**Frequently Asked Questions**

Below are frequently asked questions and quick facts about our team's operations and other swimming related information.  Click on the subject heading to be taken to that section.

[**Information About Joining LIFE!**](https://www.teamunify.com/TabGenericEdit.do?act=edit&id=7705081&page=235407&_stabid_=135407&returnPage=%2FSubTabGeneric.jsp%3F_stabid_%3D135407&team=gulthst#how%20too)

How do I sign up / register for LIFE?

What is the purpose of a swim evaluation?

How is a swimmer placed in a practice group?

What are the payment methods accepted by LIFE?

How do I know what training equipment my child needs?

Where can I get caps, goggle and other equipment?

My child participates in other activities as well as swimming.  Is that allowed?

What if I want to take a month off?

What organizations govern / regulate LIFE?

[**How To Sign Up For A Meet**](https://www.teamunify.com/TabGenericEdit.do?act=edit&id=7705081&page=235407&_stabid_=135407&returnPage=%2FSubTabGeneric.jsp%3F_stabid_%3D135407&team=gulthst#How%20to%20sign%20up%20for%20meet)

Are swim meets required?

Where do I find information on upcoming swim meets that my child may be eligible to enter?

When are the meets held and how long do they last?

How much does it cost to enter a meet?

How do I sign up for meets?

How do I know which events to sign up for?

How do I pay for the events we sign up for?

What if I miss the deadline to register online for a meet?

Can I use summer league times when I enter a meet?

[**What To Expect At A Swim Meet**](https://www.teamunify.com/TabGenericEdit.do?act=edit&id=7705081&page=235407&_stabid_=135407&returnPage=%2FSubTabGeneric.jsp%3F_stabid_%3D135407&team=gulthst#Expect%20at%20meet)

What sort of items should I bring to a meet?

What are some tips for a trouble free swim meet?

Where do my seed times come from that are in the heat sheet?

[**Online Account Information**](https://www.teamunify.com/TabGenericEdit.do?act=edit&id=7705081&page=235407&_stabid_=135407&returnPage=%2FSubTabGeneric.jsp%3F_stabid_%3D135407&team=gulthst#account%20info)

I forgot my password!  What do I do?

Can I change my password?

How can I change my email address or other contact information?

Why require username/password to use the LIFE! website?

Do I need a username/password for each family member?

Sometimes, some of the choices on the top navigation bar of the website are missing.  How do I see them?

[**Swimmer Lingo**](https://www.teamunify.com/TabGenericEdit.do?act=edit&id=7705081&page=235407&_stabid_=135407&returnPage=%2FSubTabGeneric.jsp%3F_stabid_%3D135407&team=gulthst#swimmer%20lingo)

Unattached Swimmer

Time Standards

Elite Meet

TAGS

Short Course

Long Course

Seed Time

**How do I sign up/ Register for LIFE?**

By looking through the information on this website you have already taken the first step – getting to know the team.

Next, we encourage all prospective members to drop by the pool to observe a practice and meet our coaching staff.  Please check our pool locations and times since we use six different pools during the week.

For age group swimming, you can also use this visit to get a swim evaluation to determine the group most appropriate for you.

For the Lesson Programs, you can find out any available class times by speaking with one of our DH’s.

If you like what you see, then register in one of Aquatics Offices at one of the locations. All forms are going to be located in the offices.

**What is the purpose of a swim evaluation?**

In order to place your swimmer in the best group to allow your swimmer to fully develop in technique and endurance, we ask that each swimmer being placed in a group, demonstrate their current swimming ability.  This is not a “try-out” for the team as we have groups to meet all levels of swimming, from introduction (Lessons) on up to Elite level preparing swimmers for High School & Div I College programs.

**How is a swimmer placed in a practice group?**

LIFE coaches assign each swimmer to one of the practice groups based on a number of criteria.  The criteria used during initial swimmer evaluations for joining LIFE and swimmers moving from one group to another may differ.  The following criteria are used to help the coaches in placements.

•Technique - A swimmer’s level of proficiency in his/her stroke technique is one of the most important considerations during initial evaluation.  Coaches look for this more than other criteria while evaluating a new swimmer.

•Age - Age is important, but it is not an overriding factor in the placement of the swimmer to a group.

•Ability to Train – The ability to train consistently is an important consideration. The swimmers ability to hold intervals, and handle the training load of the group.

•Performance Level – While a swimmers performance at meets is important and helps track the progress of the swimmer this is not a primary consideration for assigning a swimmer to a new group.

•Attendance – Attendance is very important in considering a swimmer for a group.  The swimmer's ability to attend practices and handle the level of dedication required to meet the criteria of that particular group will be taken into consideration.  This includes attendance at both practice and meets.

