

SWIM TEAM LEAGUE PARENTS HANDBOOK 2026-2027



YMCA OF THE VIRGINIA PENINSULAS

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POOL GUIDELINES

1. The pool must be cleared immediately when a ONE LONG whistle blast is heard.
2. No swimming without a lifeguard on duty.
3. Please shower before entering the pool.
4. Walk; do not run to avoid injury.
5. Chewing gum, food, drinks, or glass containers are not permitted in pool areas.
6. Diving in water less than 9 feet in depth is not permitted. No back flips, back dives, or twists.
7. Horseplay is the major cause of pool injuries. No pushing, dunking, spitting, sitting on shoulders, chicken fights, or any type of horseplay in the pool area.
8. Please do not hang or sit on the lane lines.
9. Proper bathing attire must be worn at all times while using the pool. Cutoffs or disposable diapers are not permitted in the pool. Children who are not toilet trained must wear swim diapers.
10. Circle swim etiquette must be used when two or more swimmers share a lane.
11. The pool will close at the sound of thunder or sight of lightning.
12. Youth 5 years and younger, and youth ages 6 through 9 years who do not pass the swim test, **must** have in-water supervision by a parent or legal guardian 18 years of age or older.
13. Youth ages 6 through 9 years who pass the swim test **must** have a parent or legal guardian supervise them from the pool deck.
14. **All red band swimmers must** stay in the shallow end of the pool, even if accompanied by an adult.
15. No inflatable pool toys/floatation devices will be allowed.
16. Extended breath holding exercises may cause blackouts, therefore they are not allowed.

SWIM TEAM COMMUNICATION

GENERAL COMMUNICATION PROTOCOL

Clear and consistent communication between coaches, swimmers, and parents is essential to the team's success. We utilize the following platforms for team-wide communication:

TEAMSnap APP

- All team communications, schedules, and updates will be managed through the TeamSnap app.
- TeamSnap is updated at the beginning of each season. An email invite will be sent to the email address on your YMCA account.
- Meet details, entry lists, and results will be shared in the Files section of the app.
- It is the parents' responsibility to check the app regularly.

TEAM CHAT GUIDELINES

- Team chat is intended for coaches' announcements only.
- Parents may use the chat only to inform coaches if their swimmer will be late to a swim meet.

DIRECT MESSAGING

- Parents should contact the head coach through direct messaging on TeamSnap for individual concerns or questions.
- Broader or program-related concerns should be directed to the aquatics director of your team's Center.

MEET ENTRY PROCEDURES

- Parents must respond to each scheduled swim meet in the app by marking their swimmer as "going" or "not going".
- Responses must be submitted before Tuesday of the swim meet week.
- Swimmers marked as "not going" will not be entered into that week's swim meet.
- While parents may request specific events, final event selections are determined by the coaching staff based on swimmer readiness and team needs.

PRACTICE STRUCTURE, EXPECTATIONS AND QUALIFICATIONS

PRACTICE LAYOUT

Each participant in the YMCA of the Virginia Peninsulas Swim League will have access to three (3) practices per week, each lasting a minimum of 50 minutes. The third practice each week is optional and will include a dryland training component to build overall athletic ability.

Swimmers should arrive at dryland practices dressed in athletic clothes over their swimsuits and wearing closed-toe athletic shoes. Practices are designed to gradually build endurance, stroke technique, and strength with the goal of continuous improvement in swim times.

PRACTICE EXPECTATIONS

- Swimmers should arrive at least 5 minutes early to participate in pre-practice stretching.
- Swimmers must come prepared with the following:
 - Bathing suit
 - Towel
 - Goggles
 - Water bottle
 - Swim cap (each swimmer will receive one team swim cap per season; replacements may be purchased if lost or damaged)

All swimmers and parents will be required to sign a Swim Team Code of Conduct. Violations of the code of conduct may result in disciplinary action as outlined in the team's behavior policy.

PRACTICE STRUCTURE, EXPECTATIONS AND QUALIFICATIONS

IN-WATER 3-STRIKE RULE

First Offense: Verbal warning for unsafe behavior or disruption.

Second Offense: Swimmer sits out and a parent will be contacted for discussion.

