



Swans Team Handbook

Welcome!!!

Welcome to the Charlottesville Synchronized Swimming Team! This handbook describes some procedures and guidelines that will help ensure that the season runs smoothly for all athletes, parents, and coaches. As our program grows, this handbook will change to stay relevant.

Charlottesville Synchronized Swimming Team is open to any athlete, age 6- 18, regardless of religion, ethnicity, social-economic background, or gender.

Charlottesville Synchronized Swimming Team Goals:

The goal of Charlottesville Synchronized Swimming team is to provide an opportunity for swimmers of all levels to learn synchronized swimming skills and:

- Improve strength, endurance, power, flexibility, body control and grace.
- Learn to count and interpret different types of music
- Develop creativity and confidence.
- Understand the value of respect, commitment and hard work.
- Practice teamwork while learning the ultimate team sport!

Description of Programs:

Charlottesville Synchronized Swimming Team is a competitive team. Swimmers will be placed into developmentally appropriate categories. The categories are as follows:

Novice: The Novice level is for athletes who are learning the novice-level skills. These skills consist of basic figure and technical routine skills. Swimmers at this level will be eligible to participate in 3 novice level competitions in the Association or Region in the 12 & under or 13-15 age divisions. Novice swimmers will have the opportunity to swim two routines in competition. Practice and meet attendance requirements are the most flexible at this level.

Intermediate: The Intermediate level is the next step after the Novice level. Some swimmers will move directly to this level as well, at the discretion of coaches. Intermediate level swimmers compete in the Association or Region in the 12 & under, 13-15, 16-17, or 18-19 age divisions. The Intermediate level figures and technical routines are more advanced than the Novice level and practice and meet attendance requirements require more commitment than the Novice level. Intermediate level swimmers may have the opportunity to swim two routines, at the coaches' discretion.

Advanced Intermediate and Age Group Competitors: These swimmers usually have significant prior experience and compete in 12 & under, 13-15, 16-17 and 18-19 divisions, although new athletes can on occasion compete in the Age Group category when they demonstrate the ability to perform at this level. These swimmers learn advanced synchronized swimming skills, routines and figures. Age Group figures are more difficult than Intermediate figures, and older Age Group swimmers perform more complex figures than younger Age Group Swimmers. Routines for 12& under athletes include required technical elements. Athletes compete at the Association level and can qualify to compete at the Regional, Zone, and National level, based on age group, placement, and/or scores.

What to Expect at Practice:

Practices will vary based on the time of year and how close the team is to a competition or event. Coaches plan each practice to provide quality instruction and training for swimmers based on their age and experience level. Athletes are expected to participate in all aspects of training. If an athlete has an injury or condition that will preclude participation in any part of training, coaches will need a doctor's note explaining limitations and/or a conference with the parent/s of the athlete. The swimmer should still attend practice unless contagious or otherwise unable. In general, synchronized swimming training and instruction will consist of:

- **Land Drill** (practicing routines on land with counts and music to learn or perfect timing)
- **Dry Land Conditioning** will include work on flexibility, extension, core upper and lower body strength, speed, agility and precision through exercises based on Plyometrics, Pilates, yoga, gymnastics, ballet and general strength and flexibility training.
- **Swimming Drills focused on all four strokes** – freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, and butterfly- to improve endurance, technique, speed and feel for the water.
- **Synchro-specific conditioning and drills-** workouts and drills consisting of synchro skills such as sculling, eggbeater, kicking, transitions, ballet legs, etc. to improve techniques, speed, strength, endurance and power.
- **Figures and figure drills-** work on figures, body positions and transitions. This can be done with a coach either individually or as a group, or with a partner. Often swimmers will be asked to work individually or with a partner to maximize pool time. Swimmers are expected to stay on task and complete the required figure or drill.
- **Routines and routine elements-** work on routines includes swimming the routine or parts of the routine with the music, swimming the routine or part of the routine to counts, swimming the routine multiple times through for endurance, working on a part of the routine or a technical element with a partner.

Communication:

Communication from the Swans:

- Our website, charlottesvillesynchro.com, has basic information on our team.
- Our Facebook page, Charlottesville Swans Synchro, is where we post upcoming events, pictures, and or all things SYNCHRO! Please make sure to like our Facebook page!
- We will plan to send weekly email updates via Team Unify regarding the ongoing logistics of Swans (practice information, upcoming meets, payments, etc.)

Communication to the Coaches & Board: Please communicate via email whenever possible. Last minute lateness or absences can be communicated through a phone call or text message to Coach Sam at 434-996-8924 – tell her who you are! If you know of an absence 24 hours ahead of time, please email the Charlottesville Swans board: SwansCharlottesville@gmail.com. Earlier is better! If parents have any concerns, please email SwansCharlottesville@gmail.com to set up an appointment to discuss with the coach(es) or board as appropriate.

