



The Lee Graham Swim Team Handbook

Welcome to the Lee Graham Swim Team!

Joining a new sport can be a confusing and somewhat frustrating time for a parent. We understand how you feel, since each of us has been in your shoes. This handbook will hopefully answer some of your questions as the season progresses, but please don't hesitate to ask a parent who has been on the team before anything you don't understand. We're here to help you!

Things you need to know right away

What is Swim School?

Swim school is a program to help swimmers who have had lessons, and are comfortable in the water, begin to learn stroke technique and begin to compete in developmental meets (B meets) on Monday nights. They usually practice on Tuesday and Thursday mornings from 9:45-10:30. They pay swim team dues, can participate in team social events, and receive a trophy at awards night.

What time is practice?

There is a general guideline for practice times based on age, but the coaches might move your child to a different time based on ability. The usual times are:

Until school is over – Afternoon practices

8 years old and under – Tuesday and Thursday 5:00-6:00 pm

9-12 year olds – Monday, Wednesday, Friday 5:00-6:00 pm

13 years old and over – everyday 6:00-7:00 pm

After school lets out for summer – Morning practices begin

13 years old and over – 7:30-8:45 am Monday through Thursday

9:00am Friday

9-12 year olds - 8:45-9:45 am Monday through Thursday

9:00 am Friday

8 years old and under – 9:45-10:30 am Monday through Thursday

9:00 am Friday

The Friday practices bring the entire team together to play water games. It gives all of the age groups a chance to get to know each other.

What equipment does my swimmer need?

Practice suit – many swim stores sell discontinued or solid color suits for a reduced price on a rack called “practice suits”. Having a suit to use at practice rather than the team suit will prolong the life of your team suit. Always rinse suits in tap water after being in the pool to get rid of damaging chlorine.

Team suit – a new team suit is selected every two years. Sizing for suits and sales usually take place at the kick-off meeting and a few more times at the beginning of the season. Be sure to write your name in it. It isn't mandatory to get a team suit – plenty of kids don't get them.

Team shirt – A team shirt is given to each swimmer before picture day. Names are usually written in the neck when distributed to make it easy to identify.

Goggles – These are a must for the comfort of your swimmer's eyes. Buy a decent pair, and write your swimmer's name on them.

Cap – a necessity for girls at every practice.

Towel – two towels are always a good idea especially at meets.

Optional items – A bag for carrying towels, fins etc. is a good idea. At the beginning of the season, when the air temperature or the water temperature is still cool, sweatshirts and sweatpants are recommended. There are team sweatshirts, sweatpants, and a variety of other things for sale. Be on the lookout for these at home meets if you are interested.

Why do I need to write my swimmer's name in everything?

You might think your child will recognize his or her own stuff, but Team shirts and suits all look alike, and the only way to identify who it belongs to, is by looking for a name. Goggles, caps, and fins often get laid on the pool deck during practice and at the end of practice. Swimmers can only tell which ones are theirs if their name is on it.

How do I know what's going on?

Swim team bulletin board - The bulletin board is located by the pay phone and has current information on it as well as meet sheets (meet sheets are explained later) on Fridays.

Swim Team Mailboxes – The plastic file tub located by the pay phones has a file folder for each family. Flyers for upcoming events, ribbons from meets, and any other correspondence can be found here. It is a good idea to check it daily.

E-mail – If you provide us with an e-mail address, we can put you on the contact list to let you know important information right away.

What should I do if I need to talk to the coach?

Please wait until practice is over to talk to the coaches. During practice, they are trying to concentrate on working with the swimmers. You might try talking to other parents or the team rep first – they probably know the answer to your question. If every parent spends time asking the coaches questions, there wouldn't be enough time to them to work with the swimmers.

What is a Team Rep?

The team rep is the person who is the liaison between the NVSL and Lee Graham. This person attends meetings at the NVSL and represents Lee Graham at the A meets in an official capacity. The team rep can argue a DQ or dispute a time for a swimmer if the rep thinks it an unfair judgment. The team rep is also the person who makes sure the swim season runs smoothly.

