

"The Ten Commandments for Swimming Parents" by Rose Snyder

1. Thou shalt not impose ambitions on thy child. Remember that swimming is the child's activity. The child will progress at his own speed. Nothing is worse than a parent forcing a child to do something he does not want to do. This nice thing about swimming is each person can strive to do his or her personal best. It doesn't matter whether they come in first or last, they can all improve themselves.
2. Thou shalt be supportive no matter what. There is only one question to ask the child "Did you have fun"? If meets and practices aren't fun, the child should not be forced to participate.
3. Thou shalt not coach your child. You have taken your child to a professional coach; do not undermine that coach by trying to coach your child on the side. Your job is to support, love and hug your child no matter what. The coach is responsible for the technical part of the job. You should not offer advice on technique or race strategy. That is not your area. This will only serve to confuse your child and prevent that swimmer/coach bond from forming.
4. Thou shalt only have positive things to say at a swimming meet. If you are going to show up at swimming meet, you should cheer and applaud, but never criticize your child or the coach.
5. Thou shalt acknowledge thy child's fears. It is totally appropriate for a child to be scared to death at his first swimming meet, or her first 500 free, or 200 IM. Don't yell or belittle, just assure your child that the coach would not have put her in that event if she did not feel she were ready.
6. Thou shalt not criticize the officials. If you do not have the time or the desire to volunteer as an official, don't criticize those who are doing the best they can.
7. Honor thy child's coach. The bond between coach and swimmer is a special one, and one that contributes to your child's success as well as fun. Do not criticize the coach in the presence of your child; it will only serve to hurt your child's swimming.
8. Thou shalt not jump from team to team. The water is always bluer at the other team's pool. This is not necessarily true. Every team has its own internal problems, even teams that build champions. Children who switch from team to team are often ostracized by the teammates they leave behind for a long, long time. Often times swimmers who do switch teams never do better than they did before they sought the bluer water.
9. Thou shalt have goals besides winning. Encourage your child to do her best. Giving an honest effort no matter what the outcome, is much more important than winning. One Olympian said, "My goal was to set a World Record. Well, I did that, but someone else did it too, just a little faster than I did. I achieved my goal and I lost. This does not make me a failure, in fact, I was very proud of that swim".
10. Thou shalt not expect thy child to become an Olympian. There are 225,000 athletes in United States Swimming. There are only 52 spots available for the Olympic Team every four years. Your child's odds of becoming an Olympian are 1 in about 4,300. Swimming is much more than just the Olympics. Ask your coach why he coaches, chances are, he was not an Olympian, but still got enough out of swimming that he wants to pass that love for the sport on to others. Swimming teaches self-discipline and sportsmanship; it builds self-esteem and fitness; it provides lifelong friendships and much more. Most Olympians will tell you that these intangibles far outweigh any medal they may have won. Swimming just builds good people and you should be happy your child wants to participate.