**SHSC Swim Parent Information: All You Want to Know**

Thank you for allowing your child to swim with us! The swim season can seem confusing, even when you are a veteran swim parent. This information packet should help you navigate practices and swim meets and answer almost all the questions you may have.

**Practices**

The most important thing to understand is that practice is critical for developing the skills needed to swim. Sometimes, it is distracting to the children when parents are close by. Occasionally, children may not want to do what the coach requests because they are scared – or they just don’t want to. If you are there, they know they can run to you to avoid what is being asked of them. Please remember that the coaches will never ask your child to do something that is dangerous. The coaches will use their knowledge and training to gauge whether or not the child is capable of performing said task (i.e., diving off the block, swimming two or more laps in the pool, etc.) However, we do understand that sometimes it is more convenient to remain at the pool during practice times. For this reason, we request that you remain behind the fence separating the baby pool from the big pool. There is plenty of seating in the shade by the snack shack and Fort Spartan. In addition, please do not try to speak to the coaches during practice. This takes their time and attention away from the swimmers. The coaches will be happy to meet with you after practice or at a scheduled time. Thank you for understanding.

Swimmers are usually grouped according to age for each practice session. If the coaches believe they have a swimmer who can “swim up” within his/her practice time, they will use their discretion to move that child to an “older” lane. Because of safety reasons, we will not allow a child to move out of their practice time, nor will we allow a child to swim in a group for which the child is not ready. This is to keep your child safe, as well as maintain the flow of practice for the children already in that specific group.

During practice, the coaches will focus on stroke technique as well as speed and endurance. Summer swim is meant to be fun, but we also want to make sure your child ends the summer a better swimmer than he/she began. This is such a rewarding feeling for the children, the coaches, and you!

**Junior Spartans (i.e., Guppies)**

This group is designed for children who do not need swim lessons but have not yet gained the ability to swim the length of the pool in freestyle or backstroke, completely unassisted by the coach. To qualify for Junior Spartans, each child MUST be able to swim half the length of the pool in freestyle or backstroke, completely unassisted by a coach. Here, the emphasis will be on promoting each child to the swim team. Until each swimmer is moved to the swim team, Jr. Spartans are invited to swim a non-timed race before the start of the meets when indicated. This is a promotional group and is ***not*** intended for swim lessons. Coaches will evaluate swimmers on their ability and recommend them for swim lessons, Jr. Spartans, or swim team. Please understand that it is with the child’s safety in mind that they are placed in their respective group.

**Swim Meets**

Because this is a swim team, it is strongly encouraged – and expected – that the children on the team will participate in the swim meets. The meets are fun for the children – they can show what they can do and gain the confidence from trying something new! It’s ok if your child is scared. Most of the time, they get in the water, swim their event, and get out proud of themselves. If they continue to be scared, we will just keep trying. Although it can be frustrating for parents, please don’t give up on your child. In addition, a child will not be eligible to swim in City Meet unless he/she has participated in at least 3 meets. More about this will be discussed below.

Swim meets simply cannot be run without the help of parents. Therefore, it is **mandatory** that each family volunteers for a shift for a **minimum of two meets**. The various positions available are timer, head timer, stroke and turn judge, clerk of course, starter, announcer, sweeps, and runner. Each position is explained below. We can also offer training for each one, and they are all pretty simple. The only position that requires some actual swim knowledge is stroke and turn judge. If you consistently do not sign up for the required shifts, you will be assigned a position and will be responsible for finding a substitute if you cannot work. Again, I cannot emphasize enough that these meets would not be able to happen if not for our parents! Also, as a matter of consideration, if you are a parent of a child you know will be swimming the second half of the meet, please sign up for a second half position, and allow the parents of children swimming only the first half to sign up for that time.

Swim meets are hot. It will be more fun for you and your children if you come in comfortable and cool clothing. You will also want to bring chairs, and a cooler with healthy snacks/drinks (please NO GLASS). Because the meets will also run through dinner, sandwiches are a great idea. We cannot promise that each club will provide pizza, etc. Some people also bring tents for shade. Other helpful items are battery operated fans and cooling towels. Remember, the baby pool will not be open. Also, keep in mind that **meets can often run until 7:00 – 8:00 PM.**

The week of each meet, you will be asked to sign your child up for the meet scheduled for that week. The coaches generally determine what strokes your child will swim (no more than 3 individual events and 2 relays (if offered) per child). If you do not sign your child up each week, he/she will not be included on the heat sheet, and it may be difficult, if not impossible, for the child to be added late.

Heat sheets will be available online for you to print, unless otherwise indicated. We will not have heat sheets available for purchase at the meets.

