

Beginners Guide to Open Meets

What is an open meet?

These are competitions held by swimming clubs which are open to swimmers from other clubs although there may be restrictions based on qualifying times.

Meets are categorised as follows:

Level 1 - Aimed at the fastest swimmers with challenging entry times.

Level 2 & 3 - Intended for slower swimmers, these events are time banded with minimum qualifying times as well as upper time limits to ensure swimmers of all abilities get a chance to succeed. You may also see these referred to as A, B and C grade meets.

Swimming clubs hold open meets for 2 reasons – primarily to provide opportunities for competitive swimming but also for fundraising. For that reason swimmers must pay an entry fee for each event entered and there is also a charge for spectators.

Why should I enter one?

5 good reasons

1. To gain experience in competitive swimming
2. To build your confidence for swimming events such as galas
3. To set new PB's as you are often competing against some of the best swimmers in the area which will stretch you
4. It's great fun!
5. If you're lucky, you'll win some medals!

Who can enter one?

Anyone can enter assuming they meet the entry time requirements where they exist. See next section for more details.

Beyond this, there are two areas to check out

1 ASA Registration

To enter an open meet you must be ASA Category 2 registered. All swimmers in the club are automatically registered as ASA Category 1, and competitive swimmers registered as Category 2. If you are unsure, speak to the club secretary who will be able to confirm your details and make the necessary application if needed.

2 Age Groups

Events are usually time banded. Swimmers can take part from about the age of 9 yrs (although some events take younger swimmers) and there is usually no upper age limit. Depending on the meet, age groups may be within one or two year groupings – age on a specific day of the year is stated, often the date of the competition.

How do I find out about them?

The diary on the club notice board and on the website details the open meets which our head coach has approved and which fit in with our league fixtures and county and regional events.

The point of contact for entering open meets is the gala secretary. Information and entry forms to download for all approved meets are available on the club website. Hard copies are also available from the gala secretary.

What are qualifying times?

There are 3 types of requirement which you may come across.

1 Qualifying time – the minimum time that the swimmer must reach before being eligible for entry.

2 Consideration time – a time slower than the qualifying time that may be considered if there is room to accommodate more swimmers when all those meeting the qualifying time have been accepted. There is no guarantee that if a swimmer meets the consideration time, that they will be accepted for the event. Again not all open meets have consideration times.

3 “No faster than” time – an upper limit on the entry time. These are given at some meets where they wish to ensure that less experienced swimmers get a chance to compete. Some open meets are very popular and become over-subscribed. In some instances swimmers may be “scratched” from an event, i.e. their entry is refused. In extreme cases this may occur when the qualification time was met. The organisers of the meet will need to refuse some entries to ensure the event runs to time and complies with health & safety requirements. It is worth checking with the gala secretary for confirmation that your entries have been accepted before the day of the meet.

How do I enter?

There are six steps you need to go through

- 1 Read the event details carefully and check that you are eligible to enter.
- 2 Discuss with your coach which events you would like to enter
- 3 Also talk to your parents and ensure you will be available on the day(s) of the meet. There are no refunds after your entry is submitted. You may want to be selective about which events you enter so you can fit in other family commitments.
- 4 Complete an entry form. Make sure you fill in your entry times or ask your coach for assistance in calculating estimated times.
- 5 Check all details on the form, sign it (if required – note this is usually the swimmer who is required to sign and not the parent!).
- 6 Give the entry form and a cheque made out to **Pioneer 79 Swimming Club** to the gala secretary as far ahead of the closing date as possible (not at the last minute please!)

What happens then?

About a week before the event you will have your entries confirmed in one of two ways

- 1 You will be given an entry card for each event for which your entry was accepted. Check all details carefully immediately you receive the card and let the gala secretary know if there are any errors. You must take this card with you to the meet and submit it/them prior to the warm-up session to confirm that you will take part.
- 2 If the event is a cardless meet, a list of confirmed entries should be posted on the club notice board about one week ahead of the event. Again check details carefully. The notice will confirm whether you need to sign in at the beginning of the meet, and if so the time by which you must have done so.
- 3 If for any reason you are unable to make the gala, please inform the head coach or the gala secretary in order that the meet organisers can amend the race programme.

What does it cost?

It depends on the meet – you have to pay to enter each event and this can range from £3 - £4. If your entry is accepted there are no refunds if you cannot swim on the day, although you will get your money back if your entry is scratched due to over-subscription. Usually you will be asked for payment with your entry form via a cheque payable to **Pioneer 79 Swimming Club** as all entries are submitted together.

Other useful information

How do I get there?

You are responsible for making your own transport arrangements to an open meet. It is a good idea to try and share transport.

How do I find the swimming pool?

Best way is to look at the website of the hosting club – they will usually provide a map or the postcode so you can use your GPS or an online mapping program such as multimap.co.uk.

Who will look after the swimmers at the Open Meet?

The Club will pay for at least two poolside passes for responsible, CRB checked adults to accompany the swimmers throughout the event. This is usually a coach, a committee member, or parent who is familiar with such events and will ensure all swimmers know what to do and when. However, most swimmers will have a parent in attendance too cheering them on from the spectator's gallery.

When do I have to be there?

You need to be at the pool before the start of the warm up to hand in your entry card or sign in. Our advice is to be there 15 minutes before the official warm up start time.

When can I leave?

Open Meets can go on a long time. You can leave once you have swum all your events. If it runs over several sessions, you can leave the pool between sessions as long as you are back in time to sign-in before the next warm-up.

NB It is essential that you inform one of the club's poolside passholders if you are going home or are temporarily leaving poolside.

What do I need to take?

As with other galas, your costume, a club hat, a spare hat, goggles (and a spare pair too), two towels, club polo shirt and something to keep you warm (club tracksuit or hoodie) and a pair of flip-flops. It's also a good idea to take a book or something to keep you occupied (parents and swimmers) as there are often long gaps between your events. You'll also need to take plenty to eat and drink, particularly if the event runs over several sessions in a day. You can buy food at the venues but it can be expensive.

More information

For further information on open meets speak to your coach or any member of the Committee. For specific details on an open meet speak to the Gala Secretary.