

COUGAR AQUATIC TEAM

POLICIES & PROCEDURES HANDBOOK



Updated February 2026

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WELCOME TO CAT

The History of CAT

The Cougar Aquatic Team (CAT) has a proud tradition of excellence that dates back to its founding in 1985. CAT is a year-round, USA Member Swim Club which offers professional coaching and instruction for swimmers of all ages and abilities.

The CAT Mission Statement

CAT's mission is to create a safe and supportive environment in which every athlete is provided with opportunity, training, and encouragement to reach their full potential as swimmers and individuals. Our coaches work with athletes to develop and maintain good sportsmanship, physical and emotional strength, and enthusiasm for the sport of swimming.

The CAT Vision Statement

CAT's vision is to maintain a safe and inclusive program that will continue to develop swimmers prepared to participate in all levels of competition.



The CAT Core Values

Community:

CAT believes the term "community" expands beyond a mere group of individuals. It embodies a collective identity forged through shared goals, experiences, and mutual support. Within this community, swimmers cultivate a sense of camaraderie, pushing each other to excel while also fostering an environment of encouragement and teamwork. Beyond the pool, this community extends to coaches, families, and supporters, creating a network of individuals dedicated to the success and well-being of every team member. This sense of belonging and unity strengthens the team's cohesion, enabling them to overcome challenges and celebrate victories together.

Character:

Character encompasses integrity, discipline, and resilience. Swimmers with strong character uphold the values of sportsmanship, fair play, and respect for themselves and others. They demonstrate unwavering commitment to their training regimen and exhibit self-discipline in adhering to it, even when faced with adversity. Character shines through in how swimmers handle both victories and defeats with grace and humility, showcasing their inner strength and integrity.

Commitment:

Commitment to the CAT program entails dedication, sacrifice, and perseverance. Swimmers commit themselves fully to their training, attending practices consistently, and giving their best effort in every session. This commitment extends beyond the pool, as athletes prioritize proper nutrition, rest, and recovery to optimize their performance. Moreover, commitment involves sacrifices such as foregoing social activities or leisure time to prioritize training and competitions. Through unwavering commitment, swimmers demonstrate their resolve to achieve their goals and contribute to the success of the team.

Confidence:

Confidence is a vital attribute for successful individuals, encompassing self-belief, mental toughness, and poise under pressure. Swimmers with confidence approach each race with a positive mindset, trusting in their abilities and preparation. They maintain focus amidst distractions and setbacks, drawing on their mental resilience to overcome challenges and perform at their peak. Confidence is also reflected in how swimmers carry themselves both in and out of the pool, exuding a sense of assurance that inspires trust and respect from teammates and competitors alike. Building and maintaining confidence is an ongoing process, nurtured through experience, preparation, and support from coaches and peers within the team.



LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT:	Preston Roth
VICE PRESIDENT:	Jennifer Hanna
TEAM MANAGER:	Melissa Yumbla
SECRETARY:	John Callahan
TREASURER:	Briana Jewczyn
SAFE SPORT COORDINATOR:	Christina Forristall
DIRECTOR OF HK RECREATION:	Robyne Brennan
MEMBER(S) AT LARGE:	Courtney Grimm

HADDAM KILLINGWORTH RECREATION

The Haddam-Killingworth Recreation Department's goal is to provide a comprehensive year-round recreational program which meets the needs of the individuals in the local community. Through their generosity as our **Sponsoring Agency**, CAT swimmers are able to utilize the community pool and all of its benefits. For more information on additional programs, please visit <https://hkrec.com/>



COACHING STAFF

The CAT Coaching Staff is vetted to the highest standards of USA Swimming and are focused on the continued development (both in and out of the water) of the athletes that they mentor.