Third Offense: Swimmer will be dismissed from practice, followed by a formal meeting with parents and coaching staff.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

To ensure a safe and productive environment, all swimmers must meet the following age-specific qualifications:

Ages 4–8

- Ability to legally perform freestyle and backstroke for 25 yards
- Demonstrated knowledge of breaststroke and butterfly techniques
- Ability to jump or dive off the starting block
- Ability to follow instructions and stay focused for 50 minutes
- General understanding of rotary breathing

Ages 9–12

- Ability to legally perform a minimum of 50 yards if all four competitive strokes (freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, and butterfly)
- Demonstrated ability in rotary breathing, proper body alignment, and head positioning
- Ability to dive from starting blocks

Ages 13–18

- Ability to legally perform a minimum of 200 yards of freestyle and backstroke
- Ability to legally perform a minimum of 100 yards of breaststroke and butterfly
- Ability to read a pace clock
- Proficiency in legal dive starts and breaststroke underwater pullouts

FALL SEASON SWIM MEET SCHEDULE

SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER 2026

- **September 26**
Each team will host a mock meet at their center
- **October 17 Meet**
 - Victory, Northumberland, R.F. Wilkinson, and Northern Neck meet at Northern Neck;
 - Luter, Hampton, and Tom & Ann Hunnicutt meet at Tom & Ann Hunnicutt
- **November 21 Meet**
 - Luter, Northumberland, and R.F. Wilkinson meet at R.F. Wilkinson;
 - Northern Neck, Hampton, Tom & Ann Hunnicutt, and Victory meet at Victory
- **December 12 Meet**
Winter Invitational: all teams meet at Hampton

FALL SEASON FULL SCHEDULE

SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER 2026

- **September 8**
Season begins
- **September 24-25**
Pre-meet potlucks
- **SEPTEMBER 26 MOCK MEET**
Mock meet at each center
- **October 15-16**
Pre-meet potlucks
- **OCTOBER 17 MEET**
 - Victory, Northumberland, R.F. Wilkinson, and Northern Neck meet at Northern Neck;
 - Luter, Hampton, and Tom & Ann Hunnicutt meet at Tom & Ann Hunnicutt
- **October 31**
Break (no practice or events)
- **November 19-20**
Pre-meet potlucks
- **NOVEMBER 21 MEET**
 - Luter, Northumberland, and R.F. Wilkinson meet at R.F. Wilkinson;
 - Northern Neck, Hampton, and Tom & Ann Hunnicutt meet at Victory
- **November 22-29**
Break (no practice or events)
- **December 10-11**
Pre-meet potlucks
- **DECEMBER 12 MEET**
Winter Invitational at Hampton
- **December 19-31**
Break (no practice or events)

WINTER SEASON SWIM MEET SCHEDULE

JANUARY-APRIL 2027

- **January 23 Mock Meet**
Each team will host a mock meet at their center
- **February 20 Meet**
 - Victory, Hampton, R.F. Wilkinson, and Northumberland meet at Northumberland;
 - Tom & Ann Hunnicutt, Northern Neck, and Luter meet at Luter
- **March 20 Meet**
 - Tom & Ann Hunnicutt, Northern Neck, Luter, and R.F. Wilkinson meet at R.F. Wilkinson;
 - Victory, Northumberland, and Hampton meet at Hampton
- **April 24 Meet**
Spring Invitational; all teams meet at Northern Neck

WINTER SEASON FULL SCHEDULE

JANUARY-APRIL 2027

- **January 1-3**
Break (no practice or events)
- **January 4**
Season begins
- **January 21-22**
Pre-meet Potlucks
- **JANUARY 23 MOCK MEET**
Mock meet at each center
- **February 18-19**
Pre-meet potlucks
- **FEBRUARY 20 MEET**
 - Victory, Northumberland, R.F. Wilkinson, and Northern Neck meet at Northern Neck;
 - Luter, Hampton, and Tom & Ann Hunnicutt meet at Tom & Ann Hunnicutt
- **March 18-19**
Pre-meet potlucks
- **MARCH 20 MEET**
 - Luter, Northumberland, and R.F. Wilkinson meet at R.F. Wilkinson;
 - Northern Neck, Hampton, Tom & Ann Hunnicutt, and Victory meet at Victory
- **March 26-April 3**
Northern Neck and Northumberland have no practices
- **April 4-11**
Tom & Ann Hunnicutt, Luter, Hampton, Victory, and R.F. Wilkinson have no practices
- **April 22-23**
Pre-meet potlucks
- **APRIL 24 MEET**
Winter Invitational; all teams meet at Hampton
- **April 25-30**
End of season celebration

PARENT/GUARDIAN PARTICIPATION AND VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS

THE IMPORTANCE OF VOLUNTEERS

Parent/guardian participation is essential to the success of the YMCA of the Virginia Peninsulas Swim League. Swim meets cannot run without the help and dedication of volunteers. In fact, volunteering is a requirement for your child's continued participation in the team.

