



## GALA PACK & FAQs



# **Galas for beginners!**

## **What is a Gala?**

A gala is a swimming competition. You swimmer will compete against other swimmers and their time is recorded and logged in individual and relay events. This time is then used to “seed” them for future galas and as a possible qualification time for Leinster galas. As your swimmer improves their times will reduce. As many swimmers compete in galas, there are strict rules and safety procedures that must be followed.

## **What types of Galas are there?**

### **Club Galas (including Minnows – for beginners)**

Examples of these are Tallaght Swim Team Gala, NAC Minnows or Trojan Gala. Minnows galas are specifically for children up to 12 years of age and may contain 25m races. They are designed for swimmers who are starting out at competing in the sport. Your swimmer usually starts out competing at club galas to gain experience.

Club galas have the swimmers swim within their age group - they must be the age on the day in order to compete in that age group. Graded galas use the swimmers logged times to classify them instead of their age.

At other galas should your child do a false start or miss the wall on a tumble turn it can usually mean disqualification (DQ) but at a minnows gala and sometimes at a club gala the referee may instead opt to speak to the coach so they can work with the child on it for future galas.

Distance galas are exactly that – galas held over long distances, possibly from 400metres Freestyle up to 1,500metres Freestyle.

### Leinster Galas

Examples of these are Leinster Distance and Graded or Leinster Winter Championships.

These galas are run by Swim Leinster and for the slightly more experienced swimmer. They may have qualifying times which your child would have to have achieved at a previous gala in order to enter each event. These are usually held in the NAC Pool.

### Irish Division 1's, 2's and Youths

These are for fairly experienced swimmers who have achieved qualifying times in their age group. The qualifying times for these are tough to meet and are generally for ages 11 up.

### Inter-Pros, European Junior Championships, SC nationals, LC Nationals

These events are for the fastest and most experienced swimmers. The teams who attend the Inter-Provincial and European Championships are selected by Swim Leinster or Swim Ireland.

### **What is SC & LC?**

SC and LC refer to Short Course and Long Course and are in relation to the length of the pool where the competition is to take place. SC is 25 metres and LC is 50 metres. The NAC pool has a moveable floor so is changed from 25 to 50 meters depending on the Gala. Club Galas are SC unless otherwise stated.

### **How do I enter my child for a gala?**

The club has a Gala Entry form on which you fill out all the details of the Gala. This will include your child's name, date of birth, the gala they wish to attend and the events they want to swim. These forms have been emailed to all parents in the info emails and are also available on the website ([www.tallaghtswimteam.com](http://www.tallaghtswimteam.com)). You should write the events on the form stating clearly what the child wishes to swim e.g. 100 Free, 50 Back, 200 IM. These forms can be given to the club secretary or gala secretary before the closing date with the entry fee. They are then entered on

software called Hy-Tek and entered with the club. Only one entry form is required per gala – all events are written on one form.

### **What happens at a gala?**

Each gala will begin with a Warm-up. This is your child's chance to swim in the pool and warm up before races. Warm-up is generally for a set amount of time before each gala and the lanes will be used for swimming lengths and /or will be designated as sprint lanes. In a sprint lane you dive in, sprint to the end and exit the pool at the end. All other lanes, swimmers must enter feet first (no diving) and will swim in circle laps. If a coach is on duty for the gala you are attending they will be at poolside with your swimmers for warm up and give instructions on what to do.

The next part of the gala is line-up. Competitors in the first event will be called to line up e.g. Boys 9 and under 50m free. All swimmers for this event will go to the line up area, their name is called, they are told what lane they will be swimming in and to stand in a line in that order. They line up and wait for their heat to begin.

When they get to the block they will give their name to the timekeeper and wait for their heat.

The referee will sound three short whistle blasts to call your swimmer to attention. This is followed by one long whistle blast and your swimmer should step up onto the diving block or into the pool if it is backstroke. The referee then calls for swimmers to “take your mark” and swimmers reach down and hold the block. From this point on swimmers can NOT move on the block or they may face a DQ. Then a single beep (electronic alarm) sounds for the start of the race and your swimmer dives after they hear the beep.

After their race they should use the cool down pool if available and find and speak with the coach.

## **What should we bring?**

You will need to bring the following:

### SWIMMER

*Tallaght Swim Team hats*

*Goggles*

*Togs*

*Tallaght Swim Team t-shirt*

*Flip-flops/Crocs/pool side shoes (training & galas)*

*Towels*

*Clothes to wear home – it has happened!!*

*Water*

### PARENTS

*Food*

*Water*

*Pen (to record your swimmer's times in the gala program!)*

*Water*

*Paracetamol (for the headache from the heat and not drinking enough water!)*

**Hats & Goggles** - you should bring a set for racing and a spare set. This is in case the hat tears or the goggles break. This is a fairly regular occurrence as children rush to get them on before their race.

**Togs** - you should bring at least 2 pairs of togs, one for warm up and one for racing. You can dry them out between the warm up and races by hanging them over your seat or the rail as it is usually very warm. Some swimmers wear different togs for every race and some older swimmers wear "skins" which go on at the start of the day and get peeled off at the end of the day.

