



## WELCOME TO THE SHARKS AQUATICS CLUB!

This manual has been compiled for one major purpose: to provide the parents of potential and novice swimmers the opportunity to gain insight into the sport of competitive swimming - its benefits, expectations and rigors.

Swimming programs are founded on the belief that swimming offers an exciting and valuable experience in a person's life. They can appeal equally to the novice or the aspiring Olympic athlete and their value goes far beyond that of increasing efficiency in the water. In a well-directed program, every participant can benefit from the experience of competition even if he or she never mounts the medal podium.

As your swimmer begins to train and to participate in competitions, you will have many questions, some pertaining to your swimmer's participation and eligibility for meets, some pertaining to your parental responsibilities. Many of these issues are covered here in a general context; please check with your Head Coach or Club Board Members for specific information.

More in-depth information is available on our web-site

[www.sharksaquaticclub.com](http://www.sharksaquaticclub.com)

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## Welcome To Competitive Swimming!

We would like to welcome you to the exciting world of swimming. Your child has become a member of one of the country's largest and most organized youth sports.

Sharks Aquatic Club consists of swimmers, parents, coaches, officials and board members. All work together toward motivating and challenging our young people.

This allows each swimmer to realize his or her individual potential while in pursuit of excellence in competitive swimming.

While training as a competitive swimmer, many skills will be acquired that will aid in the development of the whole person.

Swimmers learn:

- To make commitments
- To set realistic goals
- To deal with success and disappointments
- To be involved in social interaction
- To budget time
- Sportsmanship
- Teamwork
- Physical Conditioning
- Nutritional awareness
- Persistence
- Responsibility
- Concentration
- Courage
- Discipline
- Diligence

Our swimming club provides:

- Training and competition of swimmers at all levels, consistent with ability, desire and performance levels
- Positive social and emotional development
- Development of sportsmanship and concept of team identity, spirit, and support
- Establishment of a healthy lifestyle
- Enhancement of self-esteem and sense of personal worth through commitment to the sport
- Participation and skill improvement in an athletic activity which can be enjoyed throughout one's entire life.

The acquisition of records, trophies and medals, though gratifying, assumes a secondary role to the above objectives. In all respects, competitive swimming is a preparation for life. The hardest worker in the pool does not always win the race; however, each swimmer will learn that in order to reach one's highest potential, dedication and hard work are essential. Learning from present situations will prove immeasurably valuable in the future.

Love of competition is not the only reason swimmers swim, although it is a major one. Swimmers form innumerable friendships among fellow athletes, friendships that last for their lifetimes. The prospect of travel is often a motivating factor, especially when it's with the team/friends rather than always with the family. Most swimmers compete in the sport simply to test themselves - to compete for the love of competition.

The sport of swimming has many benefits, including the people you and your child will meet. The camaraderie among swimmers is unique, with many swimming buddies becoming lifelong friends. In addition to being around fine people, swimming provides one of the most beneficial forms of exercise for cardiovascular and overall fitness.

Swimming is also relatively injury free and can be enjoyed throughout one's entire life. Perhaps the greatest benefit of participating in an organized swim program is the life skills your child will develop. Your child will reap the benefits of swimming long after his/her participation in competitive swimming ends.

Age group swimming is fun, exciting and rewarding. In the first few years, the focus is on stroke development and learning competitive swimming basics. Many children improve rapidly and it is not unusual to see tremendous growth in these first few years. It is often difficult to avoid the tendency to push young athletes at this stage. It is important to remember that each child will develop at their own rate. Girls, who mature sooner than boys, can often start heavier training at a younger age. Swimming should be fun and relatively pressure free, especially at the younger levels. As your child progresses, continual training and competition challenges are provided to enhance their development in the sport of swimming.

A swimming club and your involvement in it can help the swimmers achieve their goals. You may soon find yourself cheering at competitions, timekeeping on pool deck, participating in executive decisions, or becoming involved as an official or committee member.

Whatever the role, your child's experience in swimming has much to do with your positive support. Please feel free to ask questions.

Whether it is coaches, officials or fellow parents, all have the same goal; to provide our children with the best possible swimming experience.

## Swim Basics

### Season

The swimming year runs from September 1<sup>st</sup> to August 31<sup>st</sup> of each year. The team will take a two week break in April and August.

The swim year is divided into two sections, short course season and long course season. The short course season runs from September to April with all competitions held in a 25 yard pool. The long course season runs from May to August with competitions held in a 50 meter pool.

### Training

Your swimmer will be registered into a group that suits his/her abilities and age and will be under the direction of a coach. You will be given a schedule of regular practice days and times at registration. It is expected your child will get to their respective practice 10-15 minutes early, so that they can be ready prior to the scheduled start time with all their swimming gear.

Please remember to inform the coach of a swimmer's absence from practice, in advance of the situation, whenever possible. Ensure that your swimmer has warm clothing to wear home after practice. Swimmers need a snack (carbohydrates, i.e. breads and fruits) before practice, and a snack awaiting them after practice. Healthy snacks perk up a swimmer, and keep them satisfied longer than junk food!

### Equipment To Get Started

Swimmers will need the following at each practice session:

**BAG:** Swimmers should have a bag that can be carried out on to the pool deck. Although lockers are available at some pools, valuables are best left at home. If your swimmer uses a locker it is advised they use a lock as theft does sometimes occur in locker rooms.

**BATHING SUIT:** All swimmers will need a training bathing suit. Have your swimmer rinse out their bathing suit in cold water, after each practice, to keep it lasting a bit longer. Chlorinated pool water is hard on bathing suit fabric. Never put the suit in the dryer as the heat will damage the lycra.

**CAP:** A cap will keep hair out of the swimmer's eyes and will reduce water resistance. It also protects hair from chlorine damage.