•Attitude – Attitude is also very important when considering a swimmer for a new group.  Do they enjoy practice?  Do they want to be there?  Do they show respect to their peers/teammates and coaches?

•Sportsmanship – Are they gracious in winning and losing?  Are they courteous to others during practice?  Can he/she handle the ups and downs, setbacks?  Do they respect fellow swimmers for their accomplishments?

•Maturity – Maturity level in a group is also important.  A swimmer must be able to relate to his/her peers on most levels in all groups.  Mental and physical maturity is important.

**What are the payment methods accepted by LIFE?**

EFT will be the only method of payment accepted by LIFE for monthly fees.

•Payments will be automatically deducted each month on or about the 1st of the month.

•Credit card payments can be accepted at this time.

EFT will mean that you have one less thing to remember each month. This form of payment will also increase accuracy and improve handling of the monthly payments of 100+ swimmers per month.

**How do I know what training equipment my child needs?**

You can get a list of the equipment your swimmer will need by accessing our Documents section in our website.  Since not all equipment is necessary at the first practice, we encourage you to please talk with your coach to determine what specifically is needed and when.

**Where can I get caps, goggle and other equipment?**

You can purchase LIFE swim caps from our team store.  During the year we will also take orders for LIFE shirts, logo merchandise.

Practice equipment (suits, goggles, fins etc) can be purchased from any of the swim shops in the Houston area (D&J Sports, Swim Shops of the Southwest or A-Gleam) or through Swim Team Store who we have everything set up with. You also have a built in discount through Swim Team Store.  Please check with you coach before you purchase any specific training equipment.

**My child participates in other activities as well as swimming.  Is that allowed?**

While required attendance is not the only factor to move up, the more you participate the faster the improvement.  With that said, we also feel that participation in other activities outside of swimming prepares a swimmer to be balanced and well rounded going into adulthood.  While swimming is a favorite activity of LTST members, you will find a lot of LTST swimmers also participate in football, baseball, basketball, tennis, band, water polo, golf as well as a number of other sports and non-sport related activities throughout their training week.

**What if I want to take a month off?**

If you would like to suspend from swimming for a month or more, please fill out the Withdrawal and Reactivation form found in our Aquatics Office.  The form must be turned in on the 1st of the previous month and will become effective on the 1st of the following month (30 day cancelation).  If you know when your swimmer will be returning you can fill out the bottom portion of the form.  There are not additional fees for returning to the team as long as the reactivation is done during the current swim season.  The form can be turned in to any DH in the office.

**What organizations govern / regulate LIFE!?**

As a member of USA Swimming, LIFE is governed by USA Swimming at the national level and by Gulf Swimming at the regional level.

USA Swimming  is the national governing body for the sport of swimming in the United States.  USA Swimming is a 300,000-member service organization that promotes the culture of swimming by creating opportunities for swimmers and coaches of all backgrounds to participate and advance in the sport through clubs, events and education.

USA Swimming membership is comprised of swimmers from the age group level to the Olympic Team, as well as coaches and volunteers.  USA Swimming is responsible for selecting and training teams for international competition including the Olympic Games and strives to serve the sport through its core objectives: Build the base, Promote the sport, Achieve competitive success.

Gulf Swimming serves as the Local Swimming Committee (LSC) and is an administrative division of USA Swimming with certain governing and supervisory responsibilities within the geographic boundaries designated by USA Swimming.  Each LSC shall have jurisdiction over the sport of swimming as delegated to it in the USA Swimming Rules and Regulations to conduct swimming programs consistent with the policies and procedures of USA Swimming and to sanction, approve, observe, oversee and conduct on behalf of USA Swimming competitive swimming events within the LSC boundaries.

**How To Sign Up For A Meet**

**Are swim meets required?**

While swim meets are not a requirement at LIFE, they are strongly encouraged.  Competitive groups will be strongly encouraged to attend as many meets as possible especially at the end of the season when all the champs’ meets occur.  Swim meets are a great opportunity where you get to know the swimmer's abilities in competition and also get to know other swim families from other groups in LIFE.  Athletes will stay committed to the sport when they are given the opportunity to showcase their developing skills.  Would you have your baseball player, football player or soccer player go to practice but never to a game?

**Where do I find information on upcoming swim meets that my child may be eligible to enter?**

There are two places you can find meet information.

1. on our web page under Meets/Events – the easiest / preferred method

2. On the Gulf Swimming website (www.gulfswimming.org) under Meets

You will also receive information from the team's Meet Entry Chair on upcoming meets the team will be attending as those meets get nearer.  You can also email LIFE/ Team Unify for additional questions regarding meets.