**Towels** – you will need at least two towels. Use one for the day after warm up and races. Keep a dry chlorine free towel for end of the day shower for home time. They also dry quickly!

**Food** - you will need to pack food that is high in energy and pack enough for the day for both the swimmer and the parent. Galas can be long days and are held in a warm environment. You should pack the following types of food:

*Water (plenty of it)*

*Sports drinks*

*Pasta*

*Bananas*

*Bread Rolls*

*Rice*

*Jellies*

*Fruit*

*Nuts*

*Breakfast Bars*

*More Water*

**NO FIZZY DRINKS & NO CHOCOLATE.....AND DID WE MENTION – LOTS OF WATER!!!!**

Food is important for replenishing energy lost during races and it is important to keep hydrated as the poolside will get very warm. Even if your swimmer does not feel like they are warm they should still drink plenty. By the time you are thirsty you are already dehydrated. You should avoid greasy foods during the day and even the day before as these can make a swimmer feel sluggish. And don't try new foods the night before a gala...just in case!

**DON'T FORGET TO BRING WATER!!!**

It is also a good habit to get your swimmer to pack their own swim bag for both galas and training so they are then responsible for their own gear. No parent wants to spend a day listening to the sound of their child complaining that “but YOU didn’t pack my bag properly”. Gala packing should be done the night before so there are no last minute panics about “where’s my hat.....where’s my togs....where’s my goggles”.

Make an early start to ensure your swimmer is there before warm-up begins. Always let the coach know you have arrived – it is good manners! The coach may think you will not be attending and may “scratch” your swimmer from the gala. Scratches are done by a coach and involve removing a swimmer from the gala. These are usually done during warm up so that non attendees can be removed from the Hy-Tek computer system to allow the heats move quicker. Once scratched, it may not be possible to have your swimmer re-entered. Likewise if you know you cannot attend a gala due to illness please let the secretary or gala secretary know as soon as possible.

If you want to bring a camera or camcorder, you must check does the venue allow it. You will then have to register your camera with some form of official ID.

Finally – galas can be stressful for all concerned, swimmers and parents. Swimmers should be encouraged to do their best. It is not realistic for every swimmer to win a medal at every gala or to even improve on a swim every time. Parents are at galas to support their child, to praise and encourage them regardless of the result at the end of the day. It is the coaches job to critique a swim and give advice on how to improve for next time.

If possible try sit with other parents from the club and have swimmers support their team mates!

You may not be a gala expert yet.....but you will be soon!

## **SWIMMING TERMS**

Blocks – the starting blocks at the start end of a lane used for diving. They also usually have a bar to allow swimmers perform backstroke starts

Clock – the black clock with the yellow hand that takes 60 seconds to go around and it is used for interval training

Deck / Bank – the poolside area. During a gala the only people allowed on the deck / bank are swimmers, coaches and officials

Dryland – exercises that swimmers do out of the water

FINA – Federation Internationale de Natation, the international rules making organisation for swimming

Fins – flippers that swimmers wear on their feet for some training

Flags – these are approximately five metres out from the wall at end of the lane and are used by backstroke swimmers to determine where the end of the lane is

Heat Declared Winner (HDW) – used in galas if there are no finals. Winners are determined by the fastest times over all the heats and a swimmer usually only swims once in that event

IM – Individual Medley - Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke & Freestyle

Lane Ropes – the dividers used to set out the lanes

Lap counter – large numbered cards used during events for 800m and above. They are turned by an official and are at the non-starting end of the lane

Medley – all strokes are used. This can be done as an individual event or a relay event with 4 swimmers swimming a different stroke. The order is as follows:

Individual medley – Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke & Freestyle

Relay medley – Backstroke, Breaststroke, Butterfly & Freestyle

NT – No Time, when a swimmer is entering an event for the first time and has no seed time

Paddle – plastic discs worn on the hands during training & different colours represent different sizes

PB/Personal Best – the best time a swimmer has so far in a particular stroke or event

Referee – the head official at a gala

Togs – please see FINA's website for rules on togs. Quick version – girls must have an open back on their togs. No togs can go below the knee. Boys togs cannot go above the waist.

([http://www.fina.org/H2O/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=category&id=304&Itemid=1006](http://www.fina.org/H2O/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=304&Itemid=1006))

Touch pad – the removable pad at the ends of the lane that is connected to an automatic timing system. A swimmer must touch the pad to register an official time

Tumble turn – used in freestyle swimming and looks like a tumble under water at the pool wall

Two handed touch – used in Breaststroke and Butterfly. Two hands must be used at both end of the lanes to touch the wall at the same time. If it is not obvious to the official you may be DQ'd

Warm-up – swimmers do this before a gala or a swim session. It warms up the muscles to avoid injury and also familiarises the swimmer with a different pool

Warm-down – also known as the swim-down or cool-down and helps rid the body of excess lactic acid generated during a race