

2017-
2018

First Colony Swim Team
New Parent Handbook



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FCST Mission and Philosophies

Mission Statement- First Colony Swim Team creates opportunity for swimmers to merge passion and commitment with expertise resulting in the highest level of personal performance.

Team Philosophy- FCST is committed to providing an enjoyable and complete swimming experience for all ages and abilities. We maintain a positive and challenging teaching and training environment in which swimmers develop individual discipline, self-esteem and pride in individual and team achievements. In addition to athletic achievements, we encourage a fully rounded family, academic and social life.

Coaching Philosophy- Our program provides progressive development through a series of age group and ability/commitment levels. At each level we strive to recognize and positively reinforce each swimmer's pursuit and attainment of defined goals. At each successive level more complex stroke technique drills and advanced theory are introduced, and more practice time and endurance/dry-land work are required. Our coaching staff firmly believes that engaging in competitive opportunities teaches swimmers valuable life lessons, such as how to control anxiety and stress, and how to deal positively with both success and failure.

Team Values- FCST staff, swimmers, and parents should strive to demonstrate our team values at all team functions.

1. Commitment
2. Integrity
3. Passion/Team Spirit
4. Teamwork
5. Performance
6. Sportsmanship

FCST Coaching Staff and Board of Directors

Please take a moment to get to know our fantastic coaching staff [here](#).

The administrative function of the club is overseen by a parent Board of Directors. The board consists of 8 elected club members and the Head Coach. FCST Board Meetings are held monthly and are open to the general membership. Minutes of these meetings are posted on the FCST website under News/BOD Information. All members of FCST must be logged into their account to view this section of the website.

Communication with Coaches, Administrative Staff, and Board Members

For any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact any member of our board, administrative staff, or coaching staff. Please use the following "rule of thumb" when deciding who to contact with your questions:

- General Questions about the Team: Contact any member of the administrative staff, coach, or board member
 - [Click Here](#) to find our staff and board email addresses
 - [Click Here](#) to find our administrative staff email addresses
- Questions Specific to Your Swimmer: Your swimmer's lead coach
 - [Click Here](#) to find our staff email addresses

- If additional attention is needed to a swimmer specific matter, you may follow up with the Division Head Coach, followed by our Head Coach. Please look for the section 'Team Structure' in this handbook to see Division Lead information.
- Questions about Billing and Registration: FCST Administrator
 - fcstadmin@swimfcst.com
- "Dry Side" Questions (Matters not directly related to training and competition): Office Manager
 - office@swimfcst.com
- Questions about volunteering: Volunteer Coordinator
 - volunteers@swimfcst.com

FCST Policies and Documents

[Click here](#) to view our team policies and documents.

Stay Connected to FCST

Have a smart phone or tablet? Use the following applications to stay best connected with FCST and USA Swimming!

- **Facebook** – Like “First Colony Swim Team” on the FCST website www.firstcolonyswimming.org for news updates and important announcements
- **Twitter** – Follow @swimfcst for news updates and important announcements
- **Instagram** – Follow @swimfcst for fun pictures of our FCST family.
- **Meet Mobile** – An application for live meet results and psych sheet (most meets included) click [HERE](#).
- **Deck Pass** – A USA Swimming application for athletes. Click [HERE](#).
- **Splash Magazine** – A digital publication from USA-Swimming. Click [HERE](#).
- **OnDeck-Parent** – An application to manage your FCST Team Unify account and track your swimmer’s progress. Click [HERE](#).

Team Structure

Senior Level Division- Division Lead Pete Wright

Senior Elite (14 & Over)

Senior 2 (14 & Over)

Senior 1 (14 & Over)

Age Group Division- Division Lead Ben Pulskamp

Pre-Senior 3 (Ages 13-15)

Pre-Senior 2 (Ages 12-15)

Pre-Senior 1 (Ages 12-18)

Age Group 3 (Ages 11-13)

Age Group 2 (Ages 11-12)

Age Group 1 (Ages 9-11)

Developmental Division- Division Lead Dana Skelton

Blue 2 (Ages 10-12)

Blue 1 (Ages 7-10)

Red (Ages 6-10)

White (Ages 5-9)

You can find more detailed information about each group by reading through our Group Descriptions (this can be found under the Practice/Groups tab on our homepage)

Training

Training Philosophy

FCST believes that training should develop the skills for lifelong enjoyment and success in swimming. Our training groups provide the support, skill development and aerobic conditioning necessary for your swimmer at their level of ability. They are meant to be a steady progression of practice time, dryland time, and skill sets in these areas. Progression through the training groups is based on individual development and is the coach's decision

Training Behavior and Attendance

Attendance

Consistent practice attendance is important at all levels of competitive swimming. It doesn't matter if you are just starting out in the sport or if you have been swimming for quite some time and are trying to reach the highest levels of the sport; you need to maintain a regular schedule.

Behavior during Training

- Support and respect your teammates – working together is an important part of the “FCST Spirit”
- Follow directions of the coach at all times. Disrespectful attitudes will NOT be tolerated
- Swimmers may leave training (practice) only with their coach’s permission
- FCST Swimmers and families are expected to follow the rules and regulations of all the facilities used
- Abusive language, lying, stealing, and vandalism will not be tolerated and the member may be subject to removal from the team

Additional Training Information

Training Equipment

Each training group has a variety of equipment which is needed to allow your swimmer to fully participate in drills and skills development. Please make sure your swimmer’s name is on EVERY PIECE of EQUIPMENT. All equipment and team swimsuits can be purchased at D & J Sports, (832) 321-7946.