Head CAT Coach & Lead Senior Group Coach: Steve Cusano

Coaching Experience:

Eastern Connecticut State University- Assistant Coach (Current)

Cougar Aquatic Team (USA Program)- Head Coach (Current)

Haddam Killingworth High School Swim Team (Current)

Haddam Killingworth Middle School Swim Team (Current)

Swimming Achievements:

Southern Connecticut State University Graduate- Swimming and Diving Team

Voted in as Captain of Swim Team as a Junior

SCSU Swim Team Alumni- Four Year Member

NFHS Network Broadcaster/ Producer

SCC DII Coach of the Year (Nominated and Awarded by Peers) (2023)

3 Time Conference Championship Team Member in 4 Seasons (NE-10)

2011 Northeast - 10 Conference Relay Winner- 200 Medley Relay- Anchor

Committees:

Connecticut Swimming Age Group Committee Member

Championship Announcer



Assistant Senior Group Coach: Tim Landon

Coaching Experience:

Assistant Senior Group Coach Valley Shore YMCA Marlins

Advanced Team Coach Shoreline Aquatic Club

Assistant Coach Soundview YMCA Stingrays

Has spent the last 10 years coaching CT Swimming with multiple Age Group, CT Seniors, and Zones Appearances by his swimmers

Swimming Achievements:

Former CT Swimmer for VSYM & CCAT

Multiple Senior and Sectional Appearances

Franklin Marshall College Swim Team 2010-2014

Captain 2014

Centennial Conference Finalist 2010-2014

Centennial Conference Champion 400 IM 2011

Centennial Conference Champion 1650 Freestyle 2012



Lead Age Group Coach: Anne (McAndrew) Callahan

Coaching Experience:

Cougar Aquatic Team (Current)

Master's Swim

Swimming Achievements:

Division I UConn Swimmer

Junior National Qualifier

CT All State in 50 Free and 100 Free

All State Scholar Athlete

State Open Runner Up

Colonies Zone Record 50 Free (2022)

2nd World Ranking 50 Free (2022)

USMS All-American- 3 Individual Events (2022-2023)

USMS National Top Ten- 19 Individual Events, 6 Relay Events

Connecticut Masters (CONN)



Assistant Age Group Coach: CURRENTLY VACANT

Coaching Experience:

Swimming Achievements:



Lead Junior Group Coach: Erin O'Connell

Coaching Experience:

Cougar Aquatic Team- Assistant Coach (Current)
Haddam Killingworth Recreation- Swim Lessons Supervisor (Current)
Charter Oak Aquatic Club (USA Team)- Head Junior Coach, Assistant Age Group Coach (2019-2021)
Big Sky Swim Team (2018-2020)
Chicago Lakeshore Swim Team- Swim Team Lead (2014-2016)
Sycamore Hills Swim Team- Head Coach (2006-2008)

Swimming Achievements:

Roger Williams University Graduate- Swim Team- 2 Time New England Qualifier 100 Breast
2 Time New England Qualifier- Age 11
2 Time 50 Breast Regional Champion- Age 14
Placed Top 6 in CCC Conference 100 Breast- 2004, 2005
High School- 4 Time State Qualifier for 100 Breast



CAT & SAFE SPORT

The Cougar Aquatic Team is committed to making our swimmer's protection and safety our highest priority. By working together as coaches, swimmers, parents, and volunteers, we can ensure that all USA swimming members are supported in a safe and dependable environment both in and out of the pool.

When making the decision to report a concern you have, it can often feel intimidating and overwhelming. Please use these guidelines to help you on the first step: "Where do I report?" The provided links which will help you get in touch with the appropriate people.

CAT's Safe Sport website: <https://www.catswim.com/safe-sport>

CAT's Safe Sport Liaison: Christina Forristall cbforristall@gmail.com

USA Swimming Safe Sport website: www.usaswimming.org/safe-sport

Report a concern: uscenterforsafesport.org/report-a-concern/



CAT SPORTSMANSHIP POLICY

Cougar Aquatic Team Code of Conduct and Sportsmanship Policy

The ultimate goal of the Cougar Aquatic Team (CAT) is to provide a fun and competitive experience for all involved. CAT strives to maintain high standards and a high level of sportsmanship, ethics, and integrity. It is up to the coaches and parents to provide the direction and constant vigilance under which good sportsmanship can prosper and have a positive impact on the swimmers. The values of lessons learned by exhibiting good sportsmanship will last a lifetime.