**When are the meets held and how long do they last?**

Meets usually are held over a Fri-Sun, but the actual days and time you are there depends on the events you sign your swimmer up for.  A large majority of meets that LIFE attends are held in the Houston and surrounding area (Harris County, Fort Bend County & Montgomery County).  In the past we have attended one or two meets away from Houston (College Station, Lufkin, Dallas, Austin) but like all meets, these travel meets are optional for swimmers to participate.

**How much does it cost to enter a meet?**

Typical costs for a Gulf hosted meet can run from $5.00 to $10.00 per individual event if you enter during the sign up period.  If you wait until the day of the meet and enter "on deck" you will be charged double.  If the meet has relays and the team has enough swimmers available for relays, the team will pay all fees related to those relays.  Fees are typically higher for championship meets (TAGS, Nationals, etc.).

**How do I sign up for meets?**

Meet sign-up or meet registration is handled online through our website.  You can also contact the LIFE through Team Unify if you have any questions on registering for a meet.

**How do I know which events to sign up for?**

You generally want to select events that have strokes that your swimmer enjoys and is legal in.  Eventually you want your swimmer to try all the different strokes and distances related to those strokes.  If you are unsure on what events your swimmer should swim then talk to your swimmer's coach for guidance.

**How do I pay for the events we sign up for?**

Once you have entered the meet, LIFE will send a check to the Host Team for all registered events.  You will be billed for all events prior to the meet through your EFT.

**What if I miss the deadline to register online for a meet?**

You will still be able to register for a meet on the day of the meet itself.  This is referred to as an “ON DECK” entry.  Please be aware that On Deck entries are more expensive, as the entry fee is often twice as much as early registration.  You will also need to pay for the meet entry at the time of ON DECK registration, so please remember to bring your checkbook, USA athlete ID number and correct entry times.

**Can I use summer league times when I enter a meet?**

No, you can only use times from a sanctioned USA meet.  Most meets allow you to enter a meet without an entry time if you’ve never swum the event at a USA meet.  It’s referred to as entering with a "No Time" (NT).

**What To Expect At A Swim Meet**

**What sort of items should I bring to a Meet?**

1. Patience- you will be there awhile.

2. Swim suit, swim cap, and goggles- wear the swim suit.  The team requires that all swimmers wear a LTST swim cap during the meet.

3. Baby powder- to "dust" the inside of the swim cap.  This helps preserve the cap and makes it easier to put on.

4. Towels - realize the swimmer may be there awhile, so pack at least two or three.

5. Something to sit on.  Often, the swimmer’s area may be located in a gym or cafeteria.  Example: folding chairs, sleeping bag, old blanket, or anything comfortable to sit on.  The swimmer will be spending more time on it than in the water.

6. Sweat suits- each swimmer may want to bring two because they can get wet and soggy.

7. LIFE spirit shirts: Two or three. Same reason as above.

8. Games or a good book- travel games, coloring books, books, anything to pass the time.

9. Food- each swimmer is usually allowed to bring a small cooler.  It is better to bring snacks.  They usually have snack bars at the meet, but the lines are long and most of the time they only sell junk food.

**What are some tips for a trouble free swim meet?**

•GET THERE EARLY.  Find the LIFE sitting area if one is setup. The swimmer should check with the coach about warm-ups.  Lane assignments for warms-ups and times are listed for each team in the heat sheet.  Warm-up times are also available on the web a few days before the meet.

•ORIENT YOURSELF.  Determine where heat and lane assignments and meet results will be posted.  Parents will also have the option to buy a Heat Sheet (a meet program).

•SWIMMERS MUST CIRCLE-IN (check-in). If circle-in is required, you must make sure your swimmer is circled-in or they will be scratched from their events.  Look for lists of events divided by ages, boys, and girls.  You must circle-in 45 minutes before the start of the meet.  We strongly encourage that you circle-in all the events your swimmer signed up for as soon as you arrive at the pool.  Please arrive early enough to circle-in and change for warm ups.  Each swimmer needs to circle-in, don’t let someone else circle-in your swimmer.  Coaches will not be able to circle-in swimmers before any meet.  Before the meet begins, coaches are responsible for getting swimmers ready for warm-ups, setting up and entering relay teams, supervising the warm-up session and providing last minute feedback to swimmers.  If you are circled-in and miss an event, you will not only miss the event you will also be accessed a $5.00 fine from the Gulf for each “NO SHOW” (NS) during the meet.  Fines are paid by the parents of the swimmer and not the team.

•PAY ATTENTION.  Your swimmer must know his/her heat and lane assignments.  You must keep track of the progress of the meet in order to make sure your swimmer gets to their lane on time.  It is the swimmer’s responsibility to pay attention to the progress of the meet.  Listen and look for event numbers as they are called or posted.  The coach’s primary duty on deck is to observe swimmers in the pool and provide feedback before and after each heat.  Coaches will not be able to leave the deck to locate a swimmer before their events.

