



Houston Cougar Aquatic Sports



INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this handbook is two-fold: to explain to new members just who Houston Cougar Aquatics Sports Club are and to outline various policies that affect all swimmers, year after year. It should be read by all families so that they may become familiar with important facts and rules of the club.

WHY SWIM?

United States Swimming (USS) age group swimming program is America's largest program of guided fitness activity for children. Age group swimming builds a strong foundation for a lifetime of good health by teaching healthy fitness habits.

Physical Development

Swimming is considered the ideal activity for developing muscular and skeletal growth by many physicians and pediatricians. Why do doctors like it so much?

- Swimming develops high quality aerobic endurance, the most important key to physical fitness. In other sports an hour of practice may yield as little as 10 minutes of meaningful exercise. Age group swimming teams use every precious minute of practice time developing fitness and teaching skills.
- Swimming does a better job in proportional muscular development by using all the body's major muscle groups. There is no other sport that does this as well.
- Swimming enhances children's natural flexibility (at a time when they ordinarily begin to lose it) by exercising all of their major joints through a full range of motion.
- Swimming helps develop superior coordination because it requires combinations of complex movements of all parts of the body, enhancing harmonious muscle function, grace, and fluidity of movement.
- Swimming is the most injury-free of all children's sports. It also has the fewest cases of concussion amongst participants.
- Swimming is a sport that will bring kids fitness and enjoyment for life. Participants in Master's Swimming programs are still training and racing well into their 90's.

Intellectual Competence

In addition to physical development, children can develop greater intellectual competence by participating in a guided program of physical activity. Learning and using swimming skills engages the thinking processes. As they learn new techniques, children must develop and plan movement sequences. They improve by exploring new ideas. They learn that greater progress results from using their creative talents. Self-expression can be just as much physical as intellectual. Finally, their accomplishments in learning and using new skills contribute to a stronger self image.



Houston Cougar Aquatic Sports



GENERAL DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVE

Houston Cougar Aquatic Sports, Coog, is a year-round club swimming team created in 2002 by the late Mark Taylor, the Head Coach of the University of Houston's Women's Swimming Team. We offer a guided age-group youth program for children age 5 and up, from the beginning swimmer to the most competitive and skilled swimmer. When a young person becomes a member of Coogs he/she learns the values of sportsmanship and team work. Swimming provides physical, emotional and intellectual skills that will last a lifetime.

The mission of the Houston Cougar Aquatics Sports is:

"Building the Champions of Tomorrow One Stroke at a Time"

COACHES RESPONSIBILITIES

The coaches' job is to supervise the entire competitive swim program. The Coogs coaching staff is dedicated to providing a program for swimmers that will enable them to learn the value of striving to improve oneself--"to be the best you can be." Therefore, the coaches must be in total control in matters affecting training and competition.

1. The coaches are responsible for placing swimmers in practice groups. This is based on the age and ability level of each individual. When it is in the best interest of a swimmer, he/she will be placed in a more challenging training group by the coach.
2. Sole responsibility for stroke instruction and the training regimen rests with the Coogs coaching staff. Each of the groups practices are based on sound scientific principles and are geared to the specific goals of that group.
3. The coaching staff will make the final decision concerning which meets Coogs swimmers may attend. The coaching staff also makes the final decision concerning which events a swimmer is entered into.
4. At meets, it is the coach's job to offer constructive criticism of a swimmer's performance. It is the parent's responsibility to provide love and encouragement that bolster the swimmer's confidence along the way.
5. The building of a relay team is the sole responsibility of the coaching staff.

The coaching staff is constantly updating and improving the Houston Cougar Aquatics Sports program. It is the swimmer's and parents' responsibility to make the most out of the excellent opportunity this program provides for success in swimming.