How can I help the team?

The Lee Graham Swim Team operates solely by volunteers with the exception of the coaches. It is imperative that each family finds ways to help out throughout the swim season. Most of the jobs can be done very easily or with minimum instructions. All of the swimmers benefit from a combined effort of the parents. We understand the desire to watch your child swim at meets which may inhibit you from volunteering for a particular job, however; it takes many people to run meets and we strive not to have the same parents volunteering all the time. With over 80 families participating, if everyone takes a few opportunities to help out it will make a significant difference.

Fun stuff

What are all the social events on the calendar?

Most of the social events on the calendar are optional, but they are part of what makes being on the swim team fun.

Hot Dogs after the practice meet – Free hot dogs to swim team members and their families are available after the meet.

Picture Day – At the beginning of the season a picture of the team as well as optional pictures of individual swimmers are done by a professional photographer.

Ice Cream Social – After one B meet during the season, free ice cream sundaes are available to swim team members, their families, and the swimmers from the visiting team.

Pasta Dinner – One Friday night during the season, free spaghetti and other pasta dishes, plus salad and bread makes a great dinner at the pool for team members and their families.

Friday Fun Days – Sometimes we organize an outing to the movie theatre, sometimes we offer movies upstairs at the clubhouse, and sometimes we go bowling. All of these are intended to keep the swimmers out of the hot sun the day before the Saturday A meet.

Senior Progressive Dinner – The senior swimmers (13 and over) get together one Wednesday to dress up and go to three different houses for appetizers, salad, main

course, and then back to the pool for dessert and swimming. This is always a highlight for the older kids.

Awards Night/Team Overnight – Sunday after Divisionals, the team has a dinner event and trophies are awarded to swimmers, then a slide show of the season is shown, the pools are open for an evening of fun, then for those who wish, a sleepover at the pool is available.

Information about Meets

What is a practice meet?

The first Saturday meet is a practice meet (some teams call it time trials), where the swimmers can swim two events to get their first times of the year. This gives the swimmer a base time to show progress for the year. It also gives the coaches times to determine who will be swimming in the first A meet the following Saturday.

What is an A meet?

An A meet is a meet with another team from the division (dual meet), where points are scored by swimmers and one team emerges the winner. There are 38 individual events and 12 relay events. They are divided into 4 strokes and 5 age groups. Swimmers are chosen to participate in these meets based on their times. Normally, the three swimmers from Lee Graham with the fastest times in each event compete with the three fastest swimmers from the other team. Each swimmer is limited to two individual events plus relays. Since swimmers go on vacations, to camp, etc, often spaces open up to other swimmers.

How can I find out if my child is swimming in an A meet?

The meet sheet is always posted by Friday morning, and you should always check to see if your child is on it. Often we have no swimmer in the lane because they didn't check the meet sheet and didn't know they needed to be there. Don't assume your child won't be swimming just because there are other faster swimmers on the team. There are three lanes to fill for every event, and sometimes, as mentioned above, people are not available for a meet

What is a Meet Sheet?

For Saturday A meets, a meet sheet, listing the six swimmers for each event, is generated. Events are seeded with the fastest two swimmers in lanes 3 and 4, the next fastest in 2 and 5, and the next fastest in 1 and 6. Friday morning, a copy is posted on the bulletin board for swimmers to check what events they are swimming. Saturday mornings, the meet sheet is available for purchase as a program. The cost is usually \$1.00.

Should I be disappointed if my child doesn't swim in the A meets?

Absolutely not. Swimming success comes with getting a better time than the last time you swam that race, and knowing that you worked hard to achieve a better time.

What is a B meet?

B meets take place on Monday evenings with another team. They are also called “developmental meets” and are aimed at those who are not yet ready for A meets. There are no points scored and no winner of the meet, but ribbons are awarded to all swimmers who participate.

Can everyone swim in a B meet?