**GOGGLES:** Goggles are worn by swimmers to enhance vision and protect their eyes from the effects of the chemicals in the water. To fit a pair of goggles, press the eyepieces to the eyes without the strap. There should be momentary suction suggesting that the shape of the eyepiece fits the shape of the swimmer's eyes.

**TEAM SUIT:** Ordered once the season begins. To be worn in swim meets only.

**TOWEL:** Most swimmers prefer a large thick beach towel. Your swimmer may want to take two towels to meets.

**WATER BOTTLE:** Make sure your swimmer takes a water bottle to every practice. At the beginning of each year the coaches will advise you if there is specific equipment that will be needed in your child's group. Equipment, club clothing and bags can all be purchased from sports retailers or online.

To ease the frustration and disappointment of losing equipment, remember label everything with permanent ink - (Name & phone #).

### **For Swim Meets you need**

- A chair for each adult and your swimmer – Swimmers need to stay off their feet between events.
- A hoodie, sweatshirt, or swim parka to keep muscles warm between heats.
- Team suit & Cap
- Goggles
- 2 Towels
- Gameboy type of game, a book to read, or a deck of cards
- Small Cooler packed with Gatorade, Water, favorite fruits (grapes, oranges), some sort of protein (peanut butter sandwiches, turkey sandwiches)
- A Sharpie Pen
- A Highlighter

***Tip: Dress COOL...in layers if needed. It gets very hot inside the pool area with a crowd of people.***

## SWIMMERS' RESPONSIBILITIES

YES, AS A CLUB SWIMMER, you have responsibilities. No matter how old you are or how well you swim, you have certain responsibilities to yourself, to your club-mates, and to those in the Parents' Group who work for you. To understand this better, let's take a look at just what a swimming club is and why it exists in the first place.

A competitive swimming club is simply a group of individuals, swimmers and parents, who have joined forces to better pursue a common interest. They work together so they can have:

1. blocks of pool time (imagine all the swimmers in your club trying to practice on their own during public swimming hours)
2. coaching and instruction
3. swim meets (individuals going their separate ways can't run swim meets)
4. fund-raising schemes to raise money for travel and other expenses (reducing the cost to the club members)
5. the fun of being with others with a similar interest. One thing is certain: without you and the other swimmers in the water, there would be no point in having a club at all. You are important to your club, and as in any type of club, membership brings with it certain responsibilities.

### IN TRAINING

1. Obey all pool regulations. You have a duty to do your part in keeping your club's good relations with the pool staff. All it takes to spoil things for the whole club is one or two "bad apples". Do your part and see that others do theirs.
2. Be on time for workouts. Be on deck, ready to swim (goggles adjusted, bathing cap on, etc.) at least five minutes prior to the start of a training session. Report to the coach when you are late or when you have to leave early.
3. Be cheerful and co-operative. Productive swimming training should be "serious fun", so to speak; even though at times it is physically demanding and perhaps boring, remember that it's what you came to the pool for - so don't complain. Nobody likes a groaner or a slacker – not your coach and not your team mates. If you are going to resent every stroke you take in training, you will never amount to much as a swimmer. Above all, don't interfere with or impede the training of others.
4. Be quiet when the coach is talking. You just might learn something; also the other swimmers have a right to hear the coach's comments and instructions. Swimming pools are noisy enough as it is. Be sociable, but not when the coach has the floor.
5. Be a good training-mate. Just as a suddenly stopped car is a menace on a freeway, you too can create a possible pile-up of swimmers in your training lane when you make unplanned stops during training swims. Never stop except at the ends of training swims, and don't be forever looking back to see if (and hope for?) someone to catch up to you; presume that someone is – and can swim faster. Cooperation is the key: in a crowded pool situation, each swimmer must leave on his/her time (start swims precisely on his/ her mark on the pace clock), swim straight a must), maintain a

respectable speed, swim all the way into the end (no walking on the bottom), refrain from annoying others (no grabbing, etc.) and just generally be a considerate team mate.

6. Be a regular attendee. Improvement in swimming, like in any other sport, is very much a matter of attending workouts regularly, being on hand when the various skills are taught, and logging mileage according to a definite plan. Casual, hit-or-miss attendance, no matter how "talented" the individual, cannot bring success in today's hotly contested competitions. "Gifted" but lazy swimmers just don't make the qualifying times for the top meets.
7. Know your best times. You should know your best times for all of the events both in competition and in training. As a rule, the best swimmers not only know their own best times but those of most of their team mates and competitors.
8. Get enough sleep. It helps to think of yourself as being "in training" 24 hours a day. A good state of general health is a must, and that means proper attention to diet, general fitness and, in particular, sleep. The system of modern athletic training, which includes swimming, is based on overload training, which simply means getting tired on purpose in the most beneficial ways and then allowing your body to adapt to the gradually harder work you ask of it. If you don't get enough sleep, the system can't work for you.

***NOTE: The above are of a general nature, true for any swimmer anywhere. Your coach and/or club will undoubtedly have additional special rules of conduct expected of you at the pool.***

Remember the rules are designed to help you become a better swimmer.

#### **AT MEETS:**

1. Report to your Coach upon arrival at the pool. "Check in" at each session in which you are to swim. Check in early enough to take advantage of the warm-up period(s). Your coach wants to know you are on hand and preparing for competition. If you are entered but can't attend, notify your coach so he can scratch you and re-arrange any relays you were to be in.
2. Sit with your teammates and be a part of your team. Your Coach will want to know where you are at all times.
3. Come prepared. You want to be warm and comfortable, so learn from the great swimmers and dress warmly when waiting for your events. A good track suit, sweat-shirts, deck shoes (runners), warm socks, spare towels, perhaps a robe or swim parka, spare (dry) swim suit (warm up in one then change to a dry one while waiting for your event), a duffle bag, etc. are all part of every serious swimmer's swim-meet kit. MARK ALL SUCH ITEMS WITH YOUR NAME AND CLUB NAME. Obviously, don't leave valuables in your duffle-bag or in lockers; leave them with your parents. Wear your team uniform, if team has one, cap, suit, shirt, track suit, etc., so you are identified as a member of your team.
4. Respect the decisions of meet officials. Any protest should come through your coach, not you or your parents.