If there is inclement weather, the coaches will communicate via email and/or text to inform parents if the meet will be delayed or cancelled. Meets can still take place if it is raining. Lightning is generally the reason meets will be delayed or cancelled.

**8 and Under Group**

**To qualify to be on the team, each child must be able to swim freestyle or backstroke unassisted by a coach for the entire length of the pool**. The four strokes the children can swim are freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, and butterfly. Eight and unders only swim 25yds (1 lap), unless it is a distance race, then they can swim 50yds (2 laps). The exception to this is the 100 IM, which is one lap of each stroke. Not all 8U will be able to swim a 50 or IM. Most 8U will be entered for freestyle and backstroke, depending on ability. If the coaches determine the child can also legally swim the more difficult strokes of breaststroke and butterfly, they may also enter your child in one of these. We cannot always decide the order of events for each meet. It would be ideal if relays, freestyle, and backstroke were the first three events. However, when this is not the case, please be prepared to stay (this is when healthy snacks are beneficial). If the relays are at the end, please confirm with the coach whether your child is swimming or not before you leave. If any relay team member leaves before the relay, the swimmers cannot swim the relay. This leads to a minimum of disappointed children and parents, especially if they have waited through other events for the relay, when they could have gone home.

During the meet, swimmers will be called by the announcer to head to Clerk of Course before their event. It is up to the parents and swimmers to listen for these announcements to ensure the swimmers get to where they need to be. The coaches cannot run everywhere looking for missing swimmers. At Clerk of Course, the swimmers will be arranged according to heat and lane. When it is time, they will proceed to line up behind the blocks until it is their turn to swim. After their swim, they should sit back in the team area or with their parents. Please do not allow your child to run around, play basketball, etc.

**9 and Over Group**

The same meet procedures and rules for 8 and Unders apply to the 9 and Overs. However, this group swims 50yds (2 laps) for each event, unless it is a distance event, in which they would swim 100yds (4 laps) or the 200 IM (2 laps of each stroke). Each swimmer may only swim a maximum of 3 individual events and 2 relays for each meet (if offered). Larger meets might limit it to a maximum of 2 individual events. Our 9 and Over Group has started to move into leadership roles on the team. Therefore, it is expected that they have a good attitude, cheer for their teammates, and stay where they are supposed to be.

**City Meet**

 City Meet takes place at the end of the swim season on a Friday and Saturday. This is the most exciting time, when all the teams from the region come together to compete against each other. It is a lot of fun for the swimmers, and I dare say some of the parents! As with the meets, it is expected that all eligible swimmers will participate in City Meet. This year, City Meet will be held at Bishop State, which is an indoor pool. Usually, the 8U swim in the morning, and the 9 and overs swim in the afternoon. In order to qualify for City Meet, each swimmer must have participated in a minimum of 3 meets. To qualify for an event, each swimmer must have swum that event this summer and met the time cut for that event. 6 and Unders are the exception to the time cut requirement. There are no time cuts for the 6U swimmers. Therefore, each swimmer needs to swim every stroke at least once in a meet.

**Communication**

This year, we are excited to use the TeamUnify application for everything! You can download the app, register, pay online, receive all communication, and view meet results. We hope this will be more convenient for all. If you have a child who swims for CMSA, you may already be familiar with this software.

**Glossary of Terms**

*Freestyle:* Also known as the crawl stroke. This consists of alternating arms and legs. The child must touch the wall during a turn and at the end of the race to avoid disqualification. Standing or pushing off of the bottom of the pool will result in disqualification.

*Backstroke:* Alternating arms and legs while staying on the back. The child must touch the wall during a turn and at the end of the race. The swimmer cannot turn over on their front during the race, or they will be disqualified (the exception to this is during the flip turn on a 50yd race). They must touch the wall at the end of the race before they turn over. This is hard for beginners to remember!

*Breaststroke:* This takes place on the swimmer’s front, when the arms are pushed forward and then swept back in a circular movement, while the legs are tucked in towards the body and then kicked out in a corresponding movement. The swimmer can breathe on each stroke. The child MUST simultaneously touch the wall with TWO hands each time they hit the wall. Breaststroke is one of the harder strokes to learn to swim legally (i.e., not get disqualified).

*Butterfly:* This takes place on the swimmer’s front when both arms are brought out of the water at the same time and then down through the water. The legs move in an up-and-down leg motion together (i.e., dolphin kick). As with breaststroke, the swimmer MUST simultaneously touch the wall with TWO hands each time they hit the wall. This is also one of the more difficult strokes to learn to swim legally.

*IM (Individual Medley):* Consists of all four strokes in the specific order of butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, and freestyle.