Parent Volunteer Opportunities:

We are committed to providing a great experience for your athletes. In order to provide the best possible experience, we need your help! Below are some opportunities that we have for you to get involved with your swimmer's program:

- Spreading the word about our program and this amazing sport!!!
- Fundraising committee
- Maintaining the team website or bulletin board
- Organizing team social events
- Chaperoning at meets
- Volunteering at meets
- Cutting music for routines
- Helping set up music before practice or taking off the deep end covers

Required Equipment/Apparel:

This and other costume gear can be ordered at:

www.swimoutlet.com/charlottesvilleswanssynchro

At Practices:

- Swim suit and cap
- Clear goggles and nose clips
- Towel/s
- Water bottle (all practices)
- Deck Shoes
- Change of Clothes for younger swimmers doing gymnastics after swimming

At Competitions, Exhibitions or Shows:

- Routine suits and headpieces
- Black figure suit and white cap
- Pink Team Warm-up Suit and black Swans cap
- Goggles and nose clips (plural for a reason!)
- Charlottesville Synchro t-shirt
- Black yoga pants or shorts for novice/intermediate athletes
- Charlottesville Synchro "dress sweats" for age group athletes and combo swimmers
- Towels (bring extras)
- Knox kit (see below) and make-up
- Routine music for land drilling and a way to play it
- Healthy snacks
- Entertainment (cards, books, iPods, etc.)

Hair Gelling (aka Knoxing):

For competitions and synchro events, swimmers hair must be put in a bun like a ballerina. To keep it in place in the water, swimmers use unflavored Knox gelatin.

Supplies:

- 3-4 Knox unflavored gelatin (found in most grocery stores)
- A cup and spoon for mixing
- Comb
- Old handtowel
- Bobby pins
- Hair elastics
- Hair net (such as Goody brand)
- Bun Form (optional but helpful for shorter hair styles)
- Paint or pastry brush (1.5 inches is a good width)

Step 1. Put hair in a tight ponytail in line with the top of the ear and braid or twist the hair. Wrap the braid around the ponytail to form a bun and secure with lots of bobby pins. You can also use a bun form, especially if your hair is short or thin.

Step 2. Take the hair net and cover the bun, twisting and recovering it until it is tight. Then secure the hair net with lots of bobby pins.

Step 3. Put an old towel around the swimmer's shoulders to catch drips. Mix 3-4 packets of Knox with very hot water. Add the water to the mix...not the mix to the water. It will have more clumps. Use about 1/3 cup of water. The mixture should be the consistency of paint.

Step 4. Brush the Knox mixture on using paint brush. Secure any loose hair around the nape with bobby pins. Cris cross x's work well for shorter pieces. Work quickly, because the gel hardens and becomes lumpy as it cools.

Meet Etiquette:

Please observe the following practices to ensure that meets run smoothly and Charlottesville Synchro makes good impressions.

Figures

- Swimmers and spectators must remain quiet during the figure competition, so as not to distract the competitors or the judges
- No one is allowed near the swimmers, judges or scoring tables, except parents working in an official capacity.
- Parents can videotape or photograph their swimmer as long as it is not disruptive
- If you are keeping track of your swimmer's score, please do not distract your swimmer or others by sharing these scores during the competition.



Charlottesville Swans Synchronized Swimming

Routines

- Please remain quiet after the referee blows the whistle so that swimmers and timers can hear when the music begins
- Once the swimmer/s are in the water, you can and are encouraged to clap and cheer as much as you like
- Only officials and workers should be walking around the competitive area during a routine.
- Awards
- Please try and stay for awards if at all possible. Please stay for awards for all age group/levels – don't leave after your swimmer's award ceremony.
- Exhibit good sportsmanship and clap for all swimmers

General

- Please pick up your belongings and trash
- Say "thank you" to the volunteers, coaches and officials that helped run the meet

Practice Requirements at Meets (especially zone and national competitions)

- Traveling for a meet is exciting and while we encourage you to plan to make the trip fun with sight-seeing near the location of a regional or international meet, doing so during the required practice or meet times will not be permitted. We suggest extending the stay and make it a fun family vacation after the meet.
- Attending, watching and cheering for athletes from the team or region may be required at these large meets because it is an excellent learning opportunity for our athletes. All the coaches hope they will be inspired by watching the other athletes. (While this may seem inconvenient we intend to follow the USA Synchro model that has sent national team athletes to watch world events even when they are not competing.)
- Extra land drill, warm-up, or open pool figure or routine practice time may be required on your athletes in order to achieve optimal performance at the meet. All athletes will be expected to attend the extra land and water practices at the away meets. The coaching staff will attempt to notify you of the times in advance but all athletes and families need to be flexible because it may depend on the draw, available pool time and final event qualification. It may also depend on the ability of the athlete to adapt to the new atmosphere and be prepared to swim. Remember each athlete has worked hard to qualify for these elite meets and all the coaches want to ensure they have the best performance of the season so they can be proud of themselves.
- Please note the coaches have the right to utilize judgement to obtain the best performance outcome for each routine and may substitute alternates for any routine based on their judgement.