5. When watching races, stay well back from the edge (including the end of the pool). You can see just as well from farther away, for one thing, plus YOUR SWIMMER(S) MAY BE DISQUALIFIED BY YOUR ACTION. Remember that at meets you are identified with your club; help your club keep its reputation for fair play and courtesy.
6. In individual events stay in the water until all have finished. Stay in your lane, in the water. It's just good sportsmanship and it allows the officials to do their jobs better. In relay events swimmers number 1, 2, and 3 on a team must get out of the water without delay when they have finished and THEY MUST STAY OUT UNTIL ALL TEAMS HAVE FINISHED THE RACE; jumping back in before all teams have finished will cause your team to be disqualified.
7. Watch what you eat. You will swim better if, on the day of the competition, you eat normally. Generally speaking, there are no "magic" foods, elixirs or supplements that will somehow make you faster, but there are things to be avoided. Some very good information is available on the USA Swimming website ([www.usaswimming.org](http://www.usaswimming.org) under "tips and training", "nutrition center"). Please advise the coach if you have any special medical situations.
8. Learn from others. During your development years in the sport you can learn a lot from watching the way the best swimmers conduct themselves at meets, both in the water and when waiting for their events. You can pick up the tricks of the trade, so to speak.

## IN GENERAL

Your chief responsibility is to yourself. You owe it to yourself to learn that this sport of competitive swimming demands a high degree of dedication and self-discipline. This is a precision sport in which mere one-hundredths of a second can determine the winner.

You should concentrate on improving in all of your training habits:

- Listen to your coach
- Swim Hard at practice
- Keep your school grades up
- Look after your health
- Get plenty of rest

## PARENTS' RESPONSIBILITIES

### To Your Club

One of the keys to continued success and development of any swim club is participation by the members. The club board that oversees the day to day operation of SAC is made up of parent volunteers. There are many opportunities for volunteers to contribute. The club cannot operate effectively without parent volunteers.

Your swimmer trains and races hard to realize his/her goals. As a parent, you achieve a sense of pride and excitement when these dreams are attained. Volunteering your time, will only serve to heighten your sense of pride and excitement.

### To Your Swimmer

"You are becoming part of the "parent, coach, and athlete triangle. The parent provides emotional support (an anchor) and physical support for the athlete. The coach provides technical expertise that is unavailable anywhere else in the triangle, and to a lesser degree, motivation, in the form of vision, challenge and emotional support. The athlete brings the raw material... the eagerness to learn, to develop, and to respond." *(Pgs. 10&11-Parent, Coach and Athlete- by John Leonard)*

As a parent, your major responsibility is to provide a stable, loving and supportive environment. Show your interest by ensuring your swimmer's attendance at practices, by coming to meets and being active in the Club. Parents are not participants on their child's team, but they do contribute to the success of the team. Be enthusiastic and supportive, but remember that your child is the swimmer. Swimmers will establish their goals in conjunction with their coach and make their own progress. Be careful as a parent not to impose your own standards and goals on your swimmer. Do not over burden your child with winning or achieving best times. The most important part of your swimmer's experience is that he/she learns about himself/herself while enjoying the sport.

### Leave the Coaching to the Coach

The best way to help a child achieve their goals and reduce the natural fear of failure is through positive reinforcement. No one likes to make a mistake, but, as your swimmer progresses, mistakes will be made. The value in this for your swimmer is in learning all he/she he can from mistakes and then moving forward. Encourage your child's efforts and point out the things they did well. As long as they gave their best effort, you should make them feel like a winner. Our coaches are seasoned and professional. To ensure your child receives the maximum benefit from their coach, all practice sessions are considered a "closed deck". While you may want to sit and observe, this can be a distraction to not only the coach, but also to your child. Once you drop your child off at practice, please be courteous and leave the venue until practice is over. If you have concerns about practice schedules, drills, exercises, or any other aspect of the coaching and instruction, feel free to make an appointment with the coach to discuss these concerns after practice.

## As a Timer

Each year SAC will host three or more meets. Parents are required to time at these meets and are encouraged to assist other clubs at their meets. Remember that being a timer gives you one of the best seats in the house! Plus, volunteering at meets is a very easy way to fulfill your service hour responsibilities to the club.

Each session at a swim meet requires at least 2 timers per lane, as well as a head timer. The Meet Director will contact all club members to fill positions prior to your club's hosting a meet. These volunteer opportunities are usually available for sign-up on the team website.

Listed below, not necessarily in order of importance, are parents' responsibilities that have grown out of years of experience:

1. See that your youngsters get to the pool on time, not just for swim meets, but also for workouts and team practices
2. Keep your child at home when he or she is realistically sick. You as a parent should learn the rest requirements for your children. Swimming training can be hard work, so be especially on guard with respect to rest requirements following a bout of illness. It is not a crime to miss a workout when there is a valid reason. Parents will usually know how much rest is required in order that the swimmer will not suffer relapse on returning to a full slate of workouts.
3. Notify the coach if your swimmer has any unusual medical problem.
4. Instruct your child in how to look after money and other personal belongings at swim meets or when traveling with the team. Your child can be responsible for packing and unpacking his swim bag. It is strongly recommended that all towels, bathing suits, goggles, swim-meet garments, etc., be marked with your swimmer's name.
5. If you don't like the way things are going in the club, discuss your problem privately with the coach (if it involves coaching) or with a SAC board member or the Team Liaison, but above all, don't make the problem the topic for the dinner table when swimmers are present. Remember, the swimmer may be quite content with things the way they are, and this sort of conversation may leave him disturbed or confused. Take your problem to a board member or coach directly. If there is a problem you will only compound it or create new ones if instead you seek to undermine the board or coach by rumor-mongering and stirring up doubt among the membership in general.
6. Swim clubs cannot function without volunteers to serve on the board and various committees. Don't leave everything to be done by the same few people who did it last year. As older swimmers graduate from high school and leave for college, more parents are needed to step and contribute to the operation of the club. It can be very rewarding and give you a sense of ownership with the club.
7. Don't be obsessed with your child winning to the point that no comfort is given when the child has his or her bad days. It is not a punishable offence to lose a race, or even to be disqualified in a heat; at such times, moral support and encouragement are called for, not wrath. In the final analysis, remember that the child is swimming against himself, i.e., to improve his own time. There is only one "first", but every tenth of a second of improvement makes that swimmer a "winner".

8. Be patient. Champions are not made overnight in this sport. It takes years to acquire the skills and polish of the best international swimmers, years of faithful attendance, hard work, and dedication and years of encouragement from you, the parent. Make your encouragement realistic. Encourage your child to strive for the next level up in the club, then the next level, and so on.
9. Take the time to find out about the sport. It can be fun, it can be rewarding, and it can become a "family" involvement.
10. Read # 9 again!!

## Ready For Competition

Once your child has a good understanding of the competitive strokes and has been introduced to the basics of racing, it will be time for their first swim meet. The coach will determine when your swimmer is ready to compete at a meet.

At the beginning of the season, swimmers are given a tentative meet schedule to assist families in their time and financial planning. Please record the swim meet schedule on your calendar and plan your activities accordingly. Check with other families for favorite hotels and restaurants at away meets.

## What is a Swim Meet?

Competition is a means of personal development. Learning about and becoming comfortable in a competitive setting, trying racing strategies, managing stress and dealing with losing and winning all contribute to the development of your child. In a competition, swimmers from the same club, or from more than one club, gather together at the pool. They do what they have been doing in practice, except they go as fast as they can while applying their racing strategies. Competition is a way to measure success of training sessions, and it allows the swimmer to race the time clock, as well as their peers and/or swimmers outside their peer group.

There are different types of swim meets. Some meets are held at home, others require travel. Some are designed to let any swimmer race and others have qualifying times that the swimmer must achieve before being entered. All swimmers are governed by a set of technical rules regarding the starts, strokes, turns and takeovers, to ensure competition is fair to all. These technical rules are established by US Swimming and NC Swimming and are monitored/enforced by officials. To better understand how a swim meet works, you should familiarize yourself with the USA Swimming Rule Book (available at [www.usaswimming.org](http://www.usaswimming.org), under "about", and "Rules & Regulations").

## Age Groups and Time Standards

For the purposes of competition, swimmers are placed into age groups. Age groupings at SAC Development Meets are as follows: 8 & under; 10 & under; 11 & 12; 13 & 14; and 15 & over. At Championship Meets they are 11-12, 13-14, 15 & over.

Swimmers will usually compete within their own age grouping with two exceptions:

- In a relay 1 or 2 younger swimmers may move up an age-group in order to allow the club to enter a relay team.
- In individual events swimmers may “swim-up” an age-category if requested by the coach - they must then swim the entire meet in this age-group.

## Before The Competition

The coaches will determine which swimmers are to go to a competition, based on ability and/or qualifying times. Once entries are confirmed, the information is e-mailed to the hosting club. You will be responsible for meet entry fees according to the number of events your swimmer is entered into. Entry fees are non-refundable. Meet information sheets with entry fees, as well as other information such as directions, parking fees (if applicable), and often hotel and restaurant information, is available on our website.

## Traveling To Meets

Directions to each meet will be posted on the SAC website prior to the meets. Nutrition And Rest in any sport, good nutrition plays a key role in athletic success. Discuss concerns regarding your swimmer’s nutrition with the coach. Placing a little more emphasis on the number of carbohydrates eaten each day will help keep your child healthy and full of energy. Swimmers should eat 4-6 times per day to balance and replenish their carbohydrate store. Ensure your child starts off their day with a good breakfast, particularly after morning practices. A small healthy snack is important for your swimmer to eat before and after training, helps them during the work out, as well as after, when their energy is low. Swimmers should drink water during the day and during the training session to prevent dehydration. Consumption of 8-10 glasses of water per day is necessary for athletes to keep cellular processes functioning properly.

At swim meets, swimmers should drink more water than usual and eat 'smart' snacks like fruit, crackers, etc. Stay away from high fat/high sugar snacks (i.e. nuts, junk food, candy, cheeses) during a competition. You need to provide the right fuel for racing. Eating out at restaurants is often part of traveling. Educate your swimmer on the right foods to order, such as pasta, chicken, salads, etc. Even in fast food restaurants, good choices can be made.

Rest is important to your child's performance as well, so ensure your child is getting to bed at a reasonable hour.

## THE STROKES

If you are a "swimming parent", your best way to become familiar with the rules is to turn out for an "Official's Clinic". Such clinics, which are usually friendly get-togethers where you can meet the other parents in the club, will take you by easy stages through Timekeeping, Stroke & Turn Judging and other areas of swim-meet officiating.

The four competitive swimming strokes are freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke and butterfly. Your swimmer will learn all four strokes as he/she progresses through the program. They will begin with instruction that is practiced over small distances. As their skill level increases, so will distances and endurance. Each of the strokes are combined into the following race events:

### **FREESTYLE (Free)**

The swimmer may swim any stroke he/she wishes. The usual stroke is the front crawl. This stroke is characterized by alternate overhead motion of the arms and an alternating up and down flutter kick. The freestyle is swum over 50, 100, 200, 400, 800, and 1500 meter distances.