Purchases can be made online or at their Katy store.

To see the equipment list for the 2017-2018 season click [HERE](#)

Caps are required for all athletes with hair which is long enough to cover the eyes when wet. Just pulling hair back into a pony tail, without a cap, disrupts development and focus. Athletes who wear a cap during practice must wear an FCST cap.

We encourage our swimmers to use practice suits, rather than their team suit, for practice. This will keep the team suit in good shape for competitions for the entire season, and it may last up to a full year.

Pool Etiquette/Pool Rules

Each of our pools has a number of requests regarding parking, pickups and drop-offs, and behavior while in the pool or deck area. Please [click here](#) for rules of each facility.

Practice Facility Rules- It is important to remember that we are guests at each of our practice facilities and it is very important that all FCST members follow and respect all facility guidelines. Because each of the pools we use is owned and managed by a different organization, each has its own set of rules.

Questions about Training

In swimming, almost everything can be divided into a “dry side” and a “wet side”. Any question about any aspect of training or competition is a “wet side” question, and should ALWAYS go to your swimmer’s lead coach first. They will be happy to help you. If you would like to speak with a coach regarding some aspect of training or competition, please do not try to speak with them while they are on deck conducting practice. You may contact a coach via email and set up a time to speak with them. If you still have questions after speaking with your child’s lead coach, please make contacts in the following order until you have your questions satisfied:

Primary Coach ► Division Head Coach ► Head Coach ► Board of Directors

[Click Here](#) to read the Parent-Coach Communication Guide prepared by the New Hampshire Interscholastic Athlete Association.

Watching Your Swimmer

FCST currently has a policy that all practices are closed to parents being on deck. We have this policy because:

- a) It can be distracting to our coaches and swimmers
- b) We want to encourage our swimmers to develop trust in their coach
- c) We want to encourage parents to communicate with the coach before or after practice, not during
- d) Some of our facilities require it

- e) This helps ensure a clear deck without distractions for the safety of the swimmers

If you would like to watch your swimmer practice, you may do so 1) at the Natatorium and Training Pool- from the bleachers, 2) at the Aquatic Center, Settler's Park, New Territory, Colony Grant, and Seven Meadows- from outside the fenced in areas

Bad Weather/Cold Weather

Always assume that practice will be held, no matter what the weather conditions. In most cases, if it is too stormy to be outside (i.e., thunder and lightning), the coach will arrange some space in a sheltered area for dryland exercises or to watch a training video. So, come to practice – you never know what surprises will be in store on a stormy day!

If it is only raining (no thunder or lightning) there will be swimming – you are already wet, so a little rain doesn't matter.

If there are very unusual circumstances, such as an extreme weather emergency or a broken pool heater, look for notification of practice cancellations on the website and through email. There may be times, however, when notice of problems cannot get out fast enough. If in doubt, come in and check with the coach before you drop your swimmer off.

Even when the air is cold, our pools are heated to consistent temperatures. This makes winter swimming fun – the water feels warm and comfy when the air is cool. For those swimmers who are smaller or may have less tolerance for cold weather, we recommend two things:

Buy a parka and wear it to the pool and wrap up in it after practice. Parkas are available from D & J Sports and should be ordered by the beginning of October to be available in time for the cold weather.

Carpools

Many members of our team form carpools to help with logistics throughout the swim season. Early in September, parents willing to help by carpooling may ask if others are interested. It is then up to the individual families to make any arrangements for their carpool.

Swimmer Drop-off and Pick-up Policy

The organizations governing the pools where we train are very clear that there are to be no unsupervised swimmers in or around their facilities. The following is the team policy for swimmer drop-off and pick-up.

- Swimmers must not be dropped off more than 15 minutes before their practice is scheduled to begin.
- Swimmers must be picked up no later than 15 minutes after practice is scheduled to end.

The team reserves the right to impose a fine for picking up and dropping off swimmers outside of this 15 minute grace period. The fine will only be accessed based on scheduled practice time. The fine will be as follows:

- First Offense - warning
- Second Offense - \$1 per minute
- Third Offense - \$5 per minute
 - All Others - \$10 per minute

Leaving for the Summer

Swimming with FCST goes on all year long (with the exception of August). However, we have a number of swimmers who want to go back and swim with their neighborhood recreational league teams. Here is some information to help you and your swimmer make this choice.

What is Recreational League Swimming? Most recreational league swimming in the Sugar Land, Stafford, and Missouri City area takes place within the Southwest Houston Recreational Swim League (SHRSL) or the West Houston Aquatic League (WHALE). *These teams are not affiliated with FCST.* These teams swim from approximately May through early July, with 6 meets on Monday nights usually starting the first Monday in June. Practices are usually 4-5 times per week.

Can my child swim with both FCST and SHRSL? No. SHRSL rules do not allow any swimmer registered with SHRSL to practice or compete with another team, which includes all USA Swimming teams. SHRSL swimmers can participate in 7 “clinics”. Swimmers must stop swimming with FCST as of April 1 and lasts until the SHRSL All-Star meet which takes place in mid-July. Swimmers who wish to continue swimming in April may participate in a FCST summer league clinic. Clinic information and fees may be found online as the summer approaches each year.

If you are considering joining a recreational league team for the summer, please talk it over with your coach in January or February, as you will have to give notice to FCST that you intend to leave the team by the end of February.

