

FREE GUIDE

MEET DAY CHECKLIST

Everything to do from the week before your meet to your last race. Tick every box.

WEEK BEFORE

NIGHT BEFORE

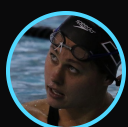
RACE MORNING

WARM-UP

BETWEEN RACES

CAFFEINE

By Coach Maria Rezhylo. 2x NCAA All-American and deaf world record holder in the 50m breaststroke.



Coach Maria
@mashaswims

 THE WEEK BEFORE

BANK YOUR SLEEP ALL WEEK



Sleep 8 or more hours every night

The whole week counts more than the last night.



Keep the same bedtime and wake-up time

Match the wake-up time to your race morning.



Nothing new

No new suit, goggles, foods or routines this week.



Follow your taper

Trust the plan. Extra hard work now will not help.

WHY THE WHOLE WEEK

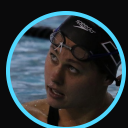
Most athletes sleep badly the night before a big race. In a study of 632 athletes, 62% did in the past year, mostly from nerves. Most said the bad night did not hurt their race.

Journal of Sports Sciences, 2011

MORE SLEEP, FASTER SWIMMERS

Stanford swimmers who slept about 10 hours a night for 6 to 7 weeks swam a faster 15m, reacted faster off the block and turned faster. Small, early study, so read it as a strong lead.

Mah et al., SLEEP 2008 research abstract



 THE NIGHT BEFORE

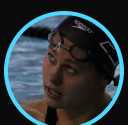
PACK YOUR BAG TONIGHT

☐ 2 suits☐ 2 caps☐ 2 pairs of goggles☐ 2 towels☐ Warm jacket and pants☐ Slides☐ Water bottle☐ Snacks for the day☐ Heat sheet and a pen☐ Dry clothes for after☐ Eat a normal, carb-rich dinner

Pasta, rice or potatoes. Foods you already know sit well.

☐ Can't sleep? That is normal

Lie down, rest and breathe slowly. One bad night is not a disaster.



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 RACE MORNING

FUEL UP 1 TO 4 HOURS BEFORE YOU RACE

☐ **Wake up at least 3 hours before your first race**

Your body needs time to wake up and digest. Coach tip.

☐ **Eat breakfast 1 to 4 hours before**

Carbs first: 1 to 4 g per kg of body weight. Low in fat and fiber.

☐ **Choose foods you know**

Oatmeal with banana and honey, a bagel with jam, toast, rice.

☐ **Drink early**

5 to 7 ml per kg about 4 hours before. That is about 350 to 500 ml for a 70 kg swimmer.

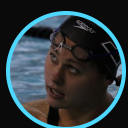
☐ **Hungry close to the race? Go small**

A banana or a few crackers 30 to 60 minutes before.

THE RULE

Eat more and earlier when your race is far away. Eat less when your race is close.

ACSM, Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and Dietitians of Canada position stand, 2016



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 POOL WARM-UP

RACE WITHIN 20 MINUTES OF YOUR WARM-UP

400

Easy swim, mix your strokes

4 X 50

Drill and swim by 25, your race stroke

4 X 50

Build to fast

3 X 25

Race pace from a push

2 X 15M

From a dive or a turn, race speed

200

Easy

COACH MARIA'S SAMPLE, ABOUT 1,100. ADJUST TO YOUR POOL TIME.

WHY 20 MINUTES

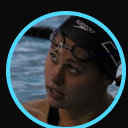
International swimmers swim a 200 about 1.5% faster when they race 20 minutes after warm-up than 45 minutes after. Body temperature drops while you wait.

West et al., J Sci Med Sport 2013

LONG WAIT? STAY WARM

Keep your jacket on and do 5 to 10 minutes of dryland moves before your race. Elite sprinters who do this swim their 100 about 0.8% faster.

McGowan et al., J Sports Sci 2017



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 BETWEEN RACES

SWIM DOWN AFTER EVERY RACE



Swim down 10 to 20 minutes

Steady, easy to moderate pace. Not just floating.



Get warm and dry

Change into a dry suit if your next race is hours away. Jacket on.



Snack small and often

Banana, pretzels, a rice cake or a sports drink. Skip heavy, greasy food.



Sip water all session

Keep a bottle on deck and drink before you feel thirsty.

SWIM DOWN VS SIT DOWN

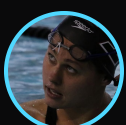
After 20 minutes of easy swimming, young swimmers clear about 3 times more lactate and swim their next 100 about 1.2 seconds faster than when they sit and rest.

Hinzpeter et al., Sports Health 2014

PACE MATTERS

A swim down at a steady, moderate pace clears lactate fastest. A swim down that is too easy clears less.

Greenwood et al., J Sports Sci 2008



 CAFFEINE, ADULTS 18+ ONLY

CAFFEINE HELPS SOME SWIMMERS, NOT ALL

UNDER 18? SKIP CAFFEINE

Pediatricians advise no caffeine under 12 and no more than 100 mg a day for ages 12 to 18. Young swimmers get faster from sleep, food and training.

American Academy of Pediatrics guidance

If you are an adult and want to try caffeine, 3 mg per kg about 60 minutes before you race:

50 KG

150

MG

60 KG

180

MG

70 KG

210

MG

80 KG

240

MG

90 KG

270

MG

**Test caffeine at practice first**

Never try caffeine for the first time on race day.

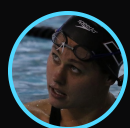
**Think twice before evening finals**

Caffeine can cut your sleep before tomorrow's heats.

**Stay under 400 mg a day**

Never use pure caffeine powder.

Swimming studies are mixed: one review finds about 1.7% faster swims, two newer reviews find no clear effect. Sources: ISSN 2021, Grgic 2022, Huang et al. 2025, Domínguez et al. 2025, FDA.



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Fast Swim Academy

 AFTER THE MEET

REFUEL, SLEEP, THEN TRAIN SMARTER



Eat within an hour of your last race

Carbs, 1.2 to 1.5 g per kg, plus about 20 to 25 g of protein.



Go to bed early

Recovery happens while you sleep.



Write down your splits and how you felt

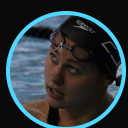
Your next meet plan starts here.

READY FOR YOUR NEXT MEET?

TRAIN WITH SETS BUILT FOR RACE DAY

100 Sprint Practices: fastswim.co/sprint

Swimmer's Strength: fastswim.co/swimmers-strength



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 SOURCES

THE RESEARCH BEHIND THIS GUIDE

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Guest et al., 2021. ISSN position stand: caffeine and exercise performance. J Int Soc Sports Nutr 18.

Grgic, 2022. A meta-analysis on the effects of caffeine ingestion on swimming performance. Nutr Food Sci 52(8).

Huang et al., 2025. Does caffeine intake enhance performance in swimmers? Front Physiol 16.

Domínguez et al., 2025. Sport supplementation in competitive swimmers. J Int Soc Sports Nutr 22(1).

U.S. FDA. Spilling the beans: how much caffeine is too much?

American Academy of Pediatrics. Guidance on caffeine for children and teens.

General guidance for healthy swimmers, not medical advice. Talk to your doctor before using caffeine or changing your diet.

