

Vincennes Swim Team

Parent Handbook



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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to explain to new members just what the Vincennes Swim Team (VST) is, and to outline various policies that affect all swimmers, year after year. It should be read by all families so that they may become familiar with the important facts of the club.

The Vincennes Swim Team (VST) is a competitive age-group swim club affiliated with Indiana Swimming and USA Swimming. The club is a non-profit organization that was started in 2007. Kids, ages five through High School, are encouraged to participate. VST utilizes the Vincennes YMCA for practices during the winter season and the Vincennes Rainbow Beach and the Princeton Aquatic Center for practices during the summer season. We are very grateful to all three facilities for their support of our program and the use of their pools.

The only requirements to become a VST member is to be able to swim one length (25 yards) of the pool and to have a desire to learn and have fun. By teaching healthy fitness habits, age group swimming builds a strong foundation for a lifetime of good health. Swimming is considered by many physicians and pediatricians as the ideal activity for developing muscular and skeletal growth.

- Swimming develops high quality aerobic endurance, the most important key to physical fitness. In other sports, an hour of practice may yield as little as 10 minutes of meaningful exercise. Age group swimming teams use every precious minute of practice time developing fitness and teaching skills.
- Swimming does a better job in proportional muscular development by using all the body's major muscle groups.
- Swimming enhances children's natural flexibility (at a time when they ordinarily begin to lose it) by exercising all of their major joints through a full range of motion.
- Swimming helps develop superior coordination because it requires a combination of complex movements of all parts of the body, enhancing harmonious muscle function, grace, and fluidity of movement.
- Swimming is the most injury-free of all children's sports. Swimming is a sport that will bring kids fitness and enjoyment for life. Participants in Master's swimming programs are still training and racing well into their eighties

In addition to physical development children can develop greater intellectual competence by participating in a guided program of physical activity. Learning and using swimming skills engages the thinking processes. As they learn new techniques, children must develop and plan movement sequences.

In addition to this handbook, you will find a great amount of other team information on the team's website. You will find items such as practice and meet schedules, team news, swim links, and much more. The team's website is www.teamunify.com/Home.jsp?team=invst. Please bookmark it and check it frequently for the latest team information.

Purpose

The purpose of the Vincennes Swim Team is to provide a program and environment to encourage the pursuit of excellence in competitive swimming for girls and boys. When a young person becomes a member of VST, they learn the values of sportsmanship and teamwork. Our goal is to provide physical, emotional, and intellectual skills that will last a lifetime.

Objectives

- To aid in the development of positive self image, self-respect, and confidence.
- To aid in the development of self-discipline, self-motivation, goal setting and achievement through hard work.
- To provide an opportunity to learn sportsmanship and teamwork.
- To provide training and competition for all swimmers who desire it, allowing for each individual to develop to his or her full potential.
- To provide an opportunity to learn good healthy habits.
- To provide experienced swimmers to participate in high school, collegiate, and the USA Swimming programs.

Safe Sport

We are a proud member of the Safe Sport Club Recognition Program. We are committed to creating an abuse-free, safe, healthy, and positive environment for all of our members through the development and implementation of Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention and Anti-Bullying policies, Safe Sport Best Practices, and Athlete Protection Training. The mission of Safe Sport is to make athlete well-being the centerpiece of our nation's sports culture through abuse prevention, education, and accountability. The vision is that every athlete will be safe, supported, and strengthened through sport.

- **Safe:** Athletes are protected from emotional, physical, and sexual abuse.
- **Supported:** Athletes enjoy welcome, respectful environments and diversity is actively embraced.

- **Strengthened:** Athletes use the skills they've learned in sport to contribute to the well-being of their communities. Every athlete thrives, on and off the field of play.

Parents - Your Role

To have a successful program, there must be an understanding and cooperation among parents, swimmers, and coaches. The progress that your athlete makes depends to a great extent on this triangular relationship.

The parents role is crucial:

- Providing good, healthy habits at home
- Encourage regular and prompt attendance at practices
- Be there for praises for good swims, and support and understanding when a swim has been disappointing
- Encourage good sportsmanship at all times

You must also remember that the coach is the coach. We want your swimmer to relate to his or her coach as soon as possible when it concerns swimming. This relationship between coach and swimmer produces the best results for the athlete when it comes to accomplishing their goals. When parents interfere with the opinions, as to how the swimmer should compete or train, it causes considerable confusion as to whom the swimmer should listen to. This type of confusion is a major detriment to the swimmer accomplishing their goals. If you have a problem, concern, or complaint, please contact the coach directly.