*There is one exception to this prohibition. If your swimmer is “PE Exempt” within the Fort Bend School System (therefore, they are in middle school), they will be allowed to continue to swim with FCST through the end of the school year. The recreational league practices do not offer enough hours to fulfill the requirements for this exemption. Check with your coach and the SHRSL team you intend to swim with for current guidelines on this exception.

Can my child swim with both FCST and WHALE? Yes, swimmers are able to swim with both teams during the summer.

What is it like to swim with FCST over the summer? Mid-March until mid-August is considered the “long course season”. This means that competition takes place in 50 meter pools. Training however, generally takes place in both 25 yard and 50 meter pools. This is so we can continue to concentrate on technique with the younger swimmers. Older kids will often practice more hours than they did during the school year to increase their base conditioning.

How do I drop my membership with FCST for the recreational league? You must give 30 days advance notice to our administrator (fcstadmin@swimfcst.com). If you are dropping, you

must fill out a drop form and either MAIL or DROP it at the Team Office. If you want to drop by March 30, to comply with SHRSL rules, you MUST turn in your termination notice by February 28. With all drops, if you turn in your notice during a month, you will be responsible for the dues for that month and for the next month if any of the 30 day notice period falls within a second month. (For example, if you turn in your notice on February 15, your 30 day notice period extends into March and you are responsible for dues for February and March.)

Of course, we hope that you stay with FCST for a long time. But if you do decide to drop from the team, for whatever reason, we ask that you also inform your lead coach, so we know the reasons for your decision. Feedback can help make us a better team.

[Click here](#) for our drop form.

Practice Pools

[Click here](#) to view addresses and maps to all our practice facilities

Competition

FCST is a competitive swim team and it is expected that our swimmers will compete in USA Swimming meets throughout the year. Competition is what makes this sport fun. In addition, meets are often where our swimmers are able to have some fun time with their friends and make new friends as well.

How often do meets occur? Meets are offered once a month on the weekends.

How do I know which meets my child will attend? At the beginning of the season, the coaching staff will publish the “Opt In/Out” Form. This form will list only meets that your swimmer’s group will be participating in. You will choose meets to attend by “opting in”. If you have any questions about your individual swimmer and meet attendance, please talk with your coach. See below for more information.

What events should my swimmer race at meets? The coaches will enter your swimmer in the events that are most appropriate for their age, skill level, and time of the season. Swimmers should compete in all strokes and distances that they have been working on legally in practices. As they begin to master all 4 strokes, they will begin to compete in those strokes at meets.

First Colony Swim Team is an IM training based team. Meaning we train and race all 4 competitive strokes. This not only prevents injury it also helps develop well rounded athletes. We do not want swimmers to specialize at a young age, this helps set them up for success as they get older.

There are TWO types of USA Swimming meets:

1. **Open Meets** – These meets are open to all swimmers, regardless of how fast they may be.
2. **Qualifying Meets** – To enter these meets you must have a qualifying time. The meet invitation will specify this, and you can always ask your coach if you have questions.

Meets- A Step by Step Introduction

Step One- Entering Meets

Opt In/Out Form- This form allows you to communicate to your coach ahead of time which meets your swimmer will attend. These forms are made available in the beginning of the season on the website and from your coach. They will include a date to be turned in. If you do not turn in the form to your coach, you will not be entered in a meet.

Meet Entries- Meet entries list all the swimmers entered in a specific meet and the events they are scheduled to swim. Our coaches check the Opt In/Out Forms and enter all the swimmers who indicate that they can attend the meet. About 3 weeks before a meet, the *preliminary* meet entries will be posted on the FCST website. It is important to check these whether you indicated that your swimmer would enter the meet or not. If there are any errors, please contact your coach as soon as possible. From the time preliminary entries are posted, you will have one week to make changes before *final* entries are turned in.

Meet Entries are finalized approximately two weeks before a meet. If you are entered in the meet at this time, you will be charged for each event you are entered for whether you swim that event or not. Charges are billed on your monthly bill. This is why it is very important to check meet entries before they are finalized. Our coaches may be close to perfect, but even they make mistakes occasionally.

How Events Are Picked- Believe it or not, there is a significant amount of thought process that goes into selecting a swimmer's events. When a coach selects events for a swimmer, they are going through the entry process with an individual season plan in mind for each swimmer.

Each swimmer has their own past, present, and future with swimming; therefore, each swimmer's event choices are unique to them based on several variables. Variable aspects for each swimmer include: age, birthday, recent achievement, past & future meet entries, past meet experiences, relative practice attendance & performance, and future goals. Additionally, many meet goals will revolve around the current focus and training of their respective practice group.

Below are stages of thought a coach goes through when selecting events for your swimmer. Depending on the variables above, each of the stages of thought will be more or less significant to each swimmer. While it may not be possible to choose the "perfect" events at every meet, there may be better events to choose than others.

The Basics – Eligibility and parameters for each meet.

1. How many events can one enter per day? How many events can one enter for the entire meet?
2. What events are offered? 25's? 50's? 100's? 200's? Distance events?
3. Are there any qualifying times or cut-off times? Age restrictions? Special rules?

Planning Stage – Make the meet competitively beneficial!

1. What are the swimmer's goals? What are the swimmer's needs?
2. How can this meet best serve this swimmer?

3. What events did the swimmer compete in at the last meet?
4. Is the swimmer locked into certain events at an upcoming meet?
5. If the swimmer skips a particular event at this meet, when will they have this opportunity again?