The first B meet of the season is open to everyone and swimmers are encouraged to participate since it is another opportunity to get times before the first A meet. Experienced swimmers usually swim the strokes that they didn’t get a time in at the practice meet, but younger swimmers may swim the same stroke they did at the practice meet. Once a swimmer swims a stroke at an A meet, he is not allowed to swim that stroke at a B meet, and if he places 1st, 2nd or 3rd, he is not allowed to swim anything in a B meet unless it is the Individual Medley event. There is usually an eligibility sheet posted before the B meet to let swimmers know if they may swim in any event.

What is the reason for this rule?

If faster swimmers continue to swim in the B meets (even unofficially), the developing swimmers never have the satisfaction of winning an event.

What if we are going to be out of town for a meet?

If your child is going to be out of town for a Saturday meet, you should leave a note in the Coach’s mailbox before Thursday of that week. Thursday is the day the coaches decide who will be swimming that Saturday, and they need to know who will be missing so they can plan the swimmers for each event accordingly. A verbal message is hard to remember when they sit down to work on it, so a note is preferred.

What should my child do to have a successful swim meet?

1. During the season, healthy eating and lots of water are a good idea.
2. The night before a meet, eat a dinner high in carbohydrates like pasta or rice to store energy for the next day.
3. The morning of the meet, eat before coming to the pool, and if snacks are needed, pack bagels, granola bars or fruit.
4. Pack two towels, two pairs of goggles and two caps for every meet. If it is cold, pack a sweatshirt and sweat pants to keep warm between races.
5. Arrive at least 10 minutes before warm-ups are scheduled to begin.
6. Swimmers should stay in the team area. After a race, the swimmer should go talk to the coach before going to visit Mom and Dad.
7. Parents should let the coaches work with the swimmers, and not interrupt them during a meet. If a parent has a question about their child’s performance, they should talk to the coach after the meet.
8. Always be positive when talking to your swimmer. Be encouraging, not discouraging.

What time do we go to the meets?

Always check the bulletin board to be certain, but a general rule of thumb is as follows:

Home B meet – warm up begins at LG at 5:00 pm.

Away B meet – meet at LG at 5:00 pm (can vary depending on the distance to the other pool), travel to other pool, warm up at 5:30.

Home A meet – warm up begins at LG at 8:00 am.

Away A meet – meet at LG at 7:30 am (can vary depending on the distance to the other pool), travel to other pool, warm up at 8:30.

What is a relay carnival?

The six teams in the division meet on the 3rd Wednesday evening of the season to swim a meet consisting of only relays. Swimmers are chosen and notified for this meet by the coaches. The top 18 times in the NVSL for each event go on to swim at the All Star Relay Carnival the following Wednesday.

What is an IM/Fly Carnival?

The Monday evening following the last A meet is the IM/Fly Carnival. At this meet, several teams come together for the purpose of getting official times in events that are not normally swum in A meets, but are a part of Divisionals and All Stars. These are Butterfly for 8 & Unders, and Individual Medley for all age groups.

What is Divisionals?

The last Saturday in July, the six teams in the division send their two fastest swimmers in each event to compete in the Divisional Championships. Each swimmer is only allowed to swim in two events, and the coaches will help the swimmers decide by Monday of divisionals week, which events to select. This means that there are often places for other swimmers who are not the top two, and sometimes at the seeding meeting, if another team has only one swimmer competing, it leaves a spot for the next fastest swimmer in the division. There are two heats in each event (12 possible swimmers), and seeding is done by using the swimmer's fastest recorded official time for the season. If a swimmer is competing in Divisionals, he/she is expected to attend practice during that week.

Swimmers not participating are done with practice for the year. Awards for the meet are plaques for 1st through 6th place and ribbons for 7th through 12th place. The top 18 times in the NVSL recorded at divisionals go on to compete against each other at the All Star Individual Championships the following Saturday. If a swimmer is going to swim in the All Star meet, he/she will need to attend practice for an extra week. During this week, everyone practices together at 8:30 am.

Should I come to a meet I'm not swimming in?