The coach's job is to motivate and to give constructive feedback to the swimmers. It is the parent's job to supply the love, recognition, and encouragement necessary to make the child work harder in practice, which in turn gives him or her the confidence to perform well in competition.

Twelve and under swimmers are the most inconsistent swimmers, when it comes to performance, and this can be frustrating for parents, coaches, and swimmers alike. Parents and coaches must be patient and permit these young swimmers to learn to love the sport. When a young swimmer first joins VST, there may be a brief period of time in which he or she appears to be slowing down. This is a result of the added concentration on stroke technique compounded with the body adjusting to the new training demands, but it will pass and lead to faster swimming.

Even the very best swimmers will have meets where they do not improve their times. The road to success is full of peaks, valleys, and plateaus in swimming. It is important to keep this in mind and to support your swimmer through the good times and the hard.

General Information

Practice

- Many swimming teams do not permit parents at practice; VST has traditionally had an open policy
- Parents should not be on deck during practice. Please do not signal, talk, or otherwise communicate with your swimmer from the balcony. This interferes with your swimmers concentration and is distracting to the other swimmers.
- Each swimmer is encouraged to purchase a team suit and cap to wear at competitive meets. It is recommended that a different suit be worn to practice to prolong the life of the team suit.
- We have partnered with Hammerhead Swim Caps and require that all 10 and under swimmers, and all swimmers in the White Group, wear them for practices and meets.
- Encouraged good sportsmanship at all times. Avoid playing your child against his or her nearest competitor. This is not a healthy motivational technique.
- VST has three swim groups: White Group, Red Group and Blue Group
 - **White Group** - This group is comprised of beginning swimmers. These swimmers are learning the strokes and building endurance.
 - **Red Group** - This group is comprised of swimmers that know all four strokes and are continually working on their endurance, working toward 100-yard/-meter events.
 - **Blue Group** - These are our advanced swimmers. This group practices for two hours per day each day to refine technique and build strength and endurance.

Financial Information

- **Registration Fees:** Each family is required to pay a monthly registration for each swimmer. Fees are on an increasing scale based on coaching and pool time. Swim fees are billed on the first of each month and are to be paid by no later than the 7th of each month. You can set these up on autopay for convenience.
- **USA Swimming Registration:** This is an annual fee which provides accident insurance at practices and sanctioned meets, as well as membership in the USA Swimming. The fees are collected by VST, in the fall, and passed onto Indiana Swimming.

- **Entry Fees:** When you sign up to go to a meet, VST must send a payment for your child's events to reserve a place in the meet. This is usually 4-6 weeks prior to the meet. You will then be billed for these fees. Even if your child becomes ill or does not participate, for any reason, you are still obligated to pay the entry fees.
- **Fundraising:** Throughout the year, there will be multiple times to help in fundraising. We rely on fundraising to help pay our pool time and coaches and ask that each family helps in the fundraising process.

Communication

The coaching staff and Board of Directors will post information on the website and send our members emails. The information provided can range from important meet information to upcoming team functions. Parents are encouraged to look at the website and emails as they may contain important information about upcoming events or changes.

Website: The club has a website www.teamunify.com/Home.jsp?team=invst that lists all pertinent information about the team and allows for dues to be paid through autopay. The website contains practice and meet schedules, coaching staff information, general information about our club and the programs we offer, team record, and links to other competitive swimming websites. Postings regarding last-minute changes with meets and practice schedules are also found on our website.

On Deck: This is a free downloadable app that is available for use on your Android and/or Apple mobile devices. The app is a messaging system that allows the coaches to quickly update anyone subscribed to the team about the latest news from VST. It is great for last minute changes or messages with time sensitive material.