If at any time during a swim meet volunteer roles are unfilled, the swim meet will be temporarily halted until the necessary positions are covered. Each YMCA center will provide all required supplies and instructions, we just need you.

Volunteer assignments will be made with sensitivity to comfort levels and training. No parent will be asked to perform a role they are not trained for or feel unprepared to handle.

Volunteer Requirements

Volunteer expectations are based on team size and swim meet needs. Each team is responsible for providing a proportional number of volunteers. This ensures equity and smooth operations at every swim meet.

VOLUNTEER POSITIONS

Below is a list of volunteer positions needed for a swim meet, along with how many of each type of volunteer is needed for a meet.

Meet Director (1): Oversees the entire swim meet and supervises swim meet staff.

Starter (1): Operates the start system, announces heats, and starts each race.

Computer Technicians (1–2): Run *Meet Manager* software, enter results, and print labels for awards.

Head Timer (1): Coordinates all timers, ensures coverage and equipment functionality.

Timers (12–16): Time each lane and ensure accurate event and swimmer alignment.

Stroke and Turn Judges (4): Monitor strokes, turns, and finishes for league compliance.

Runners (3): Transfer timing sheets and escort swimmers from the clerk of course to blocks.

Block Volunteers (2): Help younger swimmers get to the starting blocks on time.

Clerk of Course (3-4): Organize and direct swimmers before each race.

SWIM MEETS

INVITATIONAL MEETS

Invitational meets are held at the end of each season (approximately every four months) and serve as a championship opportunity for qualifying swimmers.

Swim Meet Start Time

Invitational meets will begin no earlier than 7 a.m. and no later than 10 a.m. Exact times will be provided closer to event dates.

Eligibility

Swimmers must qualify for an Invitational meet by ranking in the top 12 times for individual events
Note: Swimmers must qualify for at least one (1) individual event in order to participate in relay events.

Walk-Out Songs

Swimmers in the top seed of each event may select a YMCA-appropriate walk-out song for their race. Songs must be submitted within the deadline provided by the swim meet director. Failure to submit a selection on time will result in an automatic assignment.

Awards

- 1st–3rd place: medals
- 4th–8th place: ribbons
- 9th place and beyond: participation ribbon

Supervision and Check-In Policy

All swimmers must be accompanied by a parent or guardian aged 18 or older at all swim meets. Dropping off swimmers without supervision is strictly prohibited.

Each swimmer will be required to check in with their parent or guardian upon arrival before the start of the swim meet.

SWIM MEET TIPS

Swim meets can be a fast-paced and sometimes overwhelming experience for both swimmers and parents, especially for those who are new to the sport. If you have questions or feel unsure about what to expect, we encourage you to speak with your coach prior to the event. Each swim meet is an opportunity for swimmers to showcase their hard work and progress.

Parents are encouraged to celebrate personal bests, support good sportsmanship, and promote team spirit. If you are concerned that swim meets may not be the right fit for your child, please consult your Head Coach before making any final decisions.

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL MEET EXPERIENCE

1. **Know your child's events.** Take note of their event numbers, heat numbers, and lanes.
2. **Understand heat organization.** Swimmers are seeded by time. Slower heats typically swim first, with faster heats last. In multi-heat events, swimmers may compete together but will be placed within their respective time brackets.
3. **Check the results.** Results are posted as events are scored. Multiple heats may occur within one event, so reviewing final standings is important.
4. **Know the difference between Individual Medley (IM) and Medley Relay.**
 - a. Individual Medley (IM): One swimmer swims four strokes in the order of butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, and freestyle.
 - b. Medley Relay: Four swimmers each swim one stroke in this order: backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly, and freestyle.
5. **Celebrate time improvements.** Even small time drops in short-distance races are significant. Encourage and praise every improvement.
6. **Pack smart snacks.** Avoid sugary foods and drinks before races. Healthier alternatives like pasta, fruits, or protein-based snacks will help your swimmer perform better.

