



**Parent & Swimmer
Handbook**

Gananda Racing Aquatic Team, Inc.

The Gananda Racing Aquatic Team (GRAT) is a competitive swim club consisting of swimmers of all ages. We are based in Walworth, New York and serve the Wayne County area. GRAT is the feeder program for the Gananda Modified/Varsity Swim programs, but is open to athletes outside the Gananda School District. We compete against other swim clubs in the local area and are a part of the Niagara Local Swimming Committee (LSC) (www.niagaraswim.org).

Mission Statement

The Gananda Racing Aquatic Team encourages growth and improvement in the sport of swimming through consistent practice, engaging the teaching of our coaches and belief in a positive, winning attitude. It is our belief that through these simple philosophies our team will win not just in water, but more importantly, win in life.

Philosophy

The Gananda Racing Aquatic Team is a USA Swimming team dedicated to educating and developing swimmers into the best that they can and want to be in the sport of swimming. In the process of doing so, we teach the athletes the life values of teamwork, sportsmanship, goals, respect, responsibility, hard work, dedication, and self-discipline through their experiences in practice and competition.

This team was created for the sole purpose of establishing a strong foundation of the skills and techniques required to succeed at both High School and College level swimming. We exist to aid in the growth, development and education of every team member.

Our goal is not to create elite athletes but maintain a strong focus on technical improvements and becoming “mindful” swimmers resulting in every individual on the team achieving personal success. Success for our team is not solely defined by faster times but by how thoughtful each athlete can be in practice and during competition.

Our goal is to foster a love of swimming through education and teaching healthy lifestyle choices to every individual whether their future includes laps for fitness as a lifetime swimmer or Olympic level competition.

Organization

GRAT is a non-profit organization with a coach run, Board assisted, swimming program. We operate via our by-laws and have an elected Board of Directors that meet monthly to manage the club’s operations. Most board meetings are open for those who wish to attend.

Our club is a small-size program of approximately 50 swimmers. This size enables us to conduct practices with adequate attention by the coaches. We are also large enough to

effectively run fundraising events to help to minimize membership cost. If membership grows to a level of pool crowding, we may temporarily restrict new membership.

Facilities

Our pool is located at the Richard Mann Elementary School, 1366 Waterford Road, Walworth, New York 14568. Having been built in 2002, our pool is a 25 yard, 6-lane pool with a diving area in the deep end. A complete locker room is located within the pool facility. GRAT has access to a 6-lane read out Colorado Timing System, as well as other equipment.

Practices

GRAT typically runs 2 to 3 sessions per year. Each session will last approximately 12 – 15 weeks and will consist of various practices running Monday – Friday evenings. Monthly schedules will be posted on the GRAT website.

At the beginning of each session, coaches will evaluate swimmers on various skills and divide them into groups by age/ability. Attendance is not mandatory, however, the GRAT coaching staff recommends 2 -3 practices per week for 10 year olds and under, and 3 -5 practices per week for swimmers 11 years old and older.

Swimmers should arrive about 10-15 minutes early for practice. Show respect to ALL of your teammates by refraining from making disrespectful remarks and playing in the locker rooms. Swimmers should arrive at practice with a filled water bottle and empty bladder.

Arrival and Departure

Parents are encouraged to assure that swimmers arrive on time for practice, in their suit and ready to swim. Swimmers must be picked up promptly at the end of each practice session. Coaches cannot leave until the last swimmer is picked up, so please be on time.

Swimmers are not allowed to leave the pool without a parent/guardian or MAAPP designated ride. Upon arrival, swimmers should be accompanied into the pool area in case the coaches are inadvertently delayed or practice is delayed because of school or other functions, unless swimmers have a means of contacting a parent/guardian or MAAPP designated ride. Occasionally we may have to cancel practice at the last minute due to pool conditions or other reasons. The coaches all feel a strong sense of responsibility for our swimmers, so please respect their need to get home to their own families. If mitigating circumstances prevail, updated procedures may be communicated via email and our various communication tools.

In the event that the coaching staff is late, athletes/parents must wait in the hallway outside the pool area. **No one is to be admitted into the pool area or the water without a member of the coaching staff or a lifeguard on duty!**

During Practice

Provided they are not disrupted during practice, and the pool facility has sufficient space, parents are allowed in the bleachers during practice. Due to USA Swimming regulations, and the safety of the swimmers, parents cannot be allowed on the pool deck. If there are any disruptions, coaches may ask the parents to clear the pool area.

Parents should NOT interrupt coaches during practice. Our coaches are generally available briefly before and after practice to discuss a swimmer's progress, etc. If a longer discussion is desired, coaches and/or Board members are available by appointment.

Snow Days and Other Cancellations

NO SCHOOL, NO POOL! – This only applies to closings, NOT staff development days, etc.

When the Gananda Schools are closed, or closed early for snow days, etc., there will be no practice.

GRAT has adopted the use of "[OnDeck \(Sports Engine\) App](#)" for mobile notifications. The mobile app is available in the Google Play Store and Apple App Store. Please see the Head Coach or a Board Member for details or assistance.

If we get advance notice of a pool problem or other reason for practice cancellation, a representative will send an email notification. Cancellation will also be posted on the calendar on our website (www.gratswimming.com). We encourage parents to sign up for push notifications via our OnDeck app. In the event of a practice/schedule change, we will send push notifications directly to your mobile device.