The Freestyle portion of an Individual Medley or Medley Relay means Front Crawl, so the stroke must be swum on the breast using alternating arm motions and alternating vertical motions of the feet.

### **BACKSTROKE (Back)**

The swimmer must stay on their back. The stroke is an alternating motion of the arms. At each turn the swimmer must touch the wall with some part of their body. After the turn, the swimmer pushes off the wall on their back. Swimmers must surface within 15 meters after the start of the race and after each turn. Backstroke race distances are 50, 100, and 200 meters.

### **BREASTSTROKE (Breast)**

Perhaps one of the most difficult strokes to master, the breaststroke requires simultaneous movement of the arms on the same horizontal plane. The hands are pushed forward from the breast, on or under the surface of the water and brought backward in the propulsive stage of the stroke, simultaneously. The kick is a synchronous thrust of the legs called a "frog" or breaststroke kick. At each turn a simultaneous, but uneven, touch is permitted. Any competitor who, on his approach to a turn or finish allows his shoulders to leave the horizontal plane before touching the wall with his hands shall be disqualified. Breaststroke race distances are 50, 100, and 200 meters.

## **BUTTERFLY (Fly)**

This is the most beautiful and physically demanding stroke. The butterfly features the simultaneous overhead stroke of the arms combined with the dolphin kick. In the dolphin kick both legs move up and down together. Swimmers must surface within 15 meters after the start and after each turn. Learning the timing is the most difficult part of this stroke. The butterfly is swum in 50, 100, and 200 meter distances.

## **INDIVIDUAL MEDLEY**

Usually called simply "IM", the Individual Medley, as its name implies, is a medley of the four strokes already discussed, performed by an individual. The swimmer swims Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke, and Freestyle for each quarter of the distance. Note that Freestyle in an Individual Medley (and in a Medley Relay) means Front Crawl, a stroke swam on the breast using alternating arm motions and alternating vertical motions of the feet. The strokes must be done in the order stated above and each part of the race, right up to the touching of the wall, must be done according to the rules of the separate strokes. The most common IMs are for 200 and 400 yards/meters, but for the younger age-groups, and novice swimmers in general, the 100 IM is sometimes swam in short-course pools (one length of each stroke). The order is Fly, Back, Breast, and Free.

## RELAYS

There are Freestyle Relays and Medley Relays. In each case each team consists of four swimmers, each swimming one quarter of the distance continuously. (It is not permitted to have a team of just three swimmers, for example, with one swimmer swimming two legs of the race).

In a Freestyle Relay each swimmer may swim any stroke or any combination of strokes - just as in a Freestyle event. In a Medley Relay each of the four swims a different stroke. The Backstroker, who swims first, starts in the water as he would for any backstroke event. The Breaststroker swims next, starting from a dive; then the Butterflyer and finally the Freestyler. (The order is Back, Breast, Fly, Free) When one swimmer is finishing his leg of the relay, the next swimmer must remain in contact (with his toes at least) with the front edge of the starting platform until the incoming swimmer touches the end wall. The swimmer taking over may be "winding up" or in the process of diving as long as he is still touching the block when the incoming swimmer touches the wall. Relay swimmers must swim in the order the names appear on the entries (card or sheet).

Obviously, if any one of the team members is disqualified because of his actions in the race, the entire team is disqualified.

## Starts and Turns

Many races are won or lost in starts and turns. In the start, the swimmer is called to the starting position by the Starter who visually checks that all swimmers are still. Then, once the Starter is satisfied, the race is started by either a gun or electronic tone.

Quick turns are essential to a good race. In all events the swimmer must touch the wall, but in the Freestyle and Backstroke the swimmer may somersault as he or she reaches the wall, touching only with the feet. In the other two competitive strokes, the swimmer must touch the wall with both hands before executing the turn.

## Split Times

Of interest is the rule that allows the time of any portion of a race that begins with the starter's signal to be accepted for official purposes (for records, Time Standard Awards, meet entry times, etc.). In individual events, for example, this means that in, say, a 1500 meter race, an official time taken at the 800 meter point can count. The split times must be requested prior to starting the race and the swimmer must complete the entire event with a time equal to or better than the meet qualifying time. If he/she does not, then the split time is not a legal time. In relay events, the time of the lead-off swimmer can be a legal entry time and will appear in the meet results.

## HOW TO WATCH A SWIM MEET

### The Racing Course

The length of a short course racing pool is 25 yards and of a long course racing pool is 50 meters. The pool has 6, 8 or 10 lanes and each lane is approximately 2.5 meters wide.

### The Meet

Swimmers are allowed to enter a specific number of events, which varies with the meet. Generally the meet package will indicate the following: one-day, one-session = 3 individual events, plus relays; two-day, 3 session meet = 2 individual events per session, plus relays; 2 ½ -3 day meet = 6 individual events, plus relays. Some variation may occur.

Officials are present at all competitions to monitor the technical rules of swimming and to ensure that the competition is fair and equitable. As part of their training, officials attend clinics, pass a written test, and work at meets before being certified.

A swimmer may be disqualified after a race. Disqualification is meant to point out parts of the swimmer's stroke that need to be corrected. Although your swimmer may be very disappointed, it is to be treated as a learning experience. The rules require that reasonable effort be made to notify the swimmer or his coach of the reason for disqualification. The decision of the officials is final as far as the swimmer is concerned; however, the Coach may question the decision, if he/she feels it is warranted. Parents or swimmers should NOT question the decisions of officials, leave this to the coach.