It is always nice to have non-swimming team members there to help cheer, and older swimmers are encouraged to attend B meets to help cheer on the younger, newer swimmers. Swimmers not competing in A meets may enjoy coming to the meet to see what it is like.

What is a DQ or being DQ'd?

Being disqualified (DQ) means that the swimmer did something that broke a rule for the legal execution of the stroke. This often happens as swimmers learn the finer points of a new stroke, and it is not a life-shattering event, merely a learning experience. All

swimmers (even Olympic athletes) have DQ'd many times in their lives, but they learned how to be successful at the stroke as a result.

The NVSL

What is the NVSL?

The Northern Virginia Swim League (NVSL) started in 1956, and is made up of over 100 teams divided into 18 divisions. It is the oldest and largest summer swimming league in the country with over 10,000 swimmers. The NVSL issues the rules and schedule by which we operate our swim team.

Who are all the people dressed in white shirts and blue shorts?

These are all of the officials running the meet. It takes more than 40 parents to run each meet. Usually these duties are divided between the two teams.

Referee (provided by the home team) – The referee is the chief official of the meet. He is responsible for conducting the meet and is the final authority on interpretation and enforcement of all rules. He signals the start of each race by blowing his whistle, at which time everyone becomes quiet.

Starter (provided by the home team) – The starter is responsible for making sure all the swimmers get a fair start. At the beginning of each race, he announces the stroke and the distance of the race, instructs them to “take your mark”, and once the swimmers are ready and still, he starts the race.

Clerk of Course (one from each team) – These two people are the “gatekeepers” for the swimmers. They get the swimmers lined up in the correct order for each race in a special area.

Stroke and Turn Judges (two from each team) – The officials make sure each swimmer swims in accordance with the rules for that stroke. If a swimmer does not, the stroke and turn judge records the error on a disqualification (DQ) slip and gives it to the referee for review.

Relay Take-off Judges (four from each team) – During relays, these officials are positioned at each end of the pool to make sure each swimmer touches the wall before the next swimmer leaves the pool deck.

Timers (nine from each team) – Each lane has three officials with stopwatches. Each timer starts their stopwatch at the beginning of the race and stops it when the swimmer touches the wall. The three times are then recorded on the swimmers card, fastest and slowest times thrown out and the middle time becomes the official time recorded for the swimmer.

Table Workers (each team provides several, but the head table worker is from the home team) – The table workers record the official times, keep the score and prepare the ribbons.

Marshals (one from each team) – The marshals help direct teams to their team areas, keep spectators off the pool deck, and maintain order during the meet. The marshal has the authority to reprimand individuals engaging in unsafe or unsportsmanlike behavior.

Announcer (provided by the home team) – The announcer maintains the tempo of the meet by announcing events, swimmers in the event, and results of the event.

Computer Rep (provided by the home team) – The computer rep is in charge of all swim team information. He has every swimmer in the database and enters all of the official times from every meet, which is then turned in to NVSL for the official records. He also provides the coaches with information on everyone's time in each event so they can decide who will swim in the meets, personal best times, new records, prints out the cards for the meets, and prints out the stickers for the back of the ribbons.

Team Rep – The team rep watches the meet for any unfair judgment during the meet. It is the team rep's responsibility to protest anything they feel is unfair.

How can I become an official?

Many official positions require training sessions with the NVSL. Officials Clinics are held in late May and early June. If you are interested in becoming a trained official, let the team rep know before the season starts, if possible, so you can find out the training schedule. Timers, table workers and marshals don't need special NVSL training, and this is a great way to get involved.

Planning for next year

Is the calendar the same every year so I can plan camp week, vacations, etc?

The dates change every year, but the structure is the same. Individual All Stars is always the first Saturday in August. Count back one week to the last Saturday in July for Divisionals. The five Saturdays prior to that are the five A meets. Count forward three Wednesdays after the first A meet to get the date for the Relay Carnival, and one week after that for the All Star Relay Carnival. The practice meet is always the Saturday before the first A meet.