

Information for New Parents

For all our new members this year, we provide below some timely information that will help you understand and enjoy the Gator swim team. Thanks go to John Blakney for pulling this information together.

Code of Conduct. The Gators swim team expects all parents to read, understand and comply with the Code of Conduct for our league, which can be found on the Gator website. We collectively are the face of Southglenn and we want to maintain our reputation for fairness and sportsmanship. Note that the website contains much additional information and is worth getting to know.

Practice. The more your swimmers practice, the stronger they will be and the more improvement can be made to their technique. Coaches prefer to see kids at least 3 days/week and always on Friday which helps confirm events/relays for the Saturday meet. Get to know your swimmers' coach(s). They are there to both help the swimmers and the parents. Parents must refrain from approaching the coaches while they are working their age group; this greatly impairs their ability to coach while swimmers are in the water. Please wait till there is a slack time, after practice or even make an appointment. Practice times start out after school until school ends (LPS) and then switch to mornings with the eldest swimmers starting earliest. The week of July 4th usually has fewer practices and during prelims week they shift due to age group prelims. So be alert for changes during these times. Stroke Clinics are held on Wednesday nights. Check the website or with the coaches as to what will be covered on that evening.

Meets. Meets start at 8:00am sharp (some pools start at 7:30 due to neighborhood time restrictions so be sure). Arriving early allows you and your swimmers to get parked, setup and warmed-up for the meet. Swimmers are not required to warm up but the best ones always do. Warm up times – home is generally 7:00am, away is generally 7:25 but always check with your coaches or look online.

If your swimmer is not going to make a meet (or some portion of it), you need to document this by sending your coach a message or use the '*Miss a meet?*' function on the home page of the website. You can also use the sign-out book at the front desk of the clubhouse. That keeps the coaches from scheduling them in an event or even worse a relay that does not swim because they did not show up. Swimmers need to swim at least 2 meets to be eligible for Prelims/Championships.

Maps are available on the league website at MHSL.org. Lots of additional information on this website also.

Hints for Getting Setup. Find a space around other SGCC folks (many pools have designated or obvious areas for visiting teams). Spread your stuff and then locate the board with the SGCC lineup and write down your races. Many swimmers find it helps to do this with a sharpie on the back of their hands. (Parents too!) Know your volunteer duties and be ready. There is usually an officials meeting around 7:30, then the National Anthem at 7:55 and then the meet starts at 8:00 sharp.

The first relays with the younger swimmers are always chaotic. Stick close to your swimmer (outside the heating area is sometimes necessary due to space restrictions), and be ready to support them or help them get to their start position (sometimes at the other end of the pool).

Surviving the Meet. Here are some keys to surviving the day, which starts early, and usually ends around 2pm. These are true for both parents and swimmers –

- Rest – do not run around the whole time; the best swimmers are lying around between races.
- Drink fluids – sugar drinks are not that effective at hydration. Lots of water is recommended.
- Remember sunscreen – regardless of how warm it is and start the day with layers (sometimes many as we have seen some very cold days).
- Eat wisely – junk food has the name for a reason. Most pools have extensive concessions but it is not always what you want to eat so it is best to pack what you want unless you know the routine at that pool.
- Swimmers are able to retire from a meet at any time (for example, if they get too cold.) We try very hard to get meets in safely. That means we sometimes run a meet to halfway and then call it because it's too cold to continue. Swimmers do not have to swim. Just make sure the coaches know your decisions.
- If possible, stick around for relays and ask your coach if he or she needs you even if you are not scheduled to swim.

Meet Flow. Here are some details about meet flow. Be aware that delays cost time and those running the meet are focused on keeping to the schedule that has been set. Most teams use a First Call/Last Call board and announcements over a PA system. On first call for an event, go to the heating area. If you hear last call you need to hustle over. Do not be the swimmer who is called over the PA for a race!

Swimmers get cards in the heating area that they carry to the timers in their lanes. Most heating areas have benches or chairs that they use to organize the events/heats. Heats move up in rows until it is time to move to the starting area.

When swimmers approach the blocks they should listen to the starter so they understand the routine. Generally they load the swimmers using voice, alert everyone with a whistle and then start with a buzzer. Older swimmers will do flyovers when they stay in the water and the next race dives over them to begin.

Swimmers are allowed one false start in this league; two false starts is a DQ. There is usually a false start rope that is dropped to keep the swimmers from going the whole way (although someone invariably ignores it). Meet your swimmers at the finish end with a towel and words of encouragement.

Meets use Stroke and Turns judges whose job it is to DQ swimmers in order to be fair to all swimmers. There are judges assigned (usually – team preference) to give feedback immediately afterwards but this doesn't always happen. Coaches will get slips identifying the infraction and can protest if they feel it is warranted. It is not appropriate to ask the S&T judge about DQs during the meet. Every swimmer will experience a DQ in their career. It is normal and part of the learning process but you need to be prepared to explain this to your swimmer the first time.

Results are usually posted throughout the meet: individuals' results and ribbons are normally available by Monday practice.

If you have any questions, please see your coach(es). You can also learn more about our meets by attending the Mock Meet, usually scheduled during the week prior to the first meet.

Good luck and have fun!