Competition Basics:

Figures:

- Each swimmer performs a total of four figures in front of a panel of judges. Swimmers wear white swim caps and plain black suits. Goggles and nose clips are permitted.
- Each figure receives a score between 0 and 10, with tenths of points. The judges look for design (proper body positions and transitions) and control (extension, height, stability, and uniform motion).
- 50% of the figure score (or the team's average score) will be added to the routine scores for the final total. Figures are a VERY important part of synchronized swimming. Swimmers should learn to LOVE figures!!!!

Routines:

- There are five free routine events: solo, duet, trio (novice and intermediate level only), team and combination. Combination routines have 10 swimmers. Teams have from 4-8 swimmers. Teams will receive a 0.25 point bonus for each swimmer over four.
- The length of the routine will vary based on level and age group. Novice routines are a maximum of 1:30 seconds. Intermediate routines vary between a maximum of 2:00 and 2:50, depending on the age of the swimmers. Age group routines vary from 2:00 to 4:00.
- Routines receive a score between 0 and 10, with one-tenth increments for Technical Merit, Artistic Impression and Difficulty
 - Technical Merit includes execution (of strokes, figures, and parts, transitions, propulsion and precision of patters), and synchronization
 - Artistic Impression includes choreography (variety, creativity, pool coverage, patterns, transitions), music interpretation, and manner of presentation
 - Difficulty includes the number of times more challenging movements are achieved in the routine (double leg vertical, double arms, spins and lifts)
- Novice and Intermediate routines are technical routines with required technical elements.

Transfer Policy

- Should a swimmer and parent decide that they want to transfer to another synchronized swim team within USA Synchro they will be required to follow the procedures found in Appendix J of the current rulebook. The rulebook can be found on the USA Synchro website under resources.

Recruitment Policy

- Parents are encouraged to advertise our team, especially to new swimmers. Since USA Synchro has specific rules about recruiting swimmers we suggest the parent refer the contact information for the new swimmer to coach.
- Contact about transferring from another synchronized swimming team may not be initiated by a parent. If a parent or swimmer from another USA Synchro registered team contact you about Swans, please refer them immediately to Coach Sam. This will prevent accidental violations of the USA Synchro policy.
- If your swimmer is approached about transferring to another synchro club, please inform a coach immediately. (Exception would be collegiate coaches that may initiate contact after their sophomore year of high school)



The Ten Commandments for Parents of Athletic Children

(Reprinted from the Young Athlete by Bill Burgess)

1. Make sure your child knows that, win or lose, scared or heroic, you love him/her, appreciate their efforts, and are not disappointed in them. This will allow them to do their best without a fear of failure. Be the person in their life they can look to for constant positive reinforcement.
2. Try your best to be completely honest about your child's athletic ability, his/her competitive attitude, their sportsmanship, and their actual skill level.
3. Be helpful, but don't coach him/her on the way to the pool or on the way back, or at breakfast and so on. It's tough, but it's a lot tougher for the child to be inundated with advice, pep talks, and often-critical instructions.
4. Teaching them to enjoy the thrill of competition, to be "out there trying", to be working to improve his/her swimming skills and attitudes. Help him/her to develop the feel for competition, for trying hard, and for having fun.
5. Do not re-live your athletic life through your child in a way that creates pressure; (remember that) you lost as well as won. You were frightened, you backed off at time, and you were not always heroic. Don't pressure your child because of pride. Athletic children need their parents, so you must not withdraw. Just remember that there is a thinking, feeling, and sensitive, free spirit out there in that suit, who needs a lot of understanding when his/her world turns bad. If he/she is comfortable with you, win or lose, he/she is on the way to maximum achievement and enjoyment.
6. Don't compete with the coach
7. Don't compare the skills, courage, or attitudes of your child with other members of the team.
8. Get to know the coaches so that you can be assured that his/her philosophy, attitudes, ethics and knowledge are such that you are happy to have your child under his/her leadership.
9. Always remember that children tend to exaggerate, both when praised and when criticized. Temper your reactions and investigate before over-reacting
10. Make a point of understanding courage, and the fact that it is relative. Some of us climb mountains, and are afraid to fight. Some of us will fight, but turn to jelly if a bee approaches. Everyone is frightened in certain circumstances. Courage is not the absence of fear, but a means of doing something in spite of fear and /or discomfort.