### Seeding and Lane Assignments

Normally, the competitor with the fastest qualifying time or submitted time - shall be seeded in the center lane of any pool with an odd number of working lanes, or in the lane immediately to the right of center, facing the course, in pools with an even number of lanes. The second fastest competitor shall be placed in the lane immediately to the left of the fastest, the third fastest on the first's right, and so on alternately from left to right working outward. (i.e. in a six lane pool, the fastest swimmer in the heat is in lane 3; in an eight lane pool, lane 4).

The intent of this rule is to seed no swimmer more than one-half the pool width away from the fastest swimmer entered in the heat.

## **Preliminaries and Finals**

While some meets are simply “timed finals”, other meets have preliminary sessions. All swimmers are competing against each other for the top 16-24 positions. These swimmers will advance to the “finals” session, normally in the afternoon or evening. It is important to take note of the North Carolina Scratch Rule as announced in the preliminary session. Basically, if your swimmer has qualified to advance to the finals, they have 30 minutes after the preliminary event is scored and posted to declare their intentions if they do not wish to swim in the final session. Failure to show up after being seeded in the finals may result in your swimmer being disqualified from the remainder of the meet. If you have any questions about this procedure, please speak to your coach PRIOR to the meet.

## BASIC OFFICIATING AT SWIM MEETS

A successful swim meet in a six to eight lane pool requires at least 8 officials. While a meet can be conducted with fewer officials, they will usually have a larger task load. Swimming officials are all volunteers. They are usually parents, grandparents and/or friends of swimmers, or of former swimmers, but basically they are just people who enjoy being involved in the sport. Besides officiating at swim meets, their involvement includes taking clinics and workshops to improve their officiating skills as well as conducting clinics to help others become better officials. To become an official, you need to attend a clinic, often presented at swim meets, to learn the basics of officiating. You will then be in an apprenticeship program where a qualified official will work with you at an actual meet on the pool deck. After a few of these apprenticeship sessions, you will be evaluated and recommended by a referee prior to becoming a certified USAS Official. All officials must be “non-athlete” members of USA Swimming and must undergo an annual background check, as well as annual Athlete Protection Training. All registration fees and background check fees for our club’s officials are paid by SAC. If you are interested in joining our team of seasoned officials, please contact the Head Coach, a Board member, or any of our officials.

**Meet Manager:** responsible for pre-meet, meet and post-meet organization and operations.

**Referee:** chief official over all others during the meet, ensures fairness and makes decisions during the session.

**Starter:** starts each race with gun or horn, making sure each start is fair.

**Chief Finish Judge:** determines final time of each competitor and compiles the order of finish of a race.

**Chief Judge Electronics:** supervises results coming from an electronic timing and judging machine.

**Chief Timekeeper:** responsible for all Timekeepers and watches; takes time of winner in heat.

**Clerk of Course:** checks in swimmers and directs them to proper heats and lanes; maintains quiet and order on the pool deck; usually has one or two Marshals to assist him/her; may seed or reseed heats on deck.

**Computer Operator:** Operates the computer timing system and validates swimmers’ times using HY-TEK Meet Manager Software.

**Marshal:** assists the Clerk of Course in maintaining order on deck and directs the swimmers to their proper heats and lanes

**Stroke Judge:** on each side of pool, watches correctness of strokes to ensure that no swimmer gets an unfair advantage.

**Turn Judge:** watch correctness of turns at both ends of the pool.

**Recorder/Scorer:** usually in a separate room; records the results and keep scores for awards.

**Timekeeper:** takes times of swimmers in each race and marks times on swimmer's entry card (standards require two timers per lane for most events. Usually the electronic timing system is used as the primary record and two Parent volunteers provide positive backup to this system. There is also a "Head Timer" to oversee and assist all timekeepers.

**Timekeepers' Sheet:** Written log of times corresponding to event and swimmer.

***Prior to every swim meet, the basic responsibilities of the officials are reviewed by the Referee. The Chief Timekeeper talks to the Timekeepers; the Chief Finish Judge to the Finish Judges; and the Clerk of Course to the Marshals. (pre-meet briefings)***

## Your Swimmer's Coach

The coach is your first level of communication in the club. Any questions or concerns should be directed to your swimmer's coach. The coach will direct you to the appropriate person if need be.

The best time to talk with the coach is after practice. Parents should not try to discuss matters with the coach on the pool deck during practice or competition. If there is a problem or concern that does not get resolved through your swimmer's coach, you should approach the Head Coach or a Board Member. Please remember nothing can be done about a problem not discussed, and that a problem will remain your own until it is dealt with. Remember, when parents interfere with training and competing, it causes considerable confusion as to who the swimmer should respect and listen to regarding their swimming. Periodically, come to a practice and watch what your swimmer is doing. Please approach your swimmer's coach with any questions or concerns you may have.

### Swimmer Advancement

Swimmers advance through the program based on subjective and objective criteria, which is available from your coach. Swimmers will advance through the competitive program when they achieve specified criteria. Promotion is based on both subjective criteria (commitment to program, emotional/social readiness and performance) and objective criteria (mastery of skills), as well as the availability of room in the next level of the program. Your swimmer's coach will make a recommendation for advancement. It will be reviewed by the coaching staff and finalized by the Head Coach. The parents will be consulted prior to informing the swimmer. When a swimmer moves to a new group, parents will be advised of the new monthly training fees, changes to fundraising commitments and the new training schedule.

### Swimming and School

School and swimming work together and swimmers often improve scholastically. Their swimming schedule will challenge them to be organized. Parents and coaches must help in this respect. This requires communication between all three parties. Increases in training, social events, competitions, and academic expectations come with responsibilities. Initially, the athlete will not handle these without error, but with encouragement, and initiative delegated to your swimmer, success will be realized. Blaming missed assignments and poor grades on swimming schedules is not acceptable. Swimmers are expected to plan ahead and ensure that work is up to date; that studying for exams starts well ahead of the exam date; and that teachers know well in advance the days that will be missed because of swim meets. Swimming and school sports can work together. Feel free to discuss your swimmer's involvement in school sports with his/her coach.