Problems with the Coach

When contacting the coaches, please be considerate. The best way to speak with the coaches is to meet with them after practice. The coaching staff is typically at the pool 10-15 minutes after practice anyways, so this is a great time to speak with them. You can also send a note or an email to the coach to get important information to them. Please avoid sending emails that have "feelings" in them. Emails can be interpreted differently by those writing them and those reading them and this can lead to a lot of misunderstanding and hurt feelings. Also, before and during practices are not good times to discuss issues with the coach because these are typically very busy times for the coach. The coaching staff is always willing to speak with the parents regarding

their questions and concerns, but it is important to do it at the right time and in the correct manner.

One of the most traditional swim team communication gaps is that some parents seem to feel more comfortable in discussing disagreements over coaching philosophy with other parents, rather than taking them directly to the coach. Not only is the problem never resolved that way, but, in fact, this approach often results in new problems being created. Listed below are some guidelines for a parent raising some difficult issues with the coach.

1. Try to keep foremost, in your mind, that you and the coach have the best interest of your child at heart. If you trust that the coach's goals match yours, even though his or her approach may be different, you are more than likely to enjoy good rapport and a constructive dialogue.
2. Keep in mind that the coach must balance your perspective of what is best for your child with the needs of the team, or training group. On occasion, an individual child's interest may need to be subordinate to the interest of the group, but in the long run the benefits of membership in the group compensate for an occasional short-term inconvenience.
3. If your child swims primarily with an assistant coach, always discuss the matter first with that coach, following the same guidelines and preconceptions noted above. If the assistant coach cannot satisfactorily resolve your concern, then ask the head age group coach, or head coach, to join the dialogue as a third party.
4. If another parent uses you as a sounding board for complaints about a coach's performance or policies, listen emphatically but encourage them to speak directly with the coach.

Swim Meets

It is extremely important for swimmers to participate in swim meets. They are great fun and a good confidence builder for children, if done in the right way. Realize when a child swims, they are racing against their own best time, or to try and achieve a new time standard. Swim meets always have multiple heats, so a swimmer is always swimming with others that have similar times. Again, they will do better and have more fun if they race against their own best times, and not whoever is next to them. Swim meets will be posted on the website with deadlines for entering. Please talk to a coach if you ever have any questions. Be sure to watch for the deadlines, it is next to impossible for coaches to get swimmers entered in a meet after the deadline has passed.

It is the responsibility of each swimmer to arrange for his or her travel to away meets, as no team sponsored transportation will be provided.

Below is some general information regarding swim meets. If you have any questions, or need further details, please see a coach, a "veteran" parent, or a board member.

Before a Swim Meet Begins

Always arrive 15 minutes before the scheduled warm-up time. It is very important to warm up with the team and get some extra coaching guidance before the meet. The team usually sits together near the coaches. Just look for the VST banner.

There are usually sign-ins for the swimmers, which means they need to highlight or cross his or her name off a list of the events they are swimming for that day. The sign-in sheets are posted at different areas at different meets so be sure to ask when you get there. Swimmers are not allowed to swim if they don't sign in. There can be many unhappy people if you drive a long way, warm-up, and then aren't able to race because you forgot to sign in.

After signing in, find the VST coach for the meet. The coach will always know who is swimming at the meet, their events, and will help in any way they can.

NO parents are allowed on the pool deck, unless they are officiating. Any questions concerning results, an officiating call, or any conduct of a meet should be referred to the coaching staff.

Once a Swim Meet Begins

It is important for each swimmer to know what event and heat he or she is in. Some children write this information on their hand, while others will simply check posted heat sheets before each race.

Younger swimmers sometimes have a clerk of course to report to. Eleven and older, and sometimes the younger kids, report behind the starting blocks. Each meet will have an announcement for each event. The swimmer should report wherever they are told at the first call. When in doubt, ask the coach to figure it out.

Swimmers should have their caps and goggles on and ready to swim. The starter will not wait for a swimmer to prepare themselves. If goggles break

before or during the race, the swimmer should still race. Please go over this with the swimmer beforehand.

Since there are multiple heats for each event, and everyone is crowded behind the starting blocks, it is a good idea for swimmers to check in with the timers to let them know that they are there and ready to swim. Timers have a sheet with the names of the swimmers for each heat and their assigned lane.

After Each Event and at the End of the Swim Meet

The swimmer should go directly to the coach after every swim. The coach will discuss the swim, always giving positive comments and suggestions for improvement.