Code of Conduct for all Swimmers:

- Swimmers are expected to follow directions at all times from any coach of the Cougar Aquatic Team. Coaches will be treated with respect.
- Swimmers will use appropriate language before, during, and after practice, in the RSD17 Pool, Patsy Kamercia Field House, and all swim meets. We are role models and will respect other teams as well as our teammates on the Cougar Aquatic Team.
- Swimmers will respect each other; fighting, bullying, hitting, spitting and any other inappropriate behavior * is not acceptable and will not be tolerated.
- Swimmers will be respectful of teammates' feelings and personal space. Swimmers who exhibit sexist, racist, homophobic or otherwise inappropriate behavior will be faced with consequences.
- Swimmers will respect personal property as well as the property of RSD17 and any other building we may travel to.
- We are guests of RSD17 and we need to treat the other patrons with respect, as well as the property of RSD17.
- Any disruptions such as: rude behavior, or horseplay around practice or at a swim meet will result in the swimmer being asked to leave.
- Social Media will be used to celebrate, promote, and encourage. Any negative use of social media will NOT be tolerated.

Expectations:

- All swimmers will be on time to practice or meet warm-up; ready to begin swimming at the designated practice and meet time.
- All swimmers will be picked up on time.
- All swimmers are expected to do the work that is asked of them in order to achieve their goals.
- All swimmers will wear TEAM CAPS and TEAM SUITS to meets. If a team suit is not available an all black suit can be worn for competition.
- Swimmers must notify coaches ahead of time if they need to leave practice early, will be late to practice, or will miss practice by emailing or calling their coach with exact times and dates.
- All swimmers are expected to participate in 2 meets and Regional Championships. If unable to participate in a meet, athletes will need to decline participation on the CAT registration portal.



Code of Conduct for the Parents/Guardian:

- Please remember to stay off the deck during practices and swim meets.
- Set an example by showing respect to the coaches, team members, training facility, competition facilities, meet staff, officials, and other parents.
- Show good sportsmanship.
- Be supportive of your child and their teammates.
- Be active with the team by volunteering, fundraising and working at swim meets.
- The coaches on deck are trained professionals; please allow them to coach without distractions during practice and meets.
- No food or beverages allowed in the pool area besides water.
- Social Media will be used to celebrate, promote, and encourage. Any negative use of social media will NOT be tolerated.

Responsibilities:

- Participate in CAT community building events- attend social get togethers, join community outreach events, participate in fundraisers.
- Pay bills on time.
- Encourage teamwork with parents, swimmers, and coaching staff through discipline and hard work.
- Make sure your swimmer is on time to practice and meets.
- Maintain self control at all times.
- Please do not coach your child during practice or at meets; this is the coach's job.
- Trust and support your swimmers and coaches' decisions around goal setting.
- Volunteer at swim meets and honor your timing commitments when asked.
- Encourage your child to be committed and dedicated to the sport.

Course of action:

In the event that a swimmer or family feels the program is not meeting expectations, please contact the following individuals in this order to address the concerns:

1. Practice/assigned coach
2. Steve Cusano, Head Coach

Violation of the Policy:

There will be disciplinary actions taken if any of the above are not followed. The athlete's behavior, based on the infraction, will determine the progressive nature of discipline. Possible consequences include but are not limited to the following:

- Verbal or Written Warning
- Parent Conference
- Behavior Modification Plan
- Suspension
- Expulsion

**Behavior that is inappropriate shall include but is not limited to the following: vandalism of any kind, horseplay, fighting, pushing someone into the water, throwing equipment (kickboards, pool buoys, etc.), entering the water before practice begins, smoking, consumption of alcohol, chewing tobacco, taking drugs, disrupting practice, unsportsmanlike conduct at swim meets, inappropriate language, any behavior that may cause or threaten harm to someone else and stealing of any kind. Taking photos and/or videotaping in the locker rooms is strictly prohibited.*

**** All behavior deemed inappropriate will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. CAT has the right to supersede the disciplinary course of action if the inappropriate behavior is deemed severe, including but not limited to suspension or removal from the team.****



Conduct of Swimmers and Parents at Meets:

At all swim meets, swimmers are expected to wear the team suit and (if a cap is worn) the team cap. Only under conditions in which the team suit may be considered inappropriate, or a coach has instructed you to wear a tech suit, may an alternate suit be used. An acceptable alternative to the team suit is a plain black suit. No swimmer shall attend a meet unless accompanied by a parent or a chaperone arranged for by the swimmer's parent or guardian. In prelim/final meets, all swimmers who qualify to compete in finals are expected to participate in finals. Parents are expected to remain off the competitive deck unless acting in an official capacity such as a timer or official. Parents will be expected to serve as timers (or a corresponding meet worker position) as assigned by the pool representative.