Have fun. Stay positive, encourage your swimmer, and enjoy the experience with the team.

SWIM BAG PACKING LIST

To help your swimmer have a successful meet experience, we recommend preparing a well-packed swim bag. Please label all items: including the bag itself, towels, goggles, and suits, as these items often look alike and can be easily mixed up.

ESSENTIAL ITEMS

Team suit: Always ensure your swimmer packs their designated team suit.

Team swim cap: Pack two caps in case one tears. Coaches also carry extras at swim meets.

Team T-Shirt or warm-up jacket: For warmth between events and team visibility.

Goggles: Bring at least two pairs. Breaks can happen, and backup is essential. Avoid using brand-new goggles for the first time at a swim meet.

Deck sandals/flip-flops: Protect feet and reduce the risk of injury or infection. Should be worn at all times around the pool.

Towels: Pack at least two large towels. Everything gets wet, and swimmers often use towels to stay warm.

HYDRATION AND NUTRITION

Water bottle or sports drink:

Swimmers dehydrate quickly. Encourage frequent sips.

Healthy snacks: Raisins, trail mix, fruit, crackers with peanut butter, string cheese, granola bars, or dry cereal. Avoid high-sugar snacks.

COMFORT AND HYGIENE

Something warm to wear: Team sweats, fleece, or extra towels to stay warm.

Change of dry clothes: For after the swim meet. Pack in a plastic bag or separate compartment.

Toiletries: Swim shampoo, conditioner, brush/comb, deodorant, feminine hygiene products, contact lens solution (if applicable).

Ear drops: Vinegar/alcohol solution in glycerin base can help prevent swimmer's ear. Use after each swim meet or practice.

Baby powder: Helps keep swim caps dry and easy to put on. A small bottle will last a long time.

SWIM BAG PACKING LIST

MEDICAL AND SAFETY

Inhalers and medication: If your swimmer uses an inhaler or other medication, pack it. Let the coach know where it's stored.

Pain relievers: Tylenol or Motrin may be helpful for older swimmers.

ENTERTAINMENT

Books or homework: Great use of downtime between events.

Headphones and music device: For motivation or relaxation between events.

Cards or small games: To pass the time in team areas.

EXTRAS

Plastic bags: Various sizes to separate wet and dry items, or to protect electronics.

Packing thoughtfully ensures your swimmer is prepared, focused, and ready to enjoy the swim meet.

SWIMMING RULES AND REGULATIONS

GOVERNING BODIES

The rules and regulations governing YMCA swim meets follow guidelines set forth by:

FINA (Fédération Internationale de Natation): Oversees international aquatic sports

USA Swimming, Inc.: National governing body for competitive swimming in the United States

These rules promote fair, consistent competition for all athletes.

Breaststroke

- Forward start
- One arm pull and one downward butterfly kick followed by a breaststroke kick allowed underwater at start and turns
- Arms must move in the same horizontal plane
- Stroke cycle: one arm pull and one kick
- Head must break the surface at least once per cycle
- Simultaneous two-hand touch required at turns and finish
- Common Violations: Alternating or butterfly kick, improper pull cycle, over-water recovery, one-hand touch

Butterfly

- Forward start
- One arm pull and any number of dolphin kicks allowed underwater at start and turns
- Arms must move simultaneously above the water surface
- Legs and feet must move together (no flutter or breaststroke kicks)
- Simultaneous two-hand touch required at turns and finish
- Common Violations: Alternating kicks, underwater arm recovery, one-hand touch

Backstroke

- Backstroke start
- Head must surface by 15-meter mark
- Shoulders must remain past vertical toward the back except during continuous turning action
- Must stay on back until the finish
- Common Violations: Rolling onto stomach before turn or finish, illegal turn technique, fully submerged after start

SWIMMING RULES AND REGULATIONS

Freestyle

- Forward start
- Head must surface by 15-meter mark
- Must touch wall at turns and finish
- Common Violations: Submerged too long, no wall touch, walking or pushing off the bottom

Individual Medley (IM)

- Order: Butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, freestyle
- Transitions must conform to the finish rules of the stroke just completed
- Common Violations: Improper transitions, wrong stroke order, stroke infractions during segments

