



Huntsville Swim Association Parent Handbook

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Welcome to the Huntsville Swim Association

Welcome to the Huntsville Swim Association! Whether you are joining us for the first time or returning for another season, we are thrilled to have you as part of our team. HSA is more than a swim club — it is a community of athletes, families, and coaches united by a shared passion for the sport and a commitment to excellence both in and out of the water.

Since our founding in 1969 as the Rocket City Aquatic Club, HSA has grown into one of the premier swim programs in Alabama and the Southeast. Over the decades, our team has produced Olympians, state, regional, and national champions, and countless collegiate swimmers, while remaining deeply rooted in the North Alabama community. That tradition of excellence is something we carry forward every season, and it is built one practice, one meet, and one swimmer at a time.

This handbook has been designed to help you navigate life as an HSA family. Inside you will find everything you need to understand our training programs, competition structure, team expectations, and how you can get involved. We encourage you to read it carefully and refer back to it throughout the season. If you ever have questions that are not answered here, please do not hesitate to reach out to your swimmer's coach or any member of our staff.

We believe that the relationship between swimmers, coaches, and families is at the heart of everything we do. When all three work together with trust, open communication, and a positive attitude, great things happen. We look forward to a fantastic season and to watching every HSA swimmer grow — not just as athletes, but as people.

Welcome to the HSA family. Let's get to work.

Head Coach Matt Webber and Board President Allison Proud

Huntsville Swim Association

Introduction to HSA

Our Winning Aspiration

We inspire excellence through a positive team culture where athletes own their goals and build character. Together, we celebrate success and lasting impact.



Our Mission

Develop swimmers of all ages and abilities by fostering a positive team culture rooted in respect, discipline, and empowerment. We guide athletes to own their goals, grow in character, and pursue excellence in and out of the pool.

Our Vision

Our vision is to be a swim club where athletes thrive together, celebrate success, and create a lasting impact on the sport, their communities, and their lives beyond swimming.

Team History

HSA was started in 1969 as the Rocket City Aquatic Club. In 1974, the club's name was changed to the Huntsville Swim Association. Since 1969, HSA has produced Olympians and countless athletes that have competed on the international, national, and collegiate levels. Former and current HSA swimmers also hold numerous relay and individual LSC records. Along with individual accomplishments, HSA has won the LSC championship numerous times and finished within the top three at National Level Meets. For forty years, HSA has proven itself repeatedly as the top program in Northern Alabama, the State of Alabama, and the South.

Organizational Structure

HSA is a non-profit, parent-owned organization governed by a Board of Directors (BOD). The Board represents the association and works in conjunction with the coaching staff to maintain the high quality of the program. The club employs a Head Coach who is responsible for managing day-to-day operations and leading the swim program and coaching staff.

The BOD operates within a framework of bylaws that guide the operation of the team. It also establishes and manages an annual budget, reviewed monthly at regular Board meetings. While the coaching staff manages the "wet" side of the program — scheduling and coaching workouts, meet attendance, event selection, and athlete development — the BOD oversees the "dry" side, which includes the dues structure, club budget, investments, and long-term planning.

Member involvement is an integral part of the association. Parents and members support HSA through a variety of committees and organized volunteer activities. Monthly training fees, sponsorship efforts, and hosting swim meets provide the financial foundation that supports the program.



HSA is a member of both USA Swimming, the national governing body for amateur competitive swimming in the United States, and the Southeastern Swimming Local Swimming Committee (LSC), the local governing body that oversees swimming across Tennessee, Alabama, and the Florida panhandle.

Facilities

The HSA administrative office is located at:

2612 Artie St. SW, Huntsville, AL 35801

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 1102, Huntsville, AL 35807

HSA's primary practice facility is:

Huntsville Aquatics Center

2213 Drake Ave. SW, Huntsville, AL 35807

The Huntsville Aquatics Center is owned and operated by the City of Huntsville Parks and Recreation Department. HSA rents lane space directly from the Parks and Recreation Department.

Coaching and Office Staff

All HSA coaches are registered members of USA Swimming. All coaches undergo a background check and hold current certifications in First Aid, CPR, US Center for Safe Sport Athlete Protection, Concussion Recognition, USADA Clean Sport, and Coaches' Safety Training.