I understand the above expectations and that my failure to adhere to them may result in disciplinary action.

Swimmers Name (Printed): _____

Date: _____

Swimmers Signature: _____

Parent/ Guardian Name (s)
(Printed): _____

Date: _____

Parent/ Guardian Signature(s): **(YOU HAVE SIGNED THIS WITH YOUR CHILD'S REGISTRATION)**



Code of Conduct for Coaches:

The purpose of this code of conduct for coaches is to establish common expectations for all members of the CAT Coaching Staff. It is to be used as a guide to promote a positive team environment and good sportsmanship.

- At all times, adhere to USA Swimming's rules and code of conduct.
- Set a good example of respect and sportsmanship for participants and fans to follow.
- Act and dress with professionalism and dignity in a manner suitable to his/her profession.
- Respect officials and their judgment and abide by the rules of the event.
- Treat opposing coaches, participants, and spectators with respect.
- Instruct participants in sportsmanship and demand that they display good sportsmanship.
- Coach in a positive manner and do not use derogatory comments or abusive language.
- Win with humility and lose with dignity.
- Treat every athlete fairly, justly, impartially, intelligently, and with sensitivity.
- Always place the well-being, health, and safety of swimmers above all other considerations, including developing performance.
- Continue to seek and maintain their own professional development in all areas in relation to coaching and teaching children.
- Always maintain a professional separation between coach and athlete.

Any complaints of a coach violating this code of conduct will be brought to the attention of his/her supervisor and/or the club's board of directors.



PRACTICE GROUPS

The following are guidelines used as an entry point for swimmers. Conversations will occur with swimmers & parents (especially those new to CAT) to gauge motivation & readiness. Group placement is at the discretion of the Head Coach.

Junior Group Program:

An introductory program for new swimmers that aims to bridge the gap between swim lessons and competitive swimming. Swimmers must be able to swim two pool lengths unassisted and have working knowledge of at least two strokes. Recommended for swimmers ages 6 - 12.

Age Group Program:

The Age Group program focuses on developing proper techniques for all four strokes (including IM), as well as starts (individual & relay), legal turns, and finishes. Swimmers are introduced to interval training and longer endurance sets. Ages can vary, but this program is recommended for swimmers ages 10 - 14.

Senior Program*:

The progression into the Senior program is a focus on refining stroke technique while also increasing speed, strength, and endurance. Racing strategies are introduced for higher level competition and is intended for swimmers in middle school through college.

***IMPORTANT HIGH SCHOOL SWIMMER INFO:**

The Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC) serves as the sole governing body for interscholastic athletic activities in Connecticut. Prior to the start of the season, you, your swimmer, and your coach should have a discussion about their rules regarding Club participation during High School swim season.



SWIM GROUP PROGRESSION

Moving up a group is a reward for your swimmer, NOT an entitlement. Trust the process - parents & swimmers need to be patient and not rush through a group. Each swimmer should experience being a leader of a group before moving up to ensure longevity in the sport.

The following are guidelines on how swimmers progress through practice groups, and conversations will occur with swimmers to gauge motivation & readiness. Group progression is at the discretion of the Head Coach.

REC to JUNIOR

Technique Requirements:

1. Must be able to complete a few 25s with no assistance from the wall or lane line.
2. Must be able to swim with their head in the water for a minimum of 5 seconds between breaths.
3. Minimal head up or “doggy paddle” breaths. Side breaths preferred but not required as long as the above requirement is met.
4. Basic understanding of freestyle and backstroke required. Breaststroke and Butterfly knowledge not required.
5. Willingness to attempt diving at least from the side of the pool required. Proficiency in dives is not required as long as the swimmer is willing to attempt the skill.
6. Flip turns are not required to join that skill will be taught, willingness to attempt the skill is required.