Opportunity Stage – Achieve higher levels of the sport!

1. What are the swimmer's physical and technical strengths? What are their physical limits?
2. In what events can the swimmer see time improvement?
3. In what events can the swimmer earn a new time standard, IMX score, or qualify for a higher level meet?
4. Are there any new events/strokes/distances that can be swum?
5. Is team score being kept? Does the team need points? Are points relevant to this swimmer's events?
6. How can the swimmer be more competitive for the next oldest age-group?

Psychological Stage – Race with confidence!

1. What does the swimmer want to swim? What are they comfortable with? What's fun?
2. What challenges will the swimmer accept and welcome?
3. How do I balance challenging the swimmer without overwhelming them with a heavy workload?
4. How often have they swum a particular event? Will this event become trite or stale?
5. What expectations need set up, and what conversations need to happen, for the swimmer to have confidence before the meet starts?

Logistical Stage – Make the meet cost and time effective!

1. Where is the meet? What costs will be spent on attending (gas, food, hotel, entries, etc.)?
2. What are the entry fees and facility surcharges?
3. How long will the meet last? How much time will be spent at the pool and on travel?
4. Where is recovery built into the equation?

Some common principals of developmental and age-group swimming:

1. Your swimmer's best events will change over time, usually for reasons beyond anyone's control.
2. A fast swim at a young age may not translate into a competitive stroke 2-3 years later.
3. Success in swimming is measured by progress over time – it may take a few months, meets, or seasons to determine what works and how the swimmer is making progress.
4. Compare times season-to-season and year-to-year, not meet-to-meet; it's much easier to see improvement and success, and for the swimmer to get excited about their swimming.
5. The swimmer, parent, and coach almost always share the same desired outcomes for the swimmer, but may have a different idea/plan for how to get there. Communicate concerns ahead of time to ensure both parties are on the same path to the end goal.

Understanding Meet Entries & Meet Invitations- Meet Entries can tell you what event(s) your swimmer will be swimming. Meet Invitations can help you figure out what day the event(s) will be. Meet Invitations also list meet location, warm-up and meet start times, and much more information.

What Event- Each swimmer will have an event number and the type of event (ex: 50 Free) following their name. Entries are listed in alphabetical order with girls first, boys following.

Meet Entries look like this:

event numbers	swimmer's name	event type	swimmer's official time
# 7	Ball, Melanie (10)	Female 9-10 50 Fly	FCST-GU
# 19		Female 10 & Under 200 IM	46.40L
# 67		Female 9-10 50 Free	3:29.87L
# 103		Female 9-10 100 Free	39.57L
			1:24.67L

What Day- To find out the day an event will be swum, you must check the Meet Invitation and the Meet Entries. Meet invitations are put out on both the FCST and the Gulf LSC websites about one month prior to the meet. Meet Invitations include a list of the events that will occur on each day of the meet. Check the Meet Entries for the event numbers of the events for your swimmer. Then check the Meet Invitation to see what days those events occur.

Warm-ups- The Meet Timeline and Warm-up times are published a few days before a meet, and can be found on both the FCST and Gulf LSC websites. Both the Timeline and the Warm-ups are set after each team sends in their final entries, and are based on the number of entries from each team for each event.

Timeline – The Timeline for the meet is an approximate projection of when each event will be swum. Don't rely on it to be exact! Many things can affect a timeline, such as equipment problems, longer breaks between events, and other unforeseen problems. However, it does give you a rough idea of what to expect and approximately how much time your swimmer will have between events.

Itinerary- The meet itinerary will be posted usually a few days before the meet. Once we receive the warm up schedule from the meet host. This is list everything you need to know for the meet (warm up time, shirt color, what time to arrive...)

Step Two- Getting There

The location and address of the meet is included on the Meet Invitation and the itinerary. Meet Invitations sometimes also include a map, usually on the last page or two of the meet invitation.

Arrive 15-20 minutes before the start of the warm-up session for FCST. This gives you time to set up and get your swimmer ready before racing off to warm-ups. This also helps reduce stress on the swimmer; avoids having them feel rushed.

After warm-ups- Your swimmer will always have a team meeting after warm-ups, but not always immediately after. Check with your swimmer to see if they went to the team meeting, or when it is. During the team meeting the coach will tell the swimmers who will be on a relay (if relays are offered at the meet). Ask your child if they are on a relay – if they aren't sure, have them check with the coach. Missing a relay hurts the other swimmers in the relay, so you want to be really sure that you are not on one before you leave the meet.

If there is enough time between warm-ups and the swimmer's first event this is a good time to have a light breakfast.

Step Three- What to Bring

Suit, cap, goggles- FCST suits and caps are required for all meets. FCST is an Arena sponsored team. In return for the many benefits the team reaps from that contract, FCST swimmers must wear Arena suits to compete. Please do not send your swimmer to a meet in any other brand of suit. Goggles are your choice of style and brand. It is recommended that your swimmer bring two pair of goggles and an extra cap to the meets, as a broken cap or goggles at the last minute can be a problem. You will receive a latex FCST cap at the beginning of the short course (fall) season. Replacement caps and silicone caps are available for purchase at the team office and at most meets from an FCST coach. Team swimsuits may be purchased at D & J Sports.