•SWIMMERS TALK TO THE COACH BEFORE AND AFTER THE EVENT.  Let the coach do the coaching!

•PARENTS ARE REQUIRED TO TIME.  At each meet that their swimmer participates in parents may be asked to time.  Each team is assigned a lane that requires them to provide timers for each event for the entire meet.  Check the heat sheet for timer lane assignments.  The best seat in the pool is the timer’s seat!

•MEET MOBILE RESULTS ARE UNOFFICIAL.  The only official time is the one off the meet results that are posted on the Gulf website and eventually posted on the team's website.

•RESPECT MEET OFFICIALS AND COACHES AT ALL TIMES.  The Meet Referee is in charge of the meet.  If there is a problem, talk to the coach, and he or she will speak with the officials.  Parents are not allowed on deck unless timing or working the swim meets—USA Swimming rule!

**Where do my seed times come from that are in the heat sheet?**

The team keeps a database of all times swam by each swimmer.  When the events you've chosen for a meet are entered into the computer it selects your best time for that stroke and distance to use as your seed time.

**Online Account Information**

**I forgot my password!  What do I do?**

On the "Sign-In" page, click the link and your password will be emailed to you.  Your password will be auto-emailed to the email address on file with your members-only account.

**Can I change my password?**

Yes, after you sign in, click on "Change Password" near the top-right corner of the home page.  Then type the new password and click submit.

**How can I change my email address or other contact information?**

After signing in, click on "My Account" and change your personal information.  Make sure to click "Save" at the bottom when you are done.

**Why require username/password to use the LIFE website?**

While the majority of our website is open, members-only login protects private information.  Each family’s username and password allows access to their specific family account.

**Do I need a username/password for each family member?**

No, membership is set up as ONE ACCOUNT PER FAMILY.  A family account can cover multiple swimmers in that family.

**Sometimes, some of the choices on the top navigation bar of the website are missing.  How do I see them?**

Some parts of the website are visible only after you sign-in.

**Swim Lingo**

Unattached Swimmer – No, this is not in reference to a swimmers marital status.  An unattached swimmer is a description based on USA swimming rules.  According to USA and Gulf Swimming requirements, if a swimmer switches from one USA Swimming club to another, he or she must enter meets as unattached for a period of 120 days since they last swam in a meet for their old club.  An unattached swimmer can still practice with their new team, but cannot represent the new team for the benefit of scoring points in a meet or on relay teams.  The main purpose of this rule is to prevent swimmers from switching clubs just before a critical meet so they can help the new team score points.

Time Standards – USA Swimming publishes time standards for boys and girls by age group that can be used as a scale to measure a swimmer’s level of achievement in each event.  They are, from slowest to fastest, B, BB, A, AA, AAA & AAAA.  Trying to reach the next level in a particular event can be motivational to swimmers.

Elite Meet – Meets are often restricted to swimmers above or below a certain time standard level to limit the number of entries.  For example, to enter an event at an Elite meet you must have at least 3 A times or better to enter that meet.  Other meets are limited by age to limit entries to a manageable number. (11 & Up, 10 & Under)

TAGS – (Texas Age Group Swimming) - The term is usually used to refer to the TAGS meet or its qualifying times ("TAGS times").  The Texas Swimming Association organizes two end-of-season TAGS Championship meets each year, one for short course in early March and the other for long course in late July.  These meets are the top championships for swimmers in the state that have not yet achieved a Jr. National qualifying time.  Time standards are published annually for the TAGS meets.  Swimmers must achieve the qualifying times for each event during the season in order to enter that event at TAGS.  The location of each meet varies.  Short Course TAGS meets have recently been held in Midland, Dallas and at Texas A&M.  Long Course TAGS meets are usually held at the University of Texas in Austin.

Short Course – (abbreviated SC) - refers to a competition organized in a pool of 25 meters (27.34 yd) in length, instead of a regular Olympic size pool of 50 meters (54.68 yd).

In the United States, the short course is more often 25 yards (22.86 m); the two are differentiated as SCY and SCM.  Records set in yards pools are American Records (if set by an American) or American Open Records (if set by someone of different citizenship).  NCAA championships are swum SCY, except in Olympic years, when metric courses are used.

Long Course – (abbreviated LC) An Olympic-size swimming pool is the type of swimming pool used in the Olympic Games, where the race course is 50 meters in length.  This is typically referred to as "long course", delineating it from "short course" which applies to competitions in pools that are either 25 meters or 25 yards in length.

Seed Time – this does not refer to how long farmers takes to plant seeds.  Seed times are usually a swimmers best time (in age) for a particular stroke.  These seed times are then used to assign swimmers to heats and lanes for a swimmer.