Behavioral/Coachability:

1. Swimmer must demonstrate the ability to take instruction and be respectful to their coaches and teammates.
2. Swimmer must demonstrate the ability to learn and adhere to lane etiquette, and safety standards.

Time Standards:

1. Swimmer must be able to complete a lap of both freestyle and backstroke.
2. Each length of each stroke should take no more than 1 minute to complete.



JUNIOR to AGE GROUP

Technique Requirements:

1. Legal Flip Turns (free, back and open turns)
2. Must be able to legally complete a 50 in all 4 strokes
3. Must be able to maintain circle swimming etiquette (moving to the side when finishing, leaving 5 seconds apart and going down and back on the correct side of the lane, pass without completely running over one of their teammates)
4. Understanding the basic knowledge of interval training
5. Perform track start and backstroke start effectively and legally
6. Know the starting sequence without being prompted by a timer, official, or coach at a swim meet

Behavior/Coachability Requirements:

1. Maturity: Athlete is motivated to listen to coaches and try to improve.
2. Must be willing to do the work and put effort in
3. Consistency in practice (attendance)
4. Athletes need to know their attitude affects how they swim and how others around them swim

Time Standards:

1. Need to be similar in ability and speed to coach the group
2. Be able to hold 4x50s on the 1:30

Senior Prep Goals for Age Groupers:

- ▶ Swim 400 IM with legal technique and proper transitions
- ▶ Race in every distance, every stroke available over duration of season
- ▶ Achieve Age Group time standards for their age bracket
- ▶ Improve fluidity in turns and push-offs
- ▶ Improve start and backstroke entry into water
- ▶ Begin learning how to manage effort and intensity through practice
- ▶ Learn and improve goal setting skills
- ▶ Improve on controlling attitude and focus within workout and understand that they affect teammates
- ▶ Create a core group of 'training friends'
- ▶ Sit with friends and teammates at swim meets
- ▶ Listen to coaches.



AGE GROUP to SENIOR

Technique Requirements:

1. Must have general knowledge of the core fundamentals for each stroke.
2. Responsible for knowing heat and lane assignments for their events and showing up behind the block on time.
3. Streamlines must be correct to the standard with dolphin kick to freestyle kick transition off all underwaters
4. Have some awareness on the breakout stroke and breath control.
5. Awareness of the pace clock and know when it's time for them to go. Not looking for other lanes or counterparts to trigger the sendoff.
6. Should be able to swim a 100 of all 4 strokes, 200 IM and 500 free.
7. Must have a feeling of connecting the head position with body alignment when breathing to both sides. **Not crossing over with the dominant arm when breathing to the non-dominant side.**
8. Needs to be able to carry momentum throughout a flip turn. **Head stays neutral, and legs kick right up until the moment of the flip.**
9. Must be able to perform a dive and glide and have legal relay transition.

Behavior/Coachability Requirements:

1. Attendance should improve, not decline as the athlete matures
2. Age requirement: You don't want to push a young swimmer developmentally to engage in exercise that their pre-adolescent or teen body isn't ready for. Body and muscles need to be ready for more intense sets.
3. Emotional: is the swimmer serious about workouts or want it to be more fun than business? Are they finishing the sets or getting out all the time? Are they putting effort in? Are they getting in late consistently?
4. Set goals and keep them focused for the for season
5. Have REALISTIC expectations for times and cuts.
6. Manage emotions pre and post races during meets.

Time Standards:

1. Able to hold 10 x 50s on 1:00 & 5 x 100's on 1:45
2. Race in every distance, every stroke available over duration of season
3. Times/endurance: Has the swimmer shown success in making certain intervals throughout the season as the sets get longer and harder?



RECOMMENDED PRACTICE EQUIPMENT

Equipment for swimming enhances performance and general “feel of the water.” Through the generous donations of our swimming community, CAT is able to offer basic equipment for any swimmer to use during practice.

It is highly encouraged that parents purchase gear for their child to ensure a proper fit...especially as they progress through higher training groups. Links to recommended equipment for each swim group can be found on our website.

Please consult with your Lead Coach if you have any questions on equipment.