### Discipline

A disruptive swimmer takes the coach's time away from other dedicated swimmers. Excessive misbehavior on the part of a swimmer may result in disciplinary action. The coach will warn the swimmer and they may be asked to leave the practice if they disregard the warning. Parents will be informed if a swimmer is asked to leave a practice. If the behavior continues, the dismissal may involve more than one practice.

## **CLUB OBJECTIVES/STRUCTURE**

Every club will have its own objectives, but generally they are similar to these:

To provide a speed-swimming program of developmental training which will enable every swimmer in the Club to develop to the full extent of his or her level of interest, commitment and ability.

To promote the amateur sport of competitive swimming through the co-operation of North Carolina and US Swimming.

To promote good sportsmanship, leadership and character.

### **Club Structure**

Our Swimming Club is a non-profit organizations operated under the direction of a parent run board. Our club program is directed by the Head Coach. The Head Coach is responsible for guiding the professional coaching staff. Administration, policy and operational activities supporting the programs are planned and carried out under the direction of the Board President and the committees.

The ongoing success of our Club depends on the teamwork, dedication and efforts of all involved. SAC is identified with our own team colors and club logo. Swimmers are usually expected to wear team clothing and colors when representing their club. This builds team spirit and makes swimmers proud of the club they are associated with. Parents are invited to participate as well.

## Governing Bodies

The Sharks Aquatics Club is a parent run and professionally coached competitive swim team swimming out of pools in both Kings Mountain and Shelby North Carolina. The certified coaching staff strives to provide each swimmer with direction, technical adjustments, goal setting, discipline, and a positive learning experience. Our swimmers compete locally, regionally, and nationally.

Our Board and Officers, as well as our Committee Chairmen, are listed on our website.

The Sharks Aquatics Club (SAC) is a not-for profit corporation. Members are parents or guardians of any member of the Sharks Aquatics Club swim team. Parents, as members of SAC, are responsible for funding the operation of the swim team. Major sources of revenue include monthly dues, profits from meets that SAC hosts, and various fundraising activities. The most significant fundraising activity in recent years has been obtaining sponsorships/contributions from businesses and families for the swim meets that we host. As members, with the responsibility of funding team operations, each family is expected to 1) adhere to established policies regarding payment of dues and fees, 2) volunteer time in support of team activities and meets (ex: timing, hospitality, sales, office operations, officiating, etc), 3) solicit sponsorships /contributions for meets that SAC hosts, and 4) offer other support that may from time to time be needed by SAC. These opportunities will count toward your annual service hour commitments.

## Financial Responsibilities

The annual registration fee charged by SAC includes membership with USA Swimming, membership with North Carolina Swimming, and insurance that covers your swimmer at both practice and meets. The SAC Board of Directors will establish the annual registration fee amount based upon the cost of items covered with the registration. Annual registrations occur in August or September. SAC expects all registrations to be completed before the end of September so that USA Swimming and North Carolina Swimming registration processes can be completed so that new swimmers can begin competing in meets. Swimmers are not eligible to swim in meets without these memberships. ***Also, please note that meet entry fees are separate and not included in SAC membership.***

Family Discounts – All monthly dues are “per swimmer”. A discount is given if there is more than one swimmer per family. There is a 5% discount per month for families with multiple swimmers. This is for dues only.

Billing is handled electronically through our website with automatic drafting from your credit card, debit card, or checking account. For obvious reasons, please do not give monthly payments to coaches. Billing questions should be directed to the Treasurers. Contact information available on our website.

Leaving SAC – Through the registration process, you committed to SAC through August 31st. However, we recognize that circumstances arise that may require you to leave SAC. If this occurs, you must notify the Head coach and the team treasurer in writing giving at least a 30 day notice. Email is the best way to handle this notification. Dues will be assessed through the month in which the 30 day notice expires. There will be no prorating of dues for partial months. (Example: If you give notice to the head coach/team treasurer on December 15th that you are leaving SAC, dues will be assessed through January as the 30 day notice would expire on January 14th). In making a decision to leave SAC, it is strongly encouraged that you speak with your swimmer’s coach or the head coach regarding the circumstances.

Leaving SAC is not encouraged for temporary or short-term absences as there is a \$50.00 re-entry fee during the September 1st – August 31st commitment period.

Financial Hardships and Medical Circumstances – You are encouraged to speak with the head coach, Treasurers, or President if there are extreme financial hardships or medical circumstances that may prevent your swimmer from swimming for an extended period of time. Limited financial assistance may be available and awarded each year. In the event of such extreme circumstances, the Board will consider making exceptions to the above policies. This will be done on a case by case basis.

With participation from everyone, SAC will remain financially sound.

## GLOSSARY OF SWIMMING TERMS

**Age Group Swimming:** nationally recognized age groups are 10 and under, 11-12, 13-14, and 15 and over.

**"A" time:** time required to compete in our Short Course Championship. Third USSA motivational swim time.

**Billeting:** accommodation for swimmers away from home. Swimmers stay at the home of another swim family when they travel to a meet in another city.

**Block:** the starting platform for the beginning of a race.

**"B" time:** First USSA motivational time.

**Chaperone:** a swim parent who accompanies the team from the point of departure to point of return, on out of town swim meets. USA Swimming requires that any chaperone must be a member of USA Swimming and successfully pass a USA Swimming-administered criminal background check.

**Consolation Final:** in a meet with finals, after the top 6-8 swimmers (depends on number of racing lanes) have been selected for the Final, the next 6-8 will race in the Consolation Final or the "B" Final.