Meets

Western New York is home to many swim clubs who host numerous meets. At meets, swimmers compete by age group and are seeded by previous best times. Our coaching staff will decide which meets our team will attend. Information regarding these meets will be posted on the GRAT website event tab and on the team calendar as well as the OnDeck app. Athlete families will declare their intent to participate in each meet and will select which events the athletes would like to compete. Coaches will review these selections and make decisions on final meet entries.

Coaches may also assign participating swimmers to relay teams, if appropriate. Athletes are expected to participate in relay events if provided the opportunity.

Meets are NOT mandatory, however, they are a fun social event where team success is achieved and team spirit is built. Please visit our various digital platforms to view any changes to the meet schedule.

Meet Expectations

- If you are not a USA insured Coach, Official, or Athlete then you are not allowed on the deck with the exception of any volunteer position you may be filling to help run the meet (ex: timing).
- If our team has timing responsibilities, parents may be assigned to time if there are not enough volunteers.
- All swimmers should arrive at the meet 15 minutes prior to warm-ups and be ready to swim.
- Parents & Swimmers: **please notify the coaches if you will not willing or able to participate in any or all relays.** If you do not note that you will not be able to participate in any relays then the coaches will make up relay teams assuming that you are able to swim in any relays we wish to enter you into.
 - Sometimes there might not be enough swimmers to make a relay or your swimmer may be an alternate and may be put in a relay at the last minute, so, if you do want to participate in a relay and are not entered in one, be prepared to swim in one if the situation arises.
- All swimmers are required to remain in the team area throughout the meet. If you need to go anywhere you must notify a coach first.
- All sign-ups are final by the due date that is posted in the meet packet and in the e-mails sent to you.
- Payment for meets will automatically be charged to the family's credit card on file at the time the meet events are finalized. GRAT pays all entry fees in advance to the hosting team, so once the meet is finalized and entries are transmitted, **all meet fees are final and non-refundable.**
- All sign-ups are final by the due date that is posted in the meet packet and in the e-mails sent to you.
- After meets are complete, you can view the results in multiple locations including the OnDeck app, the Niagara LSC website, and our GRAT website under My Account> My Meet Results. Optionally, results can also be viewed real time via the "[Meet Mobile: Swim](#)" app by ACTIVE Network that is available via the Google Play Store and Apple App Store for a minimal annual fee.
- **Our team policy is that there will be no scratching of events (Prelims and/or Finals), except for extraordinary circumstances. In some cases, there may be a fine assessed for unauthorized scratches in accordance with the Niagara District Swimming Rules and Regulations.**

Seeding, Programs, Lane Assignments

Most large meets have several heats of each event. Entries are normally required well in advance to allow the host team to seed the meet, publish a program, and list lane assignments. Programs are published showing the order of events. Many swimmers will write their event #, heat #, and lane # on their hand to have easy access to this information. ***If we are asked by the hosting club to do lane timing, every swimmer's family must share in this duty. NO EXCEPTIONS!***

Short Course vs. Long Course

Short Course meets are swum in 25-yard pools and are generally shorter events. Long Course meets are swum in 50-meter pools. Each course has its own series of championship meets.

Swimmer Achievements

The GRAT coaching staff will track and recognize each individual's achievements. Some of these achievements will be in the form of best times, reaching personal goals, or mastering a new technique.

Coaches

All GRAT coaches are employed by the team and must meet all the stringent USA Swimming requirements. For additional details, please visit:

[Coaching Membership Requirements Checklist \(usaswimming.org\)](https://usaswimming.org)

GRAT also provides paid professional development opportunities for team coaches as applicable.

Cost

Dues are set each year by the Board of Directors based on attendance and various fees. Fees may vary from session to session and include the following:

- GRAT registration fee (Multi-child discount per family is available)
- Annual non-refundable USA Swimming Fee*
- Annual season administrative fee (calculated one per family account)
- All fees are non-refundable.

*USA Swimming fee is subject to yearly change by USA Swimming, Inc. We have no control over the cost.

Fundraising

Dues only pay a portion of GRAT operations. The rest is raised through various fundraisers, for example: Car Washes, Candy Sales, Spaghetti Dinner, etc. Team members are all **required** to participate in **every** fundraiser throughout the swim season, unless otherwise noted. A buyout may be offered **per** fundraiser.

Practice Wear

Girls must wear a proper fitting one-piece suit for practice and meets. Boys should wear a comfortable suit as well (jammers are recommended for competition). Swim caps are highly recommended. Any hair that is long enough to be tied back must either be tied back or contained under a swim cap. Goggles are **mandatory** for both boys and girls.

Team Wear

Swimmers are encouraged to purchase a team suit, cap and swim equipment (goggles, etc.). The typical expenditure is \$50 – \$100. GRAT apparel is available via our online team locker room at [Microsoft Word - TeamLockerRoomInst.docx \(teamunify.com\)](#)

Purchasing these items is completely *optional*, but fun to have while representing our team at meets.

Other GRAT Events

Gananda Racing Aquatic Team is a family-oriented organization, with strong friendships among swimmers, parents and coaches. We have several social events planned each year to promote team spirit and unity. For example: Pasta/Pizza dinners, fun meets, holiday celebrations, and Year End Awards Celebration. We welcome any additional team event ideas from our parents and swimmers. The more you become involved, the stronger we become as a swim family. Please share your ideas with us so we can continue to grow and thrive.