

By [Elizabeth Wickham](#)

While swimming Masters, I introduced myself to a fellow swimmer and learned she had a four- and six-year-old in learn-to-swim and the youngest group on our club team. I told her, “You’re going to have so much fun in the years ahead. Enjoy it!”

I felt a tinge of jealousy along with a flash of memories driving to meets in the early mornings with my kids, laughing with other parents in the stands, and watching my kids dive off the blocks earning a long sought-after cut. My years as a swim parent are closing, while this swim mom has years of exciting times ahead. She told me that her son insists on going to practice every single day. I told her my daughter is like that, too, and that’s wonderful. We can’t force them to love swimming.

Here are a few things I’d suggest to a new swim parent:

One

Passion for the sport

You cannot make your children love the sport. Children want to please us and they will try to swim if it’s important to us, but if it’s not their passion, it’s tough to stick with it. We cannot want swimming more than they do. If they aren’t passionate about swimming, let them explore something else they may love more.

Two

Stay away from drama

At some point, you’ll see some problems erupt between kids or parents. You may notice some people who are negative and have nothing positive to say about your team, coach or other parents. Stay away from negativity and drama and you’ll be a happier swim parent.

Three

Encourage your swimmer

We can encourage our kids by getting them to the pool consistently, cheering for them and volunteering. We can ask simple questions about how practice is going and how they felt during a race. We can be good listeners and enjoy hearing about their experiences.

Four

Allow them ownership

We can't swim for our kids or put in the effort day in and day out. Our kids are the ones who are putting in the hard work. They will learn so many lessons when they take responsibility for what they do on a daily basis in and out of the pool.

Five

Six simple words

I've seen parents visibly upset when their kids don't do well and even yell and pull their swimmers out of meets. If children love swimming, surely this isn't the way to get them to continue to enjoy it. The best advice I've heard is to say six simple words and see how it works with your kids: "I love to watch you swim."



What advice would you share with a new swim parent?

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