The coaching staff is responsible for all aspects of the "wet" side of the program, including scheduling and running workouts, meet attendance and event selection, relay team selection, goal-setting sessions, and establishing guidelines for athlete conduct, advancement, and competition. Full-time coaching staff also assist with office functions including billing, team communications, and website maintenance.

A full list of coaching staff, including individual biographies, can be found at swimhsa.org.

Communication

Open communication between coaches, parents, and athletes is essential to each swimmer's success within the HSA program. If any issue arises, we ask that you follow the steps below in order, as this ensures the most informed person addresses the matter first:

1. Contact your swimmer's group coach directly.
2. If unresolved, contact the Head Age Group Coach or Head Coach.



3. If still unresolved, contact the HSA Board President.

HSA uses the following channels to communicate with families throughout the season:

Website: The HSA website (swimhsa.org) uses the SportsEngine platform and serves as the hub for all team communication. Families can access practice calendars, meet information and sign-ups, billing, general announcements, sponsorship opportunities, volunteer job sign-ups, and both team and personal time records. Accounts are created during the registration process.

Email: Regular email notices are sent to all families with updates on pertinent dates, schedule changes, and links to important information on the website.

GroupMe: Some practice groups may use a “GroupMe” to share urgent or important information such as practice cancellations, practice time changes, or team social events. Athletes in Voyager 1-4 may join their group’s respective GroupMe along with their parents. Athletes in groups other than Voyager should not be added to the GroupMe channels. All communications should take place in the team GroupMe; no communication between athletes and coaches should occur via direct messages.

Office Phone: The HSA office can be reached at (256) 270-9255. All full-time coaches have access to the office phone.

Coach Email: Individual coach email addresses are listed under the Coaches tab on the HSA website. All coaches check their email regularly and will respond in a timely manner.

Training Group Meetings: Each training group holds at least one parent meeting per year to review group-specific information. Notes from these meetings are available on the HSA website throughout the year.

Training Programs

Objectives and Values

All HSA coaches have access to the most comprehensive training and certification program for youth coaches of any sport in the United States. They welcome swimmers of every level and provide them with the best possible environment and resources, allowing them to progress from novice to the highest level of competition. The HSA coaching staff strives to instill in young swimmers an understanding and appreciation for such concepts as high self-esteem, personal accountability, sportsmanship, teamwork, self-discipline, goal setting, and goal achievement. These ideals will translate into each athlete's success in training, competition, and in life as they grow and develop into adults. We strive:



- To ensure that our swimmers acquire the skills and confidence to succeed in all facets of life.
- To sustain a highly motivated and trained coaching staff.
- To advance and promote a program that encourages attendance, develops team unity, and builds life-long friendships between team members and club families.
- To operate all of our programs at the highest levels of integrity and fairness.
- To provide a positive environment that is challenging, safe, healthy, and rewarding for all athletes.
- To maintain world-class sportsmanship at all times.
- To build a solid base from which we can grow and expand our membership in the community.

Overall Structure

The Huntsville Swim Association offers training and practice groups for swimmers of all ages and ability levels beyond our minimum requirement to join the team. It is the goal of HSA to offer ability-specific training for all athletes, geared toward challenging each individual and developing each swimmer to the best of their abilities. Our structure ensures each swimmer develops at their own pace, while building the skills needed to progress.

The training program is designed with three goals in mind: 1) to place swimmers in groups with their peers, driving opportunities to build connections within age groups; 2) to provide families with a logical and clear progression for their athletes and enable coaches to support them along that progression timeline; and 3) to provide opportunities for athletes to participate in swimming at variable levels of commitment best suited to their individual needs and goals.

USA Swimming Memberships

HSA utilizes three different USA Swimming membership types for its members. Each membership type represents different populations, commitment levels, and/or price points.

Type of USA Swimming Membership	Groups Assigned	Brief Description
Non-Athlete Membership	Parent Volunteers, Coaches, and Officials	Adult membership for members that have direct interaction with athletes. Members with this membership must undergo a criminal background check, SafeSport Training, and various educational trainings based on role.
Premium Membership	Athlete members of Explorer 2& 3, Discovery 2&3, Endeavor 2&3, all Apollo groups, and all Voyager Groups	Athlete Membership that allows competition in all sanctioned events. Swimmers 18 & over must undergo SafeSport Training.
Flex Membership	Athlete Members of Explorer 1, Discovery 1, and Endeavor 1	12 & under Athlete membership that allows up to two sanctioned meets per year. Price is reduced from the premium membership.