BASIC ESSENTIALS (for all groups unless noted)

- Mesh gear bag
- Water Bottle
- Swim cap(s): Silicone or Latex is personal preference. Team caps will be issued once per season. Please keep enough spares around for the inevitable rip.
- Goggle(s): Always have a spare on you.
- Kickboard
- Pull buoy
- Fins
- Paddles (*groups: AG & SR*)

ADVANCED GEAR

- Finis Tempo trainer (*groups: AG & SR*)
- Snorkel (*groups: SR*)



SUITS

Practice suit: To be worn during practice so as to not wear out the team suit. Any brand is sufficient, and comes down to personal preference. Look for their “endurance” style.

Team suits: To be worn during meets. Orders will be placed at least once per season.

TECH SUITS

These race specific suits look like practice suits, but are made from compression material designed to reduce drag, muscle oscillation, and skin vibration. The patterned fabric streamlines water away from the body and doesn't stretch much.

A racing suit should fit even tighter than practice suits and can even require assistance to pull it on. Consider sizing down for competition suits.

Please consult your Lead Coach for a recommendation. Tech suits are to be worn during advanced championship meets ONLY.



CAT FEE STRUCTURE

CAT is a non-profit, registered USA Swimming Inc. team, fully funded by membership fees from our swimmers.

USA Swimming Membership All CAT swimmers must purchase a USA Swimming Membership which establishes their amateur status as a competitive swimmer and provides insurance coverage during swim practice and meets. Parents will receive a specific team link from USA Swimming once they have registered with CAT to complete the process. For more information, please go to <https://www.ctswim.org/Membership/>

Meet fees: Swim meet fees are non-refundable and are charged by the host swim team for each event a swimmer enters. Parents can choose to attend or decline any meet for their swimmer.

HK Rec Pool Membership This supports the Haddam Killingworth Recreation Department as our sponsoring agency and allows us full use of the pool facility.

High School Swimmer & Spring Sport Discount Swimmers who participate on their High School swim team are granted a discount on their CAT tuition fee for Short Course season. Swimmers that participate on any High School team during the Spring season will be granted a discount on their CAT tuition fee for Long Course season.

College Swimmer “drop in” All college athletes that participate in a CAT organized practice must be a current USA swimming member and complete the APT training course through USA swimming. Summer training: \$250. Winter break training: \$50.

If any swimmer has a specific financial hardship that precludes them from joining CAT, please reach out to a member of Leadership for more information.

All outstanding balances must be paid before registration is processed.

All fees subject to change.



VOLUNTEERING AT SWIM MEETS

Every meet that CAT attends depends on parent volunteers to operate efficiently and on schedule. Each participating team is required to provide a specific number of parent timers, and **our ability to compete is directly tied to meeting this obligation**. Prior to each meet, parents will be assigned timing responsibilities and a detailed schedule will be distributed.

Parents are assigned to time only during the session in which their child is swimming, however, **timing assignments are your commitment**. If you are unable to attend—or if your child scratches their session—it is your responsibility to arrange a qualified replacement. To ensure all families feel confident and prepared, an informational training session for new parents will be held at the start of each season.

BECOMING A USA SWIMMING OFFICIAL

USA Swimming encourages all clubs to have parents who are registered as swim officials. This ensures that all meets run as smoothly and as consistently as possible.

CAT is actively seeking parents who are interested in becoming a USA Swimming official and is offering the following incentive to parents who successfully become registered:

- Reimbursement of your USA Swimming Official's training fees & expenses.
- **Admin Official/Referee:** 15% off your child's CAT tuition fee for each season that you keep an active USA Swimming Official registration plus meet fees waived.
- **Stroke & Turn Official/Starter:** Meet fees waived.

For families with multiple swimmers, officiating benefits (meet fee waivers and/or 15% tuition discount) will be applied to the swimmer with the highest applicable cost. Meet fees are waived only when you officiate the same session that your child swims. Travel fees not included.

If you are interested in becoming an official or have questions on what it entails, here is the link to start your journey:

- <https://www.usaswimming.org/officials/how-to-become-an-official>



EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT SWIMMING...

but were afraid to ask.