At least 2 towels – Pack at least two towels for your swimmer. The swimmers need to stay warm and dry in between their races.

Appropriate clothing- Some meets are held indoors and some meets are held outdoors. The indoor meets can be quite warm, but occasionally you may be surprised by a cold area, so it is best to bring some layers of clothing. Outdoor meets require lots of sunscreen, hats if you like, and whatever clothing you would like. T-shirts must be FCST shirts, and our coaches request that you wear certain color shirts on certain days. You will receive that year's team t-shirt when you register. Additional shirts can be purchased at the FCST office.

Parents: You may purchase a team t-shirt for yourself. We offer these for sale throughout the season. Wearing a t-shirt to meets helps other parents know you are on the team, so you can sit together, offer each other support, cheer together, and you will know who to find if you have questions.

Optional: Chairs, tents, blankets, other items- It is usually best to pack a few folding chairs in

the car, as you may need these at some meets and not at others. If you arrive fairly early in the morning, there is usually some seating near the pool at all the meets, but it often is not enough to hold all the people who come to a meet. Tents (pop-up shade covers) are good for meets with outside setup. Blankets can be spread out for tired swimmers to lie on, play cards, etc. There may not be room for all of these items at some meets. Swimmers may want to include the following in their bags: books, homework, games, change of clothes, and talcum powder (to sprinkle in their cap to help it dry).

Food- Concessions are always available at area USA Swimming meets. The quality and variety varies from meet to meet. Most meets are close to fast food places and sometimes grocery stores. You are encouraged to bring or buy nutritious food for your swimmer – coaches don't want to see their swimmers loading up on candy and fried foods. Remember that they will have time between events to eat, but it is best to limit the food to small "snacks" until they have finished all of their events.

Most meets have sufficient room for a small cooler if you choose to bring one, although some pools restrict cooler use (see the meet invitation for the meet for restrictions).

Step Four- When You Get There

Send your swimmer off to warm-ups- They need to get ready to swim and go meet with the coach and other swimmers on the pool deck just before their scheduled warm-up time.

Check Your Timing Assignment- For most meets, the team is required to provide parents who will be back-up timers. These timers use stop watches, and provide times that will be used if the automatic timing devices fail. Timing can be fun – you are close to the action and get to meet other interesting swim parents.

Find a heat sheet (sometimes called "psych sheets" or" meet programs") - Heat sheets can tell you the timeline, list all events and swimmers for each event, the swimmers' assigned heats and lanes for each event, and may also include some information on time standards. Looking this over will give you a sense of the flow of the meet. Most meets now offer heat sheets on the app Meet Mobile. The meet invitation will typically note how heat sheets be distributed.

Find out where heat/lane assignments will be posted- The event heat and lane assignments will also be posted in one or more places near the pool. These will tell you what heat and lane your swimmer is swimming in their event. Sometimes the heat and lane assignments are ONLY posted in the area that is restricted to swimmers (the pool deck). Your swimmer should begin checking for their heat and lane assignment about 20-25 minutes prior to the time listed for that event on the timeline.

Find out how you will know what event is swimming- At some meets, the event being swum will be listed on the scoreboard. Also, the official starting each event will usually announce the event and heat at the start. Sometimes the announcer will also announce, but not consistently. This is important to know, as it will help you keep track of when your child should be getting ready to swim.

Step Five- Before, During, and After Each Event

Swimmer checks in with coach- About 15 minutes before your swimmer's event they need to gather their cap and goggles and check in with the coach. Your swimmer's specific coach may not always be at any given meet, but there will be an FCST coach there that is assigned to talk to your swimmer. Usually the coach will give them some words of encouragement, and tell them how they would like them to swim the event. This coach will also watch your swimmer when they swim. If the heat and lane assignments for this event have been posted before they go to speak with the coach, the coach will ask them what their heat and lane are. Younger swimmers sometimes like to have their heat and lane written on their arm to help them remember.

Swimmer waits by the blocks- After speaking with the coach, the swimmer should go and wait behind the blocks for their event to be called. USA Swimming insurance specifies that parents are not to be on deck during a meet. If you are worried about your child finding the right place and paying attention to when their heat will be called, pair them up with a more experienced swimmer, who can be on deck with them.

Swim- Parent's role: Find a good spot to watch, wave to your swimmer, and watch the whole thing. Yelling encouragement is optional. We encourage you to leave the coaching to our wonderful coaching staff. If parents give technique or racing tips to their swimmers, it can often conflict with what their coach has been teaching and confuse them right before their race.

Swimmer checks in with coach- Your swimmer should check in with the coach after their swim to receive feedback on their race. Depending on when their next event is, the coach may tell them to swim a few warm-down laps.

Go get a hug from a parent, and get ready for the next event.

Repeat the above for each event they are swimming.

For relays – start getting ready a little sooner, to give enough time to gather all members of the relay. Relay teams should be all together and in the area of the starting blocks at least 5-10 minutes before their event.

What to eat and drink- During swim meets, it is very important for swimmers to stay hydrated and energized. Easily digested good carbohydrates are your best bet for energy foods—fruit, whole grain breads with jam, pasta. Water and sport drinks are good for hydration.

Check out the Nutrition section of the USA Swimming website for lots of great info on nutrition for swimmers. Go to www.usaswimming.org, click on the link to Parents, and then the link to Nutrition.

