A Guide to Swim Competitions

1. What kind of swim competitions are there?

Anaconda swimmers compete in numerous types of competitions. The main difference between these are that some are open to all swimmer (check the age restrictions), for other competitions the club will select their swimmers and championships (county, regional etc) are for swimmers who have qualified by reaching target times (automatic and consideration times). In addition there are galas which have 'no faster than' times which can exclude swimmers who have already reached a certain target as well as graded galas during which swimmers have to reach a combined time as a group.

➢ Open Meet
- Open to all swimmers, but sometimes restrictions on 'no faster than' times apply (eg swimmer achieved a faster time in a stroke/length prior to the event to the time advertised in the information pack under the event on the Anaconda website. This means the swimmer can't compete in this particular stroke, but can still compete in other strokes/length)
- Eligibility report will be displayed on Anaconda website under the event to confirm the eligibility of all Anaconda swimmers
- Invitations will be received through the Active Swim Portal
- Cost per race may vary due to location and length of race (eg 800m and 1500m more expensive)
- Check the deadline on the swim portal by which you have to enter the event
- Late withdrawal might occur an additional cost

➢ Graded Gala (North London Graded League)
- A team competition during which the club tries to reach a certain time across a group of swimmers instead of the fastest possible time (non-target meet) ie mainly used as a development opportunity for less experienced/younger swimmers
- This allows the club to choose a range of swimmers with a variety of abilities and allow exposure to competition to all swimmers

- Invitations will be posted through the swim portal and/or by direct email
- There is usually no cost attached to these events

➢ Junior Arena League (age 9-12)
- Important club competition in which the club competes against other clubs in the south east, but mainly London
- Clubs are categorised in 1st and 2nd division and the bottom two clubs of the 1st division will step down to 2nd division while the top two clubs from the 2nd division will step up to 1st division at the end of the competition
- Normally three competition days – one in April, June and May (advertised on Anaconda website)
- The club will select its fastest swimmer in the age groups 9, 10, 11 and 12 separated in girls and boys
- 9, 10 and 11 year old swimmer will compete in 25m individual races and relays/medleys
- 12 year old swimmers will competed in 50m individual races and relays/medleys
- Please make note of the competition dates early to ensure your child is available and the club can send its fastest swimmers

➢ Arena League (age 10+)
- Important club competition in which the club competes against other clubs in the south east of England, but mainly London
- Clubs are categorised in Premier, 1st and 2nd division and the bottom two clubs of Premier and 1st division will step down to 1st/2nd division while the top two clubs from the 1st/2nd division will step up to Premier/1st division at the end of the competition
- Normally three competition days – one in October, November and December
- The club will select its fastest swimmer in the age groups 11/12, 13, 14, 15 and open
- Swimmers will compete in individual races and relays/medleys
- Please make note of the competition dates early to ensure your child is available and the club can send its fastest swimmers

➢ Counties, Regionals, Nationals
- Swimmer must achieve qualifying times prior to the deadline to ensure a place (automatic times)
- Consideration times (conn times) may allow the swimmer to compete, but it will depend on the number of swimmers with auto times (eg 50m free conn time might be less likely to get the swimmer to compete while a 200m fly conn time it is more likely due to less swimmers competing in this event)
- Swimmers sign up for the county/regional/national events using the swim portal and eligibility report, as only times swam during official events will count (not time trials)

- Swimmers can sign up for all events for which they have achieved auto or conn times, but only those with auto times are guaranteed entries.

Swimmers are encouraged to swim a range of events, particularly at a young age. This is to discourage specialisation early on, and to help swimmers develop a motivation to improve all swimming disciplines. Ideally, swimmers should aim to swim no more than two events per session, and should look for swims that are both in and out of their comfort zones.

See below for factors to consider and an example.

2. Which competitions should my child be competing in?

All swimmers should be competing at the highest level of competition in which they qualify for (Development, County, Regional, and National). They should also be aiming to gain qualifying times at relevant target competitions in the lead up to these main meets. These will be detailed on the Anaconda website. Around the main open competitions, there will be many opportunities to compete in other non-target meets that should be used to update personal best times and gain race practice.

3. What is the aim of the meet?

If the goal of the meet is to achieve qualifying times for a particular competition, you should prioritise those events and ensure the swimmer will not be fatigued by swimming too many events on that day/session. Some competitions can be used for training purposes to gain race practice. In this situation, a swimmer will enter many events and focus on racing skills rather than times.

4. Do I have to be at every session?

Swimming competitions host 100's of swimmers in a large number of events, so naturally this takes time. Most open meets take at least two days to complete, some take multiple weekends. You should question whether your child needs to be at all sessions. Maybe by reducing the time they spend at the pool, they will achieve better results. This is dependent on the number of events they swim. See below for example selections.

Example
Below is a programme for the Ealing Development Meet. Annie isn't sure which events she would like to enter.

- First I will highlight her favourite events; she loves free and butterfly (yellow). I have missed 200m butterfly because I don't think she is ready for this tough event yet.
- Next I look for events in the same session so she has more swims; some of these will push Annie slightly outside her comfort zone (green).
- I now look to see if I think she can handle the number of event without fatigue, so I know she has a chance in performing well in each. If not, I will remove an event (red cross).

- Annie is close to achieving a County Qualifying time in her 50m free, so I have removed her from the 100m back to ensure she is at her best for the 50m free.
- I have chosen to remove the event on the first day since this is her least favourite stroke and she would have no other swims on this day.

NB. If this was an Open Meet, Counties, Regionals or Nationals, the first thing to do is to check the eligibility report, to identify the events for which Annie has the qualifying times, and therefore able to enter. Remember she can also apply where she has considered times.

If you are unsure of your selections, please highlight them and show the Head Coach for approval.

Session 1

1   Girls 400m Freestyle
2   Boys 50m Butterfly
3   Girls 50m Breaststroke
4   Boys 100m Freestyle
5   Girls 200m Backstroke
6   Boys 200m Breaststroke
7   Girls 200m Freestyle **X**

Session 2

8   Girls 100m Butterfly
9   Boys 100m Backstroke
10 Girls 200m Individual Medley **X**
11 Boys 200m Butterfly
12 Girls 50m Backstroke
13 Boys 50m Freestyle
14 Girls 100m Breaststroke
15 Boys 100m Individual Medley

Session 3

201 Boys 400m Freestyle
202 Girls 50m Butterfly
203 Boys 50m Breaststroke
204 Girls 100m Freestyle
205 Boys 200m Backstroke
206 Girls 200m Breaststroke **X**
207 Boys 200m Freestyle

Session 4

208 Boys 100m Butterfly
209 Girls 100m Backstroke **X**
210 Boys 200m Individual Medley
211 Girls 200m Butterfly
212 Boys 100m Breaststroke
213 Girls 50m Freestyle
214 Boys 50m Backstroke
215 Girls 100m Individual Medley