Please refer to the HSA Financial Policy for more details on the different types of USA Swimming memberships, and to the HSA Volunteer Policy for more information about volunteer training and registration requirements.

Current USA Swimming registration fees and instructions for completing registration are available on the HSA website and at usaswimming.org.

Age Group Divisions

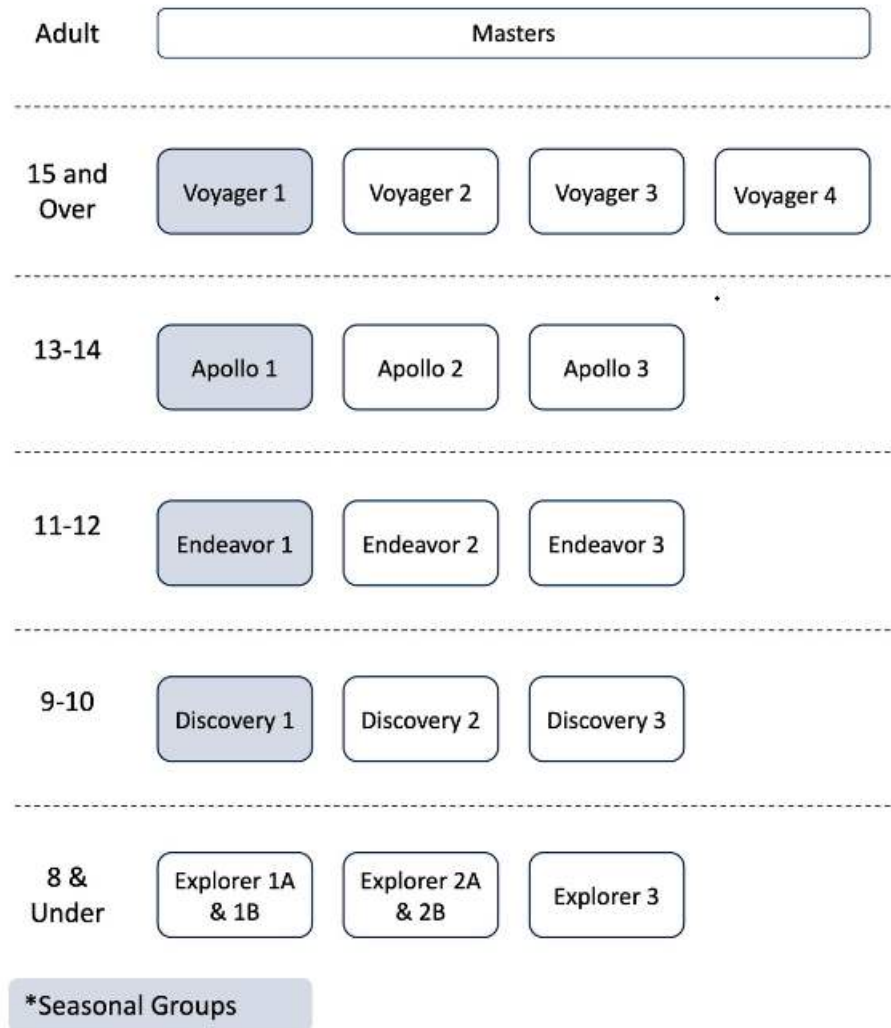
HSA's training groups are organized around USA Swimming's age group competition divisions:

Age Group	Division
8 & Under	Explorer Group
9-10	Discovery Group
11-12	Endeavor Group
13-14	Apollo Group
15-18	Voyager Group
18+	Masters Group

Within each age band, swimmers are further divided into groups based on skill level and performance. The current group descriptions and entrance expectations can be found on the HSA website.



Group Structure



Training Progression

The HSA training program is built around three phases of development, each building on the last.