**Cut:** slang for a qualifying time. It refers to a time standard required for a swimmer to attend a particular meet or event.

**Deck Entry:** when the number of athletes in an Heat is less than the number of lanes in the pool, a coach may request to enter a swimmer in the Event. The swimmer is referred to as a "Deck Entry".

**Disqualified or "DQ":** occurs when a swimmer has committed an infraction of some kind as determined by an official.

**Distance:** refers to events over 400 meters.

**Double A:** AA time. Fourth USSA motivational time.

**Double B:** BB time. Second USSA motivational time.

**Drill:** an exercise involving a portion or part of a stroke used in training to improve technique.

**Dry Land Training:** training done out of the water that aids and enhances swimming performance. Dry land training usually includes stretching, calisthenics, and/or weight training.

**DQ:** slang for Disqualified

**Event:** specific races in which an athlete may enter. Each group of athletes that race against each other is referred to as a Heat. Generally the number of Heats within an Event can be calculated by dividing the number of swim lanes into the number of athletes, plus one more for any remainder.

**False Start:** when a swimmer is moving at the start of the race, before the gun/electric tone sounds (cause for disqualification). A repeated electronic tone, gun, or whistle sound will let the swimmers know there has been a false start.

**FINA:** Federation International Aquatique is the world governing body for swimming.

**Final:** the championship of any event in which the top 6 or 8 swimmers (depending on the number of lanes in the pool) from the preliminaries compete. These are generally held in the evening and will determine awards and team points.

**Flags:** Backstroke flags are placed 5 meters from each end of the pool. They enable swimmers to execute a turn more efficiently by indicating the closeness of the approaching wall. From the flags, experienced swimmers know how many strokes it takes them to get to the wall and thus when to turn.

**Goal:** a specific time, strategy or tactical achievement a swimmer sets and strives for.

**Individual Medley:** an event in which the swimmer swims all four strokes in the following order: fly, back, breast, free.

**Heat:** Each group of athletes that compete within an Event make up a Heat.

**IM:** slang for Individual Medley

**Long Course:** refers to the pool length and the season. The Long Course season usually runs from March to August and competitions are held in a 50 meter pool.

**Marshalling Area:** used at a swim meet for organizational purpose. It is the area where swimmers must report prior to racing.

**Meet Fees:** a meet fee applies to each event at a swim meet (usually \$5 or \$6). There may also be a general fee or surcharge for each swimmer entered in the meet. All fees are outlined on meet information sheets.

**Middle Distance:** refers to events of 200 to 400 meters in length.

**Negative Split:** swimming the second half of the race equal to or faster than the first half.

**Official:** A judge on the deck of the pool at a sanctioned meet. They include Stroke and Turn Judges, Administrative Officials, Starters, Timekeepers and Referees. They can be identified by blue slacks or shorts and a white polo shirt. All officials are certified by USA Swimming and undergo criminal background checks, as well as recurrent Athlete Protection Training.

**Pace Clock:** Large clock with a large second hand and a smaller minute hand, used to check pace or maintain intervals in practice (may also be digital).

**Prelims:** slang for Preliminaries

**Preliminaries:** in these races swimmers are trying to qualify for the championship and consolation finals in an event.

**Quad A:** AAAA time: Fastest USSA motivational time.

**Racing Suit:** the team suit worn at swim meets. These are sized to fit snugly so they do not gap or sag during the race. Check with your coach for proper sizing.

**Relay:** event in which four swimmers compete together as a team. Sanction: clubs must receive a permit from North Carolina Swimming in order to host a swim meet.

**Scratch:** to withdraw a swimmer from an event in a competition.

**Seeding:** the heat and lane position given to a swimmer based on their entry time.

**Senior Swimming:** there are no age categories in Senior Competitions. It is designed to afford maximum opportunity for participation, provide an educational experience, enhance physical and mental conditioning and develop a pool of talented athletes for National and International Competition.

**Shaving Down:** where a swimmer shaves off all the body hair to reduce drag and increase sensitivity to the water. Usually done after a taper, before a major competition.

**Short Course:** refers to the pool length and season. The short course season runs from September to March and competitions are held in a 25 yard pool.

**Split:** is a swimmer's intermediate time in a race. Splits are used to determine if a swimmer is on pace. Under certain conditions, splits may also be used as official times. In a relay, a split would be the time for only the first of the four swimmers.

**Sprint:** refers to the shorter events (50 and 100 yards/meters). It also refers, in training, to swimming as fast as possible for a short distance.

**Stop watches:** accurate watches (usually electronic) are used to time swimmers during a competition. When automatic timing equipment is used, stop watches serve as a backup.

**Streamline:** the position used to gain maximum distance during a start and/or push-off from the wall in which the swimmer's body is as tight (with arms forward of head) and long as it can be.

**Taper:** the final preparation phase before competition. Characterized by a reduction in the yardage swum in practice and the intensity of the training sessions.

**Time Standards:** each provincial regulatory board establishes time standards used to determine a swimmer's relative performance . These determine which meets each swimmer is eligible to attend.

**Time Trial:** a "time only" swim that is not part of a regular meet. A swimmer is racing to achieve a certain qualifying time. It cannot be used to establish records.

**Touch Pad:** a large sensitive board at the end of each lane where a swimmer's touch is registered and sent electronically to the timing system.

**Triple A:** AAA time: Fifth USSA motivational time.

**Warm Down:** is a low intensity swim used by a swimmer after the race or main practice set. A warm down rids the body of excess lactic acid and gradually reduces heart and respiration rates.

**Warm Up:** is low intensity swimming used by a swimmer prior to a race or main practice to get muscles loose and warm. A warm up gradually increases heart and respiration rates and may include some short sprints.

