1 meets. Sometimes meets specify that the times must have been achieved during a certain time-period so look out for this in the conditions in the meet packs.

## **6. Volunteering**

Open Meets would not happen without a lot of volunteering parents! Nearly all the adults you see on poolside at an open meet (with the exception of some coaches) are volunteers. This includes the announcer, the officials (people in whites), people handing out medals, people on the door and many more. We ask all parents with swimmers at our own club's open meets to volunteer for at least one session. If you are new to volunteering, you can always offer to shadow a role to learn more about it. Volunteers will still be able to watch their child swim and it does help pass the time. Sitting on the spectator seats watching a whole session can seem very hot and long at times! Some roles require further training but can be very rewarding.

For more information contact, our volunteers co-ordinator on:

[workforce@gloucesterswimmingclub.co.uk](mailto:workforce@gloucesterswimmingclub.co.uk)

For more information on Team Managers, please contact our TM Co-ordinator on:

[gcscteammanager@gmail.com](mailto:gcscteammanager@gmail.com)

For more information on Officials, please contact our Officials Co-ordinator on:

[officials@gloucestercityswimmingclub.co.uk](mailto:officials@gloucestercityswimmingclub.co.uk)

## 7. Help

This may seem daunting to begin with but remember that all parents started out in the same situation. If you have more questions, please either ask other parents or e-mail the Competitions Secretary on [gcsccompetitions@gmail.com](mailto:gcsccompetitions@gmail.com)

### 7.1. What to bring – Swimmers

Swimmers should bring the following in their swimming bag:

- 2 towels – one for drying, one to sit on
- 2 swimming costumes/trunks
- 2 pairs of goggles (in case one pair gets lost or breaks)
- A T-shirt – preferably a Gloucester City Swimming Club T-shirt
- A Gloucester City Swimming Club hat
- Poolside shoes – flip flops or similar
- Plenty to drink – squash or water (nothing fizzy)
- Snacks – fruit, nuts, pasta, rice, sandwiches, wraps (when attending a long meet it is important that children have enough food to eat. If they have a lot of races, they need to get used to eating smaller quantities more often to keep topped up throughout the day without getting too full to race)
- Things to do such as books, magazines, games (at some Galas electronic devices are discouraged so that children can enjoy the team atmosphere and support other team members but at Open Meets many children choose to bring a phone, ipad or similar. Please ensure they do not leave anything valuable in the changing rooms and be aware that valuables are taken at your own risk)
- Tracksuit/shorts to wear over swimming costumes between races

Please remember all belongings are the swimmer's responsibility.

### 7.2. What to bring – Parents

Wear layers – swimming pools get very hot!

- Bring plenty of drinks and comfort food! Your child will probably want more than you have packed and you will probably get hungry too – it's all the shouting!
- Pen, paper, highlighter and, if you are very enthusiastic, a stopwatch!
- Cash and debit cards – there is always an entrance fee which varies from club to club and depending on the level of meet. There is also usually a raffle (difficult to say "no") and sometimes (at open meets) you also have to pay for a programme. Sometimes there is a swim shop and/or meet hoodies or T-shirts for sale.