TEAM LEVELS

The Coogs use a "progressive" age group program designed to develop the child physically, mentally and emotionally in a systematic fashion. A well-defined, long-term approach of gradually increasing degrees of commitment is essential to reach peak performance levels during a swimmer's physiological prime. The emphasis in the early stages of participation must be placed on developing technical skills and a love for the sport. In the later years, a more demanding physical and psychological challenge must be introduced to the training program. In this respect, "too much too soon" is more often the cause of failure to achieve maximum potential in senior swimming than in the reverse situation.

In addition to emphasizing long-term rather than short-term results, it is also important that we establish training groups of swimmers who are compatible in respect to abilities, maturity, commitment levels and goals.



Houston Cougar Aquatic Sports



At each level, the goals and objectives are specific and directed toward meeting the needs of the swimmer. The long term goal of total excellence is always in mind. As each child is different, he/she will progress at his/her own rate. The coaching staff recognizes this fact by making team assignments based on a swimmer's physical, mental, and emotional level of development. Coaches may use their discretion in placement of swimmers in the following groups:

- National
- Senior Red
- Senior Blue
- Junior Red
- Junior Blue
- Age Group Gold
- Age Group Red
- Age Group Blue
- Development
- Fundamental

National Group

Our National group is for swimmers over the age of 15 with Sectional cuts. This group focuses training and competitive efforts at the National level and qualifying for National level meets. All swimmers are required to sign a code of conduct for this group at the start of the season.

Senior Groups

Our Senior groups are for swimmers over the age of 15 who are experienced and proficient and are working towards achieving at a State level. These groups focus on building speed and endurance, improving swimming technique, and preparing athletes for the National group. Swimmers over the age of 15 with less than 3 "15/16 A" times will be placed in the Blue group, swimmers with 3 or more "15/16 A" times will be placed in the Red group.

Junior Groups

Our Junior groups are generally for swimmers aged 11 to 14 that are committed and motivated in preparation for higher levels of swimming. These groups focus on stroke refinement, aerobic training and strength building. Swimmers with less than 3 "A" times will be placed in the Blue group, swimmers with 3 "A" times will be placed in the Red group.

Age Groups

Our Age Group program is designed to introduce and advance swimmers in year-round swimming. The groups are based on stroke instruction and progressing to competitive training. Dryland is a very important aspect of these groups to build overall fitness. Swimmers in Age Group Blue have an understanding of all 4 competitive strokes with at least one "B" time. Once a swimmer achieves 3 or more "B" times they will progress to the Red group. To advance to the Gold group a swimmer needs to achieve 3 or more "BB" times in more than one stroke.

Development

Our Development group is for young swimmers who are ready to learn more advanced stroke techniques. They must have a basic understanding of all 4 competitive strokes and will continue to learn by means of drills and games designed to make swimming fun. Swimmers are encouraged to attend meets and once they obtain the required goal times they advance to Age Group Blue.



Houston Cougar Aquatic Sports



Fundamental

Our Fundamental group is designed to introduce young swimmers to the sport of swimming through drills and games designed to make swimming fun. Swimmers must be able to complete 25m of Freestyle in order to join this group. Once a swimmer can complete 25m of Freestyle, Backstroke and Kick unaided they will progress to the Development group.

Masters

Our Master's group is for swimmers who are over the age of 18 and wish to train to keep fit or to compete at the Master's level. This group is also great for triathletes.

TRAINING SESSIONS

Training sessions are the most important aspect of competitive swimming. Consistent training is needed to progress through the classes of swimmers. Therefore, it is important that each swimmer attends as many practices as possible in order to derive the full benefits of the program.

Practice Schedule See our website at www.coogaquatics.org for latest information

PRACTICE AND ATTENDANCE POLICIES

Houston Cougar Aquatic Sports does not have a minimum attendance policy and does not discourage our athletes from participating in other extracurricular activities. Swimmers and parents need to adhere to the policies set by each group; please check with your coach.

ILLNESS AND INJURY

Whenever possible, the coach should be informed in advance of an illness or injury.