*Heat Sheet:* This is the document that lists each event in order (e.g., fly, back, breast, free, etc.), each heat (swimmers are generally placed in heats according to swim times, slowest to fastest), and lane number.

*Time Cut:* This is the maximum amount of time in which the swimmer must swim the event in order to be qualified for City Meet. If he/she swims slower than this time, they will not be able to swim that event in City Meet.

*Timer:* This volunteer meet position is the person who times the swimmer with a stopwatch (and sometimes a plunger) for each heat. The time must then be documented on the provided form. Usually there are two timers per lane.

*Head Timer:* This volunteer operates two stop watches and waits for timers to indicate they have had a mishap with their timer (e.g., didn’t start in time, stopwatch didn’t work, etc.). The Head Timer will then quickly give the timer one of the running stopwatches, and work on resetting the other stopwatch.

*Runner:* This volunteer meet position is the person who collects the DQ (disqualification) sheets from the Stroke & Turn Judges throughout the session, as well as the time sheets from each lane at the end of the heat, and turns them into the announcer table.

*Clerk of Course:* This volunteer meet position is the person who coordinates the swimmers for each event and heat. The swimmers are lined up according to event, heat, and lane. There are usually a minimum of 2 volunteers at Clerk of Course at a time.

*Sweeps:* When needed, this volunteer position sits at the finish end of the pool and writes down the order of finishes for each race.

*Stroke & Turn Judge:* This volunteer position watches each swimmer for illegal moves during the race (i.e., not swimming the stroke correctly). Although this position requires knowledge of each stroke, please do not let this discourage you! We can train you to perform this job. Generally, there are 2 Stroke & Turn judges for each session, and they divide the lanes between themselves.

*Announcer:* This volunteer position follows the meet and announces what event is taking place, as well as calling swimmers to Clerk of Course for line-up.

*Starter:* This position starts each race, using a beeper.

**FAQs**

*Why can’t all my children practice at the same time, even though I have an 8U and a 9 and over?*

Although we recognize multiple practice times may be inconvenient for parents, it is for each child’s safety that the groups area created as they are. In addition, coaches need to be able to focus on the specifics of each group. Further, if we make the exception for one person, it would not be fair to everyone else.

*I think my child should be in Jr. Spartans and not swim lessons (or on the team and not Jr. Spartans). Why aren’t they?*

Please understand that each decision is made for the safety of the child. If a child cannot swim the entire length of the pool without holding on to the rope or wall, they cannot legally swim the freestyle. Also, if a child cannot swim freestyle at all, they should not be in Jr. Spartans. Swim Team is the goal we want each Jr. Spartan to achieve, and we want to make a big deal out of that accomplishment! It is a big deal to the swimmer when they finally get to be a part of the team.

*I forgot to sign my child up for the meet. Can he/she still participate?*

We will try our best to accommodate each individual situation. However, the heat sheets are due to the opposite team by a certain time. We also use these numbers to determine flow of the meet, number of volunteers needed, etc.

*I forgot to pay my registration fee. Can my child still swim this meet, and I will pay later?*

We are so sorry, but the child’s name will not appear in the system as eligible until fees are paid.

*I want my child to come to practice, but we are not interested in swimming in the meets. Can we do this?*

While we welcome all swimmers, this is a competitive team. Each practice is designed to increase the swimmer’s potential, and that result is truly observed during the meets. Also, the meets are FUN, and the children want to participate and really feel like they are a part of the team! This is also a great opportunity for parents to get to know each other and cheer their children on, thus validating their hours of practice. Finally, how good the team is depends on the number of swimmers we have. So, please consider participating in the meets as well as the practices.

*My child is going to camp/vacation and will miss “X” amount of days. Will this be a problem?*

We understand that this is summertime and families have made plans! Enjoy your time, but don’t forget to let the coaches know your child won’t be there for that time and won’t be able to swim the meet. We look forward to seeing everyone upon your return!

*Can my child participate in both swim and dive?*

Yes! Dive practice times take place at the same time as swim, but the group practice times are flipped. Therefore, it is possible to participate in both.

*What is CMSA?*

Also known as the City of Mobile Swim Association, this is a year-round competitive club swim team with practices held at Bishop State Community College downtown (until the brand-new facility is completed near I-10 on Halls Mill Road). Here, swimmers will get more intense technical instruction, gain greater endurance, and increase their speed. All swimmers are welcome! CMSA has a place for swimmers of all abilities, offering swim lessons through an adult Master’s program. Check it out at [www.SwimCMSA.com](http://www.SwimCMSA.com)! Not only is swim a fun and life-saving sport, but it is also great conditioning for all other sports.