Skill Development: Athletes in younger or seasonal groups begin by focusing on skill development, such as proper stroke technique for the four competitive strokes, correct starts and turns for each of these strokes, and an introduction to competition. At its core,



this phase requires swimmers to focus on learning correct body movements through mass stroke instruction, breaking skills into a sequence of learning components of each stroke through drill progressions and linking individual skills to the total movement of the stroke. Along with proper stroke mechanics, this phase works on developing a level of maturity from the athletes during the practice structure, including listening skills, behavior expectations, and converting visual and auditory instructions into stroke changes.

Training Development: In this phase swimmers continue their stroke technique development, but focus begins to shift to learning the correct training tools they will need to eventually compete at the highest levels of swimming. These tools include the ability to read a pace clock and an understanding of training concepts like negative splitting, accelerating efforts, and building. These groups also offer a gradual increasing of training loads as the swimmer progresses. Along with training skills, these groups also teach basic racing techniques, basic goal setting, and dryland skills.

Racing Development: In this phase swimmers take skills learned in the first two phases and apply them to achieve the highest level of swimming possible for each athlete. Specific goal setting is used to develop both race strategy and seasonal plans. Highly focused training is demanded from the athletes daily, and athletes are expected to be internally driven to be successful. This phase also builds upon the dryland techniques taught in previous phases. Athletes in these groups are expected to compete at the highest meets that their ability allows.

Coaches reference USA Swimming's American Development Model (ADM) as a tool for long-term athlete development planning, practice group structure design, and evaluation of overall swimmer development and progress. To learn more about the ADM, visit usaswimming.org.

Seasonal Groups

For ages 9 and above, HSA offers a group that runs in multi-month sessions with breaks aligned to school calendars. These groups offer a lower level of practice and competition commitment for athletes who desire the flexibility to participate in activities outside of HSA. Swimmers in seasonal groups register ahead of each session, giving them the freedom to skip a session during a particularly busy time. Expected session dates are posted on the HSA website at the start of each season.

Seasonal group athletes may compete in home sanctioned meets during their seasons with the approval of their coach. Flex members in Explorer 1, Discovery 1, and Endeavor 1 are limited to two sanctioned LSC meets per year.



Swimmer Advancement

The process of assigning swimmers to groups is one of the most difficult things we must do. Our decisions are based on a number of factors including meet performance, training, attendance, maturity, lane space, and our future expectations of the groups. Swimmers and parents must understand that we recognize the social aspect — the desire to be with friends, the natural tendency to compare, and the multitude of other approaches or views swimmers and parents have about swimming and other athletes. Please remember that over five hundred swimmers are divided into training groups and that lines must be drawn; however, every swimmer will be given the opportunity to grow and develop over the season. Please be patient and understand that there may be adjustments to groups based on what we see in practice and how individual swimmers perform.

Please note that to be guaranteed a spot on the team in the fall, non-seasonal group swimmers 11 and older are expected to be training and competing with HSA over the summer and winter seasons. Swimmers who have committed to swimming year-round will take precedence over those who have not participated during the off-season for group placement.

Generally speaking, swimmers are grouped according to age and ability level. We want swimmers to feel comfortable within their peer group, and for the sake of practice management it is important that groups contain swimmers of similar ability.

Group Entrance Expectations

Each practice group has general performance and attendance expectations that guide coaches when evaluating readiness for advancement. For groups focused on skill development, requirements may be primarily skills-based, such as the ability to swim a legal stroke or complete a legal Individual Medley (IM). As swimmers progress, consideration is given to the ability to make practice intervals, previous attendance, and meet performance standards such as Southeastern Swimming Championship qualifying times.

While minimum expectations for group entrance are heavily used for decision making, the coaching staff will use their best discretion to prioritize what is best for each swimmer. Generally speaking, being "within range" of a Southeastern Swimming (SES) qualifying time means within 1 second for a 50-yard/meter event, 2 seconds for a 100-yard/meter event, 4 seconds for a 200-yard/meter event, and so on. One of HSA's primary goals on a yearly basis is to win the Southeastern Swimming Championships, and having shared



performance goals within each group makes seasonal planning more efficient for coaches and swimmers alike.

In addition to performance expectations, each group has its own practice attendance and competition expectations that are considered when determining movement between groups. A swimmer not consistently meeting attendance requirements creates the possibility that a coach will request a discussion with the swimmer and their guardian to determine whether a group change is needed that better aligns with the swimmer's schedule.