SWIMMERS TRAINING RESPONSIBILITIES

As a swimmer's level of swimming ability increases so does his/her responsibility. The program is designed to encourage all swimmers to be college swimming bound and as a swimmer improves, this is a deep commitment that requires great effort on all parts. A swimmer has responsibilities to the team, the coach, his/her parents, and most importantly to themselves. Swimmers need to prepare themselves for a 100% effort each time they come to practice.

Swimmers will be required to bring specified training accessories to workouts. It is the swimmer's responsibility to make sure they have these items.

Required and Optional Team Equipment

Swimmers in the COOG program are required to have the following equipment at all practices:

Goggles, Swim Cap, Swim Suit, Pull Buoy, Fins, Snorkel, Paddles (older swimmers), Dry Land Kit

PARENTS . . . YOUR ATHLETE NEEDS YOU

To have a successful program there must be understanding and cooperation among parents, swimmers and coaches.

The progress your swimmer makes depends to a great extent on this triangular relationship.

The following guidelines will help you keep your child's development in the proper perspective and help your child reach his/her full potential as an athlete:



Houston Cougar Aquatic Sports



The coach is **The Coach!!!** We want your swimmer to relate to his/her coach as soon as possible concerning swimming matters. This relationship between coach and swimmer produces the best results. When parents interfere with opinions as to how the swimmer should swim or train, it causes considerable, and oftentimes insurmountable, confusion as to whom the swimmer should listen to. If you have a problem, concern, or complaint, please contact the coach.

Be the best kind of parent you can be! While it is the coach's job is to motivate and constructively criticize the swimmer's performance, it is the parent's job to supply the love, recognition, and encouragement necessary to make the child work harder in practice, which in turn gives him/her the confidence to perform well in competition.

Ten and Unders: Kids that are in the "Ten and Under" age group are the most inconsistent swimmers and this can be frustrating for parents, coaches, and the swimmer alike! Parents and coaches must be patient and permit these youngsters to learn to love the sport.

Not every race may be a best time: Even the very best swimmer will have meets where they do not do their best times. These "plateaus" are a normal part of swimming and over the course of a season, their times should improve. Please be supportive of your swimmer at these "poor" meets, keeping the long term goal in mind, especially with the older swimmers who may have only two or three meets a year for which they will be shaved and tapered. Winning ribbons, medals or trophies is NEVER the main goal.

PARENTS RESPONSIBILITIES

Please make every effort to have your swimmers at practice on time.
Realize that your child is working hard and give all the support you can.
Encourage a good diet and sleeping habits, they will serve your swimmers well.

COMMUNICATION

Parents and swimmers can freely communicate with any of our coaching staff. All of their phone numbers and email addresses are found on our website.

FEE STRUCTURE

PAYMENT POLICIES

Each Coog family will be responsible for the following regular fees.

1. Monthly dues - All Swimmers. This is determined by assigned training group for **each** swimmer. A "multi swimmer discount" is applied for those families with multiple swimmers on the team.
2. Annual USA Swimming Registration Fee - All Swimmers. Dues for **each** registered swimmer, paid to Coog and then submitted to USA Swimming.
3. Annual COOG Registration Fee- All Swimmers. Registration fee for **each** swimmer will also include a team t-shirt & swim cap.
4. Volunteer Escrow Account - All Coog families are required to pay an annual \$100 volunteer escrow fee.



Houston Cougar Aquatic Sports



5. Meet Entry Fees - In addition to the USA fees there is also a \$6 Coog surcharge fee per swimmer. Each swim family will be billed for all events in which their swimmer is entered and the fees will be collected prior to the meet date.

6. Reinstatement Fee - There is NO reinstatement fee but if a swimmer misses the monthly payments they will forfeit the "returning member fee" at registration & will be considered a new member at that time.