Step Six- Your Swimmer is Finished

Check-out with coach, especially if relays are not over- Most of the time, check-out happens right after your swimmer's last event. The swimmer will be told to swim some warm-down laps, and then go home. However, if the relays have not yet occurred, you should double check with the coach to make sure your child is not expected to swim in a relay.

Go home – tired and happy.

Expectations for Behavior during Competitions

Whenever and wherever an FCST swimmer or parent wears any part of the FCST uniform, they should remember that they represent FCST. Their actions reflect on the team and they should behave accordingly. Swimmers' and parents' actions should reflect the pride they have in their team.

USA Swimming rules specify that any adult not registered with USA Swimming may not be on deck at any time. It is also expected that swimmers not competing will remain off the pool deck as a matter of safety and courtesy to the officials and host team. A crowded deck makes it harder for everyone working at the meet to do their job.

If a parent or a swimmer has a question about any problem that may occur at a meet, including a call by an official, they MUST contact the FCST coaching staff. As a matter of courtesy, please do not take any problems to the hosting team or meet officials. Our coaches are experienced and will know what to do if a problem occurs.

We hope that all swimmers will sit with other FCST swimmers in between events, along with parents sitting together. It is expected that FCST swimmers will leave the area in which they sit during the meet neat and clean. This, again, is a reflection of FCST.

FCST coaches will have the final word on what events a swimmer will compete in. Under no circumstances will a swimmer scratch or "on-deck" enter an event without first consulting one of the coaches at the meet.

In a meet with both prelims and finals, it is expected that all swimmers qualifying to swim finals will attend and swim in finals.

All swimmers who are assigned to relays are expected to swim their relays. If an emergency arises, contact your coach immediately.

The Secret to Developing the Best Swimmers and the Best Team

Supporting Your Swimmer- Love your swimmer. Recognize their hard work, effort, and achievements. Encourage them. This is the basis for all successful swimmers.

Provide your swimmer with the basic opportunities needed to have a positive swimming experience. This includes making sure they are able to attend practices and meets regularly. Consistent practice attendance is the surest way to improvement, and improvement becomes more obvious when they attend meets.

Be enthusiastic. A parent's enthusiasm is contagious. Volunteering at meets, willingness to take your swimmer

to practice, and participating in team activities will help your child develop a more positive attitude about the sport.

Involved Parents = Successful Swimmers

Realize that every swimmer develops and learns at a different rate, and sometimes this requires patience on the part of a parent. Avoid comparing your swimmer with other swimmers. There is NO good way to predict how a swimmer at age 8 will perform at a later age. The key ingredients to success are parent involvement, positive support, consistent attendance, and a good attitude. If you and your swimmer work together to develop these key ingredients, your swimmer will have fun, enjoy the sport, and want to keep swimming for years and years.

The root of the word “competition” means “to strive together”. Teach your swimmer to compete with, not against, others, and to use competition to help them be their own best self.

Supporting Your Program- Know the FCST Philosophy. We champion a long-term approach to each swimmer’s participation and development in our program. We teach the swimmers to be well-rounded student athletes, as well as to learn and compete in all strokes and distances.

- Stay informed- Read the emails, check out the website, watch practice periodically, and attend parent meetings.
- Get Involved- Volunteers are always needed in a variety of areas.
- Return requested information on time, such as Opt In/Out Forms.
- Communicate with your coach.

Having Fun

Although we are serious about training and competing, swimmers like to have fun as much as anyone else. Every year FCST has a number of all-team activities and small group activities. These activities promote team spirit and encourage our swimmers and parents to get to know one another.

Red, White, and Blue Meet (September)- This intra-squad event provides an opportunity for all swimmers of all abilities to be together as a team, giving the younger swimmers a chance to get to know their swimming big brothers and sisters. For our youngest athletes this is a very comfortable environment in which to be exposed to the ritual of an actual competition. Often our older, more experienced swimmers will buddy-up with the younger swimmers and help them through the process.

Travel Meets- Each year may offer the chance for swimmers to travel. These meets are a great way to get to know other team members better.

For our older swimmers, the trips are often planned so that they travel as a group with chaperones. They may fly or drive with the chaperones to the location of the meet. These trips can teach them some independence and responsibility, as well as give them a chance to see swimming as it is done in other parts of the country.

For our younger swimmers, the trips usually involve individual families traveling to a location that can be reached in a drive of one day or less. The team will pick a hotel in the area of the meet. In the past we have traveled to places such as Austin, San Antonio, New Braunfels, Baton Rouge, Memphis and Corpus Christi. Parents usually find some time to relax on these trips as well, so they are fun for the whole family.

Other Spirit Activities- Throughout the year, our parent representatives will organize small group activities for the training groups they represent. These can include hot cocoa or other snacks after practice, meeting at a restaurant or the movies, or other fun activities. The parent representatives will also help the coach organize activities if needed.

Want to know more about being a Parent Representative? Parent representatives are needed for each training group – if you would like to volunteer, tell your coach!! Being a parent rep means that you will be the main contact person for your group if someone has a question. You may also coordinate email for your group, organize fun activities, or just be on-call if the coach needs help with something. If you are new to the team, don't worry – we can help you get started!!

Working Hard (for Parents)

In order for FCST to be successful at its swimming operations, FCST must instill in its families a commitment to volunteerism and build a strong base of participating volunteer members. FCST seeks to build its volunteer member base by requiring that all member families sign a written agreement wherein all member families agree to volunteer "shifts" of service at selected FCST hosted meets. Any required level of volunteer shifts listed is only a minimum, and should easily be exceeded by all participating families.