Group entrance expectations may be adjusted between seasons or years to ensure that groups are appropriately sized. Current detailed entrance expectations for each group are available on the HSA website:

<https://www.gomotionapp.com/team/sehsa/page/system/res/209519>.

Timing of Group Changes

Age group moves take place primarily two times per year — in August at the beginning of the short course season, and in March at the beginning of the long course season. Group moves are based on the swimmer's age at the next championship meet for their group. The August move will be determined by their age at the Winter/Spring Short Course Championship meet. March moves will be based on their age at the Summer Long Course Championship meet.

Please note that in certain circumstances, a swimmer with a winter birthday — December through February — may move groups in December following the short course mid-season championship meet, at the coaching staff's discretion. Coaches also have the discretion to move swimmers within groups within a given age band off-cycle.

Seasonal to Non-Seasonal Group Moves

It is possible for swimmers in seasonal groups to move to a non-seasonal group if they choose to make a greater commitment to the sport, work hard at practice, and meet the non-seasonal group's suggested minimum requirements, including attendance requirements at practices and offered meets. Please reach out to your swimmer's coach to discuss their goals, aspirations, and progress if such a move is desired.

Practice Information

Attendance and Punctuality

Consistent attendance is one of the most important factors in a swimmer's development. Swimmers are encouraged to meet the attendance expectations for their assigned group. The suggested number of practices per week for each group is as follows:

Age Group	Group	Practices Offered Per Week	Suggested Practices Per Week
Seasonal Groups	Explorer 1, Discovery 1, Endeavor 1, Apollo 1, Voyager 1	2 (Explorer) 3 (Discovery/Endeavor) 4 Apollo/Voyager)	2
8 & Under (Explorer)	Explorer 2	3	2-3
	Explorer 3	4	3
9-10 (Discovery)	Discovery 2	5	3-4
	Discovery 3	6	3-4
11-12 (Endeavor)	Endeavor 2	6	3-4
	Endeavor 3	6	4-5
13-14 (Apollo)	Apollo 2	6	5
	Apollo 3	7	6
15-18 (Voyager)	Voyager 2	6	4-6
	Voyager 3	7	6-7
	Voyager 4	9	9

The more consistently a swimmer attends practice, the more benefit and enjoyment they will receive from the program. Swimmers who arrive more than ten minutes late to practice should check in with their coach before entering the water.

Pool Deck Rules

The pool deck is a learning environment reserved for swimmers and coaches. For insurance and safety reasons, parents and spectators are not permitted on the pool deck during practice or swim meets. Parents are welcome to observe from the stands or



designated viewing areas. If you need to reach your child during practice, please do so through the coach rather than approaching the pool deck directly.

We ask that parents refrain from attempting to communicate with swimmers or coaches during practice. Swimmers need to remain focused on their coach's instructions, and interruptions can be distracting to the entire group. If you have a question or concern for a coach, please reach out before or after practice or contact them by email.

Facility Conduct

HSA practices primarily at the Huntsville Aquatics Center, a facility owned and operated by the City of Huntsville Parks and Recreation Department. We are guests at this facility and must follow all rules and policies. Swimmers and families are expected to treat the facility with care and respect to ensure our continued access.

Please keep the following in mind:

- Label all personal belongings. HSA is not responsible for lost or stolen items.
- Keep all areas neat and clean. Dispose of trash in the receptacles provided.
- Non-swimming siblings must always be supervised by a parent or guardian.
- Horseplay in and around the pool area is not permitted.

Practice Equipment and Uniforms

The HSA team suit is a solid navy TYR suit. Females may choose between a thin strap or thick strap, and males may choose between a jammer or brief. Team suits are not required for practice or competition. HSA team caps are required for competition and recommended for practice for swimmers with long hair.

Practice equipment can be purchased at HSA's team portal through TYR.com, and our preferred vendor, Saturn Sports, located at 3061 Leeman Ferry Rd SW, Huntsville, AL 35801 (678) 539-0929. Saturn Sports carries a full selection of HSA warm-ups, backpacks, parkas, and other team gear and will be present at HSA home meets.

TYR "tech" suits are available for swimmers 13 and older. HSA coaches determine which meets are appropriate for tech suit use. Due to HSA's TYR sponsorship agreement, swimmers who reach a certain level may receive discounted suits, complimentary warm-ups, and bags as an incentive — these are available only to swimmers who purchase a TYR tech suit.