Importance of Timely Payment

Characteristic of any business, Coog expenses begin the first day of every month. A positive cash flow is required to assure payroll requirements and various other expenditures. It is, therefore, imperative for all Coog parents to pay their swimmer's monthly installment on or before the due date which is the **10th** of each month, after that date a late fee of \$10 will be attached to their account.

CANCELLING COOG MEMBERSHIP AND GOING "INACTIVE"

At times a swimmer may need to go "inactive" for a period of time due to long-term illness or injury. Notification of the need to go "inactive" must be submitted to the team treasurer and, except in emergency circumstances, requires a **written notice due 30 days prior to the swimmer's last practice.**

If you have any questions about any billing you may have received, please contact your coach.

FEE STRUCTURE

1. Registration fee (covers the USA SWIMMING Registration Fee, the Coog team T-shirt & team swim cap)

The yearly registration fee payable when you join the Club are:

- First time swimmer who joins from Sept. 1st through March 31st - \$150 per swimmer.
- First time swimmer who joins April 1st through August 31st - \$100 per swimmer
- Returning swimmer from the previous season - \$100 per swimmer
- Inactive swimmer from the previous season - \$150 per swimmer.

2. Monthly dues.

The commitment to the Houston Cougar Aquatics Sports is for a year of swimming. However, Houston Cougar Aquatics Sports dues are payable in monthly installments with a 10% discount available to those families paying for the entire season **in advance** (applies only to monthly fees).

The monthly fee schedule is as follows:

National Group	\$185.00
Senior Groups	\$170.00
Junior Groups	\$135.00
Age Group Gold	\$ 115.00
Age Groups	\$ 90.00
Development Group	\$ 75.00
Fundamental Group	\$ 75.00
Masters Group	\$ 50.00 monthly or \$100 for a 20 session punch card

DISCOUNTS



Houston Cougar Aquatic Sports



Families that pay their annual fee in full at Registration will receive a 10% discount (Coaching fees only). **This is a non refundable amount.** In addition, there is no refund for unused months if the swimmer leaves at any point during the season.

Multiple family member discount:

The 2nd member of a family is discounted 10%. The third member of a family is discounted 20%, the fourth member is discounted 30%, and the fifth member will not be charged. **Please note that if you, or your son/daughter swims in any part of a month, you are still responsible for the full month's fee.** Late payments have a \$10.00 late fee. Discounts apply only for the monthly fees, not registration.

3. Late Payment Fee

All late payments will be charged a \$10 fee.

4. Volunteer Escrow Account

All Coog families are required to pay an annual \$100 volunteer escrow fee. Each family is required to commit to 20 hours per year volunteering for team activities such as social event planning and timing at the meets. If the volunteer commitment is met, the initial payment is "rolled forward" to the next year. If the commitment is not met, the family will be billed the \$100 volunteer fee at the next year's registration. The volunteer year runs from September- August. Please check the website and team emails for various volunteering opportunities.

5. Entry fees

Throughout the year, you will receive information regarding upcoming meets. You will be billed separately for each upcoming meet that your swimmer participates in. Fees for meets are set by the Host meets and payment is required before the event starts. Once a swimmer is entered in to a meet we cannot refund this amount for any reason.

FUND RAISING

Houston Cougar Aquatics Sports will occasionally host fundraising activities. Families will be notified in advance.

TEAM UNIFORM

The Coog team suit is a solid navy "Arena" racing suit with or without the Coog logo. All swimmers, including those swimming "unattached", **must wear the team suit in competition.** The coaches recommend that all swimmers wear lycra suits during all regular season competitions. At Championship "Shave and Taper" meets, 11 and over swimmers may wear "Arena" Technical suits. The coaching staff does not recommend these suits for 10 and unders. If you have any questions, see your swimmer's coach.

If a swimmer chooses to wear a cap, he/she **must wear the Coog team cap.** Caps cost \$5 for latex and \$15 for silicone. These caps are available through the coaches at practice or at meets. All swimmers will be given one free latex cap upon registration.