FCST is a non-profit, nationally recognized team committed to providing the best coaching staff for our swimmers so that they may achieve their swimming goals. But a swim team, especially one the size of FCST, cannot function through its coaching staff alone. FCST is 100% dependent on volunteers for everything that we do.

You can find more information and the minimum number of shifts required by going to our Volunteers page on our webpage, click [HERE](#)

Timing- All families attending any meet hosted by a team other than FCST will be required to help with timing assignments. Depending on the number of chairs we are assigned to fill, families will be required to fill at minimum 1 chair per family or, if needed, 1 chair per swimmer entered. Timing slots may range from 30 minutes to 2 hours depending on the length of the meet, but will typically be 1 hour.

The timing sign up will be set up and made available as soon as the timeline and timing assignments have been posted by the host team to Gulf Swimming (typically Monday or Tuesday of the meet week).

If any timing slots remain open, all families not signed up to time will be fined \$50. In addition, anyone who does not show for their timing slot must arrange for a replacement. Failure to do so will result in a \$50 fine. Swimmers of these families will not be entered in future meets until the fine has been paid. If all timing slots are filled, remaining families will not be fined. Families with a parent participating in the meet in another capacity (coach, official, timing coordinator, etc.) are exempt from this policy for that meet.

Additional Support- The board and staff recognizes that parental support and involvement is vital to the success of our swimmers and our team. There are many additional areas that require parent participation in order to provide our children with the best possible swimming and team experience. We also wish to build a supportive community for our families to feel connected to the team and each other.

For these reasons, all Age Group 2 & 3, Pre-Senior 2 & 3, and Senior 2 & Elite families will be required to volunteer in one additional area. While families in other groups are invited and encouraged to participate in this way, they will not be required, to do so.

Many of our families already contribute in these areas; but for those who do not, we want to encourage them to find one or more areas of interest to them in which to be involved. Areas of additional volunteering vary by their time of year, duration, and commitment level. Areas to consider are listed below:

- Certified Meet Official (may be in training, if actively seeking certification)
- Specialized Meet Positions (working more than the minimum required shifts) such as Meet Director/Assistant Meet Director, Meet Area Coordinator, Colorado
- Timing and Meet Manager
- Chair or member of one of the following committees/sub-committees:
 - Fundraising
 - Spirit/Team Store
 - Timing Coordinators
 - Volunteer
 - Meet Director
 - Special Events
 - Meet Operations

Exemptions- Training towards or working as a certified meet official serving at FCST hosted meets and other meets necessary to achieve and maintain certification fulfills all volunteer requirements.

Becoming a certified meet Director, or a "key area" Coordinator responsible for Volunteers, Meet Manager, Colorado Timing, Concessions, Hospitality, Clerk of Course Safety Marshals, Colorado Timing, Concessions, Hospitality, Clerk of Course, or Awards automatically fulfills all volunteer requirements.

Chairing the Special Events Committee or Merchandise Committee automatically fulfills all volunteer requirements.

Fundraising- Fundraising is an important part of FCST. With the constant challenges of rising pool costs, facility improvements and purchases of equipment to make our program one of the top swim programs in the country, fundraising is one way families can help keep the cost of dues down each year. We will hold our annual fundraiser in the late fall. More information will be posted once the season starts.

Appendices

Appendix A- Glossary of Swim Terms

"A" Times, "B" Times, etc: (also called Motivational Time Standards) - A time designated by a hosting team or LSC or USA Swimming that a swimmer must achieve for qualification or recognition. (See Appendix B for current Short Course Standards)

Age-Up- On their birth date, swimmers move into the next age group.

Alternate- In a prelim/final meet, after the finalist are decided, the next two fastest swimmers other than the finalist are designated as alternates. The faster of the two being first alternate and the next being second alternate. If a finalist cannot participate, the alternates are called to take their place, often on a moments notice.

Anchor- The final swimmer in a relay.

Blocks- The starting platforms located behind each lane.

BOD- Board of Directors of the team, LSC, or USA Swimming.

Button- The manual timing system stopping device that records a back-up time in case the touch pad malfunctioned. The button is at the end of a wire, plugged into a deck terminal box. There are usually 2 buttons per lane. It is the timers responsibility to push the button as the swimmer finishes the race.

Championship Meet- The meet held at the end of a season. Qualification times are usually necessary to enter meet.

Circle In- The procedure required before a swimmer swims an event in a deck seeded meet. Sometimes referred to as a "positive check in", the swimmer must mark their name on a list posted by the meet host.

Clerk of Course- The area of a swim meet that the administrative aspects are done. The "on-deck entry" is usually located in this area.

Deck- The area around the swimming pool reserved for swimmers, officials and coaches.

Disqualified- A swimmers performance is not counted because of a rules infraction. A disqualification is shown by an official raising one arm with open hand above his head.

Drag Suit- An extra suit worn over a practice or racing suit to provide extra resistance.

Drill- A set of swimming exercises designed to improve technique.

Dropped Time- When a swimmer goes faster than the previous performance, they have "dropped their time."

Dryland- The exercises and various strength programs swimmers do out of the water.

Dual Meet- Type of meet where two teams/clubs compete against each other.

Entry- An individual, relay team, or club roster's event list entered in a swim competition.

Entry Fees- The amount per event a swimmer or relay is charged. This varies depending on the LSC and type of meet.