Practice equipment requirements by group are as follows:

Group	Required Equipment
Explorer 1A / 1B	TYR Junior kickboard, TYR fins
Explorer 2A / 2B	TYR Junior kickboard, TYR fins
Explorer 3	TYR Junior kickboard, TYR fins
Discovery 1	TYR Junior kickboard, TYR fins, TYR snorkel
Discovery 2	TYR Junior kickboard, TYR fins, TYR, snorkel, TYR paddles
Discovery 3	TYR Junior kickboard, TYR fins, TYR, snorkel, TYR paddles
Endeavor 1	TYR Junior kickboard, TYR fins, TYR, snorkel, TYR paddles
Endeavor 2	TYR Junior kickboard, TYR fins, TYR, snorkel, TYR paddle
Endeavor 3	TYR Junior kickboard, TYR fins, TYR, snorkel, TYR paddles
Apollo 1	TYR Junior kickboard, TYR fins, TYR, snorkel, TYR paddles
Apollo 2	TYR Junior kickboard, TYR fins, TYR, snorkel, TYR paddles
Apollo 3	TYR Junior kickboard, TYR fins, TYR, snorkel, TYR paddles
Voyager 1	TYR Junior kickboard, TYR fins, TYR, snorkel, TYR paddles
Voyager 2	TYR Junior kickboard, TYR fins, TYR, snorkel, TYR paddles
Voyager 3	TYR Junior kickboard, TYR fins, TYR, snorkel, TYR paddles
Voyager 4	TYR Junior kickboard, TYR fins, TYR, snorkel, TYR paddles

All groups should also have goggles, a practice suit, a mesh bag, a water bottle, and appropriate clothes for out of pool exercises. A TYR nose clip is also optional.

Competition

Philosophy of Competition

HSA believes each swimmer should progress in competition at their own pace. Research in the fields of sports psychology and child psychology reveals that children develop their competitive spirits at different rates. Moreover, young children below the age of eight are not naturally competitive — the main attraction of sports for them is fun. Our meets are designed to offer each athlete a level of competition that suits their current commitment to



swimming and their own desire to compete. As swimmers become more committed, more competitive opportunities are offered.

Competitive Swimming Basics

For families new to USA Swimming, the following overview will help you understand how competitive swimming is organized. Please also refer to the swimming glossary on the HSA website for additional definitions of swim-related terms.

Governing Organizations: USA Swimming is the national governing body for the sport of competitive swimming in the United States. HSA is a member club of USA Swimming, and all HSA swimmers are registered members of the organization. USA Swimming is divided into regions called Zones, with HSA being part of the Southern Zone. These zones are further divided into Local Swim Committees, or LSCs. HSA is a member of the Southeastern LSC, which governs swimming across Tennessee, Alabama, and the Florida panhandle.

Seasonal Structure: The competitive swimming year is divided into two seasons. The short course season runs from mid-August through March and takes place in 25-yard pools. The long course season runs from March through early August and takes place in 50-meter pools — the same pool size used at the Olympic Games. While the competition schedule is divided into two seasons, HSA treats them as part of one unified yearly season running from August through July.

Time Standards: Time standards are simply meet management tools. At each level of competition, they are designed to create a meet of a certain size by limiting the number of swimmers eligible to compete. This concept extends from the U.S. Olympic Trials down to our local LSC championship meets. As swimmers become more committed and their times improve, they will begin to qualify for higher levels of competition.

USA Swimming establishes motivational time standards for each age group. These standards progress from slower to faster as follows: B, BB, A, AA, AAA, and AAAA. In addition, there are specific qualifying time standards for various championship meets that will be communicated to families as they become relevant for your swimmer. Most pertinent time standards are listed on the HSA website.

HSA Stepping Stones are another set of internal time standards used by HSA coaches as a tool in goal setting, meet entries, etc., centered around the Southeastern Championships meet.