Relays

- Types: Freestyle or medley (backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly, freestyle)
- Each swimmer must wait until the previous swimmer touches the wall before starting
- Must swim in the assigned order
- Common Violations: Early takeoff, stroke violations, swimmers out of order

Starts

- Forward starts: Swimmers respond to the starter's instructions and starting signal
- Backstroke starts: Enter water at first whistle, assume start position at second
- False starts occur when a swimmer leaves the block before the signal; results in disqualification
- General Start Tips: Be alert to the starter's commands, stay stationary once on the block, always wait for the signal

Additional Disqualifications

- Unsportsmanlike or unsafe conduct
- Not starting or finishing in designated lane
- Standing or walking on the pool bottom
- Pushing off walls or lane lines for forward motion
- Interfering with another swimmer
- Entering the pool without referee permission

SWIMMER CODE OF CONDUCT 2026-2027

As a participant of the YMCA of the Virginia Peninsulas Swim League, I pledge to support a positive team environment by committing to the following core values:

CARING

- Recognizing the value and importance of teamwork.
- Engaging in inclusive and supportive behavior during practice and swim meets.
- Accepting and supporting the individual strengths and challenges of teammates.

HONESTY

- Following all YMCA rules, policies, and procedures at practices, swim meets, and team events.
- Reporting any unsafe or disrespectful behavior to a coach.
- Refraining from physical aggression, name-calling, bullying, and destruction of property.

RESPECT

- Representing the YMCA with good sportsmanship and exemplary conduct.
- Showing courtesy and respect to all swimmers, coaches, officials, YMCA staff, and parents.
- Demonstrating sportsmanship by staying in the water until all swimmers finish, shaking hands post-race, and avoiding inappropriate language or gestures.

RESPONSIBILITY

- Arriving at practices and swim meets on time and prepared to participate.
- Bringing all required equipment (suit, towel, goggles, cap, water bottle).
- Checking in at the assigned time for warm-ups unless prior arrangements have been made.

DISCIPLINARY ACTION

I understand that violations of this code of conduct may result in disciplinary actions including, but not limited to:

- Verbal warning
- Temporary removal from practice or meets
- Parent-coach conference
- Suspension or dismissal from the team

Severe or repeated violations may result in immediate removal from a swim meet. All disciplinary decisions will be made in consultation with YMCA staff and coaching personnel.

Swimmer's signature: _____

Printed name: _____

Date: _____

PARENT/GUARDIAN CODE OF CONDUCT 2026-2027

As a parent/guardian of a YMCA of the Virginia Peninsulas swimmer, I agree to uphold the following expectations:

- Practice teamwork by demonstrating the YMCA values of caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility.
- Support the team by positively engaging with swimmers, coaches, and other families, and by volunteering when needed.
- Understand our roles:
 - Swimmers = Swim
 - Coaches = Coach
 - Parents = Parent
 - Officials = Officiate
- Encourage all swimmers, celebrating personal successes and promoting team unity.
- Demonstrate sportsmanship and respectful conduct toward all meet and practice participants.
- Avoid criticism, abusive language, or negative gestures toward coaches, swimmers, officials, or parents.
- Direct any concerns about swim meet decisions to the coaching staff, who will address them appropriately with officials.

I understand that conduct bringing discredit to the team may result in disciplinary action, including removal from the swim area and possible impact on my child's continued team participation.

Parent/Guardian signature: _____

Printed name: _____

Date: _____

PROGRAM SESSION CANCELLATION

If a program session is canceled by the YMCA, a full refund or credit (based on the member's choice) will be offered.

Participants who cancel before the start of the session are eligible for a refund or credit. Once a session has begun, no credits or refunds will be issued.

To better serve our swim team families, registration will be based on seasonal enrollment in four-month increments. All seasonal sessions will be available for registration at the same time.

If you plan to have your swimmer take a break from swim team, please do so at the beginning of a season to allow other swimmers to register for that time slot. If your child takes a break from any individual month within a season, they must be removed from all months of that season to allow the spot to be filled by another swimmer.

SEASON SCHEDULE

Fall Season: September-December

Winter Season: January-April

Note: Payments will continue to be due on the 1st of each month regardless of seasonal registration.

I have read and understood the above information and acknowledge my responsibility in the cancellation process.

Parent/Guardian signature: _____

Printed name: _____

Date: _____



YMCA OF THE VIRGINIA PENINSULAS