From the 8 & under 25 yard freestyle event, all the way up to the 400 meter IM at the next Olympic games, swimming, at its core, is a basic sport. You literally only need 3 pieces of equipment (swim cap, goggles, & bathing suit), plus water & a clock to compete. Yet, the rule book is 130 pages long and, at a minimum, four officials are required at every sanctioned meet.

Like any sport, the rules of swimming are designed to provide fair and equitable conditions of competition and to promote consistency in the sport, regardless of the level of competition. Each swimming stroke has specific rules designed to ensure that no swimmer gets an unfair or competitive advantage.

The four competitive strokes swum at every level are freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke and butterfly. In addition, there is the individual medley which features all four strokes; fly, back, breast and free, in that order. Relay events are comprised of four swimmers per relay team, each swimming 1/4 of the total distance of the event. There are two types of relays: freestyle relay and medley relay; back, breast, fly and free, in that order.

Each swim meet offers a variety of events and distances, depending on the age group and classification. Competition pools may be short course (25 yards or meters) or long course (50 meters). The international standard used in the Olympics is 50 meters.

Officials are present at all competitions to implement the technical rules of swimming and to ensure that the competition is fair and equitable. Officials attend clinics, pass a written test and work meets before being certified. All parents are encouraged to get involved with some form of officiating. (Please see page 24 for more information about becoming a USA Swimming Official).

If a swimmer commits a violation of the rules, he/she will be disqualified from that event, which means he/she will not receive an official time. If your child is disqualified in an event, be supportive rather than critical. ***For beginning swimmers, a disqualification should be treated as a learning experience, not as punishment.*** Coaches use disqualifications as areas that need to be addressed in practice so that it doesn't occur again and the swimmer can earn official times in their events.



Although anyone can join a Club Swim Team at any point, there is a natural progression with most kids. Starting with basic swim lessons at around 5 years old, their first opportunity for competition can begin by age 8 as some meets allow events (in all 4 strokes) that race 25 yards. Participants compete in different age groups and meets depending on their achievement level and how old they are on the first day of the meet. Nationally recognized age groups are 10 & under, 11-12, 13-14, 15-16, 17-18 and 15-18...Senior or Open competition has no upper or lower age limitations.

Whether you start your swimming career at 8 or 88, achieving success in the pool is not always linear. Unfortunately, swimmers tend to plateau at various times in the season (and over the years) and this is likely a cause for frustration; especially when athletes are putting in countless hours and yards in the pool. It is at these points in a swimmer's career that they may seek the easy way out or look to leave the sport entirely. While burnout can be a factor, it's usually an opportunity for growth by focusing on what you CAN control (streamlines, starts, turns, breathing, underwaters) vs what you can't control (the clock or your competition). By getting back to basics, swimmers tend to get more efficient in the water, and ultimately faster as well.

Unlike most sports, club swimming is very different from its High School counterpart. Although the events are the same, swimmers in a High School competition are placed in events to gain the most team points, while club swim meets are focused on individual times with multiple heats of the same stroke to see who's the fastest among all the competitors. Club meets are usually staged over 3 days with "distance events" (ie, 500 Free, 1,650 Free, &/or 400 IM) being swum Friday night and prelim's and finals held both Saturday and Sunday. This makes for a very long weekend (both for swimmers and parents) and kids need to really focus on nutrition, rest in between events, and logistics.

High School meets usually last 1 hour and it's not until the end of the season when swimmers may be more focused on individual times to be showcased at Championships. Unlike most High School sports, if your swimmer competes for his or her High School team, they are still eligible to swim in Club meets. (Please reference page 17 for more information on CIAC eligibility).

At some point in your child's swim career, you might start to wonder if they can swim in college? Although the chances of getting a collegiate athletic scholarship are rare, especially for swimming, there are usually opportunities for kids to swim beyond High School. Those that swim in college usually get the attention of a coach by having high academic strength as well as athletic ability; show leadership in and out of the pool; and finally stand out in the pool by not necessarily being the fastest, but by showing the ability to be able to swim any stroke at any time or events that no-one really wants to swim (ie...500 free, 200 fly, 400 IM).

WELCOME TO CAT!