Classification of Swim Meets

Just as HSA has a progression of training groups, we also offer a progression of swim meets. There are five basic levels of meets:

Type of Meet	Groups Attending	Typical Locations	Number of Days
HSA Rocket Meet	Explorer, Discovery 1, Endeavor 1, Apollo 1, Voyager 1	Huntsville Aquatics Center	Saturday mornings
Local Invitational	All groups except Explorer 1A/1B	Huntsville area	1 to 2.5 days
Regional Invitational	Qualifying groups	Typically within a 4-hour radius	2-3 days
Regional Championship	Qualifiers	Typically within a 4-hour radius	2-3.5 days
National Championship	Qualifiers	Anywhere in the U.S.	3.5-8 days

HSA hosts all levels of meets, ranging from extremely accessible events for those just beginning to high-level national meets for HSA's most advanced swimmers. As swimmers progress in both their commitment and ability, they will move into the next level of meets.

HSA Rocket meets are small, less formal, internal meets for HSA. The meets are a low-pressure environment that the coaching staff uses to provide competitive opportunities, evaluate progress of younger swimmers in a racing environment, and introduce basic meet protocol concepts to swimmers and parents. The meets typically include fewer events and focus on one or two strokes per meet rather than a wide array of strokes and distances.

A local invitational is an accessible competitive swim meet held in the Huntsville area, open to most swim groups, and lasting 1 to 2.5 days. Invitationals are LSC sanctioned meets.

Regional invitational meets are often open to most swim groups and typically require an overnight hotel stay. Regional championship and national championship meets require swimmers to achieve qualifying time standards to participate.

At local, regional, and championship meets, swimmers are typically separated into five age groups for competition: 8 and under, 9-10, 11-12, 13-14, and 15 and over. Some meets combine the lowest two age groups into 10 and under, and many combine the upper two age groups into 13 and over. At the national championship level, meets are typically swum as an open age group with no age separation.



Groups that use the USA Swimming Flex Membership (Explorer 1, Discovery 1, and Endeavor 1) are limited to two sanctioned LSC meets per year, which includes local or regional invitational meets.

Glossary of Swim Meets

The following is a general overview of the primary championship meets HSA attends. This is not a complete list of meets on the HSA schedule.

Southeastern Championships: This is HSA's LSC championship meet, held twice per year — once in February for short course and once in July for long course. It involves swimmers from Tennessee, Alabama, and the Florida panhandle and is often the first major regional championship meet that HSA swimmers attend.

Mid-February Prelim/Final Meet: Typically held in AL, this meet serves as HSA's short course championship meet for swimmers not attending Southeastern Championships.

Best of the South: Best of the South is a championship meet hosted by SwimAtlanta on the campus of Georgia Tech, open to all swimmers who qualify. Swimmers must meet the event's time standards to participate.

Age Group Sectionals: Sectional meets are multi-day championship events held across different regions of the country, serving as a bridge between LSC-level competition and the national stage, with qualifying times in the AA to AAA range. Unlike Zones, swimmers at Sectionals compete under their club's name rather than their LSC.

Age Group Zones: Each LSC compiles a team of its fastest age group swimmers (11-14) to compete against other LSCs in the same zone, with swimmers competing under the name of their LSC rather than their club. There are four zones — Eastern, Central, Southern, and Western. HSA/SES are part of the Southern Zone. Entries are based on performance at the LC Southeastern Swimming Championships.

NCSA Junior Nationals: Held by the National Club Swimming Association, this meet is open to 18-and-under athletes across the country. It is typically held in mid-March in Orlando, FL, and includes bonus time standards. The summer version of this meet is in late July to early August and is typically held in either Indianapolis, IN or Huntsville, AL.

Short Course Junior Nationals: Swum short course and open to all 18-and-under swimmers who have achieved qualifying times. Typically held in December.

Short Course Nationals: Swum short course and open to all swimmers with qualifying cuts. Typically held in December and considered the winter season national championship meet.



Long Course Junior Nationals: Swum long course in late summer and open only to 18-and-under swimmers. Considered the 18-and-under national championship meet each year.

US Open: Swum long course and open to any qualified swimmer from any country. Cuts are slightly slower than those for National Championships.

National Championships: Swum long course and open to the nation's top swimmers of all ages. Held in summer only and often used as the selection meet for Team USA's international meets.