False Start- When a swimmer leaves the starting block before the horn or gun. One false start will disqualify a swimmer or a relay team, although the starter or referee may disallow the false start due to unusual circumstances.

Heats- A division of an event when there are too many swimmers to compete at the same time. There are usually 8 swimmers per heat.

IM- Individual Medley. A swimming event using all 4 of the competitive strokes on consecutive lengths of the race. The order must be butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, and freestyle. Equal distances must be swam of each stroke.

Interval- A specific elapsed time for swimming or rest used during swim practice.

Lane Assignment- The lane a swimmer will be in for their heat of the event they are swimming.

Lap- One length of the course. Sometimes may also mean down and back (2 lengths) of the course.

Length- The extent of the competitive course from end to end. See Lap.

Long Course- A swim season running from early April to mid-August. Meets are generally held outside in a 50 meter pool.

LSC (Local Swim Committee) - The local level administrative division of USA Swimming with supervisory responsibilities within certain geographic boundaries designated by USA Swimming. FCST is in the Gulf LSC.

Meters- The measurement of the length of a swimming pool that was built per specs using the metric system.

NT (No Time) - The abbreviation used on a heat sheet to designate that the swimmer has not swam that event before.

On-deck Entries- Entering a swimmer on the day of the meet. Usually done at the Clerk of Course area and the entry fees usually double.

Parka- Large $\frac{3}{4}$ length fur lined coats worn by swimmers. Usually are in team colors with logo or team name.

Positive Check In- The procedure required before a swimmer swims an event in a deck seeded or preseeded meet. The swimmer must mark their name on a list posted by the meet host.

Prelims-Finals- Type of meet with two sessions. The preliminary heats are usually held in the morning session. The fastest 6 or 8 (Championship heat) swimmers and the next fastest 6 or 8 (Consolation heat) return in the evening to compete in the finals. A swimmer who has qualified in the Consolation Finals may not place in the Championship Finals even if their time would place them so. The converse also applies.

Qualifying Times- Published times necessary to enter certain meets, or the times necessary to achieve a specific category of swimmer. See "A" Times/Time Standards.

Relay- A swimming event in which 4 swimmers participate as a relay team, each swimmer swimming an equal distance of the race.

Scratch- To withdraw from an event after having declared an intention to participate. Some meets have scratch deadlines and specific scratch rules and if not followed, the swimmer can be disqualified from remaining events.

Seed- Assign the swimmer's heats and lanes according to their submitted or preliminary times.

Session- Portion of the meet distinctly separated from other portions.

Set- A series of laps and strokes done during practice.

Short Course- A season of swimming running from mid August through May where meets are swum in an indoor, 25 yard pool.

Starter- The official in charge of signaling the beginning of a race and insuring that all swimmers have a fair take-off.

Stroke- There are 4 competitive strokes: Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke, Freestyle. IM (Individual Medley) is an event in which all four strokes are swum in sequence.

Stroke Judge (official)- The official positioned at the side of the pool or walking the length of the pool as the swimmers race. If the stroke judge sees something illegal, they report to the referee and the swimmer may be disqualified.

TAGS (Texas Age Group Swimming) - Meet held at the end of each season. Qualifying time standards for TAGS generally fall between the national "A" and "AA" time standards.

Taper- The resting phase for swimmers at the end of the season before the championship meet.

Timed Finals- Competition in which only heats are swum and final placing is determined by those times.

Timer- The volunteers sitting behind the starting blocks/finish end of pool, who are responsible for getting watch times on events and activating the backup buttons for the timing system. At meets each team is usually assigned lanes for which they are responsible for supplying timers for the duration of the meet.

USA Swimming- The governing body of swimming in the United States.

USA Swimming Number- Membership number for all USA Swimming members. Needed for "on-deck" entries. Consists of the first 3 letters of the swimmers last name, the middle initial, and the first 4 letters in the last name. For example: Kent Michael Nelson, born Aug.27, 1976, would be 0 8 2 7 7 6 k e n m n l s

Warm-down- The loosening-up a swimmer does after a race when pool space is available.

Warm-up- The practice and loosing session a swimmer does before the meet or their event is swum.

Yards- The measurement of the length of a swimming pool that was built per specs using the American system.

Appendix B- Explanation of USA Motivational Time Standards

Every race your child swims at a USA Sanctioned meet will count as an official USA Swimming time (except if they get disqualified). These times are stored pretty much forever in a searchable database for anyone to see (called USA SWIMS database). These times can be found on the USA Swimming webpage.

The motivational times are based on age, gender, and season (Short course yards, Long course meters, or Short course meters). For FCST the short course yards season typically runs September through March and long course meters runs April through August.

The time standards are listed as B, BB, A, AA, AAA, AAAA times. B times are the beginning level times, with AAAA being the fastest. Ultimately, the letter rankings allow you to see how your swimmer is progressing in a certain stroke and distance. If your child has a B time in the 50 Back, their next goal to work toward will be a BB time.

There will be different meets throughout the year that may use these time standards or time standards that are made separately through the Gulf LSC (Local Swim Committee). Any time standards that are needed to swim in a certain meet will be listed on the meet invitation or discussed by your coach.

You can find the list of USA Motivational Times by clicking on the Appendix C

Appendix C- USA Motivational Time Standards

Appendix D- Tips for First Time Sports Parents

Appendix E- 4 Important Reasons for Younger Athletes to Swim Every Event

Appendix F- Swim Meet 101