Please don't yell down at the kids, or try and disturb them, after they have finished a race. The coaches will coach and parents should be there to encourage and hug.

It is very important to keep hydrated between events. Your swimmer can refuel by eating light snacks and drinking water.

After the swimmer's last event, they must ask for permission from the coach to leave the meet. Relays are usually at the end of the meet and it lets down the rest of the team if a relay is not able to swim because one individual left early. ALWAYS check with the coach before leaving a meet.

If your child swims in a relay, they are expected to stay with their relay team until everyone on their relay finishes swimming. Swimmers should be cheering for their teammates during relays. Relays are one of the most exciting parts of a swim meet.

Supplies for a Swim Meet

- Swimmers need a team suit, VST cap, and goggles. Hammerhead swim caps are to be worn by all 10 and under swimmers and all swimmers in the White Group.
- You will want to take more than one towel, as they get wet very quick
- A sweat suit, sweatshirt, or a parka is a must have. The kids are usually very cold coming in and out of the water and these items help them to stay warm.

- Food, water, and sports drinks are appropriate, as the swimmers have a lot of down time and will need to stay hydrated between their events.

Parent Tips for a Swim Meet

- The pool area is usually very warm. Dress appropriately.
- Most facilities have bleachers. Some do have room and allow for folding lawn chairs.
- Parents should not be on the pool deck or pacing the length of the pool during their child's race. Cheer loudly if you like from the balcony or grandstand, but not by the edge of the pool. If you are officiating, avoid cheering.
- Never argue with an official. Coaches' responsibilities include dealing with any unforeseen situations that may arise. Do not take it upon yourself to resolve the problem. See the coach and let them do their job.
- The most important tip is to **Be A Good Parent**. You can make this a great experience or a horrible experience with your actions. Please remember that you represent VST when you attend meets. Parents are first, and foremost, there is a positive support network for their child and all the other children swimming. Please remember each child is trying to do well and have fun, so respect every individual in a positive way. If there is ever a negative issue, or problem, at a meet, please see the coach. We want to represent VST, and our children, in the best way possible. Lots of encouragement and love go a long way for any child.

The 10 Commandments for Parents of Athletic Children

(Reprinted from The Young Athlete by Bill Burgess)

- I. Make sure your child knows that - win or lose, scared or heroic - you love him/her, appreciate their efforts, and that you are not disappointed in them. This will allow them to do their best without fear of failure. Be the person in their life that they can look to for constant positive reinforcement.
- II. Try your best to be completely honest about your child's athletic ability, his/her competitive attitude, their sportsmanship, and their actual skill level.
- III. Be helpful, but don't coach him/her on the way to the pool or on the way home, or at the dinner table, and so on. It's tough not to, but it's a lot tougher for the child to be inundated with advised, pep talks, and often critical instruction.
- IV. Teach them to enjoy the thrill of competition, to be "out there trying their best" to be working to improve his/her skills, times, and attitudes. Help him/her to develop the feel for competing, for trying their best, and for having fun.
- V. Try not to relive your athletic life through your child. You were frightened, you backed off at times, and you were not always heroic. Don't pressure your child because of your pride. Athletic children need their parents so you must not withdraw. Just remember there is a thinking, feeling, sensitive, free spirit out there in that swim suit who needs a lot of understanding, especially when his/her world turns bad. If he/she is comfortable with you - win or lose - he/she is on their way to maximum achievement and enjoyment.
- VI. Don't compete with the coach. If the coach becomes an authority figure, it will run from enchantment to disenchantment, etc. with your athlete.
- VII. Don't compare the skill, courage, or attitudes of your child with the other members of the team, at least within his/her hearing.
- VIII. Get to know the coach so that you can be assured that his/her philosophy, attitudes, ethics, and knowledge are such that you are happy to have your child under his/her leadership.
- IX. Always remember that children tend to exaggerate, both when praised and when criticized. Temper your reaction and investigate before over-reacting.
- X. Make a point of understanding courage, and the fact that it is relative. Some of us can climb mountains, but are afraid to fight. Some of us will fight, but turn to jelly if a bee approaches. Everyone has their own sets of fears. Explain that courage is not the absence of fear, but a means of doing something in spite of fear is discomfort.