Swimmers are required to wear Coog t shirts at all meets. All swimmers will receive one free team shirt upon registration. Additional registration shirts can be purchased from the coaches for \$15. You can also purchase additional clothing through our Team Unify Spiritwear link on the website.

SWIM MEET INFORMATION

TYPES OF SWIM MEETS



Houston Cougar Aquatic Sports



INTRASQUAD

These are meets hosted by Coog for Coog swimmers only. These are good practice meets for beginning swimmers and are held primarily to build team spirit and camaraderie.

DUAL

Dual meets are competitions between two clubs (Sometimes more).

INVITATIONAL

An invitational is a meet hosted by one team. The host team invites other teams and several hundred swimmers may attend the meet. Sometimes, swimmers with only certain time standards may attend. Many invitational meets are split format which means 12/under swimmers swim in a separate session from 13/over swimmers.

CHAMPIONSHIPS

Athletes who meet certain time standards during the season will qualify for season ending Championship meets. Each successive level of Championship meet brings swimmers to compete against larger and larger pools of competition.

SWIM SEASONS

The swim year is divided into two seasons. The Short Course season runs from mid-September to mid-March. The meets are primarily held in a 25-yard pools. The Long Course season runs from early April to mid-August. These meets are generally held outside in 50 meter pools (Olympic size).

COMPETITION ..and the winner is..

The Houston Cougar Aquatics Sports staff do not see the first place person as the only winner; rather, we look to see who behaves like a winner. There are certain characteristics of a winner, and every swimmer, no matter where they place, has the opportunity to emulate those characteristics.

In competition, the important measure is not who collected the most medals, or even who improved the most seconds; the real critical measure is who learned the most from the competitive experience.

Swimmers quickly forget the medals, records, and other material benefits. They will, however, remember the development of interpersonal skills, discipline, listening skills, time management, goal setting and enhanced self- image. These are the things that make the swimmer a more successful person with a better chance of living a life closer to their peak potential, and to contribute to the world they live in.

LEVELS OF ACHIEVEMENT & BASIC USA SWIMMING INFORMATION

1. There are seven different age group classifications recognized by United State Swimming which is the governing body of the sport. They are: 8-Under, 10-Under, 11-12, 13-14, 15-16, 17-18, and Senior.
2. The "Senior" classification includes any age registered swimmer who has achieved the prescribed qualifying time for that event.
3. Not all age group classifications are offered at every swim meet.
4. The swimmers age on the first day of a meet will generally govern the swimmers age for the entire meet.
5. Swimmers "age up" on their birthday (unless it is in the middle of a meet)
6. Within each age-group, there are different nationally recognized levels of achievement based on times. All swimmers begin as "C" swimmers. As they improve, they advance from "C", to "BB", "B", "A", "AA", "AAA", and ultimately "AAAA". The times required for each ability level are published each year by United States Swimming. This permits fair, yet challenging, competition on all levels.



Houston Cougar Aquatic Sports



In some cases, a swimmer may be in a different class for each stroke. An example: a "C" breaststroke time, a "B" freestyle time, and an "AA" backstroke time. In addition, swimmers may also be in different levels for different distances within each stroke; for example: an "A" time in the 50 yard free and a "B" time in the 100 yard free

MEET SCHEDULE

Each season's meet schedule is distributed at the start of the season but may occasionally be changed at the coach's discretion.

1. The meet schedule has been established with the expectation that swimmers will attend every meet available at their classification level. In other words, a Coog swimmer with "A" times should participate in all "A" level meets for Coog.
2. On an average, we want all team members to compete once every three or four weeks. The meet schedule is established with this philosophy in mind. In some cases, meets of a similar classification are scheduled as close as two weeks apart or as far as one month apart. This happens when the meets that the coaching staff choose from offer no other alternative.
3. The coaching staff reserves the right to make the final decision concerning meets Houston Cougar Aquatics Sports swimmers may attend.

Please visit www.coogaquatics.org to commit to meets.