General Meet Information and Rules

- Swimmers, coaches, parents, and guests are expected to always display good sportsmanship and follow all applicable Parent and Athlete Codes of Conduct at swim meets and other HSA activities. Please cheer on all HSA swimmers throughout the meet.
- The HSA meet schedule is posted on the team website as soon as the coaching staff sets it. Home meets are held at the Huntsville Aquatics Center. Each swimmer is responsible for arranging their own transportation and lodging for away meets. Travel information such as directions and team hotels is provided on the HSA website.
- In most USA Swimming sanctioned meets, individual swimmers may swim up to four individual events per day, although this may vary depending on the meet. Most meets do not award team trophies, though individual points are scored.
- In meets run in two sessions, swimmers 12 and under typically swim in one session and swimmers 13 and older swim in a second session. Always check the meet invitation, posted on the HSA website, to confirm the session in which your swimmer is competing.
- For home meets, HSA parents are required to volunteer. Volunteer requirements, sign-up procedures, and buy-out options are outlined in the HSA Volunteer Policy. It is each family's responsibility to review the volunteer policy and sign up accordingly prior to each meet.
- Flash photography is not allowed during meets. Events are started with a horn and a strobe light, and a camera flash can cause swimmers to false start. Non-flash photography is permitted at any time. Photography is never permitted behind the starting blocks.
- Any wearable device capable of photography, videography, livestreaming, or mixed/virtual reality recording (including smart glasses or VR/AR headsets) may only be used on deck with the prior approval of the Meet Referee. The Meet Referee retains the authority to prohibit or remove any device whose use creates a safety



concern, interferes with competition, compromises athlete privacy, or is inconsistent with USA Swimming Safe Sport policies.

- Parents and guests are not permitted on the pool deck during meets unless they are signed up to volunteer and have passed any required background checks or training.
- If you have a question about a time, placement, or disqualification, do not approach a meet official directly. Please speak with your swimmer's coach, as only the coach may inquire, ask for clarification, or protest a time or referee's decision.

What to Bring to a Meet

- Swim suit, goggles, and HSA swim cap. If wearing a cap, it must be an HSA cap.
- At least two towels per swimmer. Keep one dry until the end of the day's events.
- Clothes to wear over the swim suit between events. Swimmers can easily become chilled. Good choices include warm-up suits, sweatshirts, shorts, T-shirts, and jackets depending on the season.
- Food and snacks. Swimmers will expend significant energy over the course of the meet. Carbohydrates are recommended for sustained energy; heavy, fatty, or rich foods are not. Good options include pretzels, crackers, dry cereal, fruit, granola bars, trail mix, and sports drinks. Note that hard-sided coolers are not permitted inside the Huntsville Aquatics Center, and a concession stand is available at most meets.
- A water bottle. Swimmers lose water even when they don't feel like they're sweating. Stay hydrated throughout the meet.
- A Sharpie marker to write event and heat numbers on your swimmer's arm. This is especially helpful for younger and less experienced swimmers.
- Cashless money for the concession stand or meet apparel. Saturn Sports will be on site at most HSA home meets. Heat sheets are typically available online prior to the meet and are not sold at the meets.

Meet Entry Process

- Go to the HSA website at swimhsa.org and sign in with your account information.
- Navigate to "Team Events" on the home page.
- Click on the meet title for information including warm-up times, event schedules, parent worker needs, relay information, and location details.
- To sign up for a meet, click "Edit Commitment," select your swimmer, choose your commitment status under the Declaration button, and save your changes. Please note in the comment box if your swimmer cannot attend all days of the meet.
- To withdraw from a meet before the online deadline, return to "Edit Commitment," select your swimmer, change the declaration to "No," and save your changes.



- For every event your swimmer is entered in, there is a meet entry fee. These fees vary by meet and will be reflected on your monthly statement. USA Swimming also charges a per-swimmer, per-meet surcharge. Some facilities charge an additional facility surcharge. You will be notified of applicable fees in the meet information posted on the HSA website.
- Parents and swimmers are welcome to give input on which events the swimmer would like to swim by selecting events, but coaches have final say over all meet entries. If you have questions about which events may be appropriate for your swimmer, please reach out to their group coach.
- Once meet entries have been submitted to the host team, you will be assessed the entry fee for those events regardless of attendance. If you do not withdraw your swimmer through the website before the registration deadline, you will be responsible for the meet fees even if your swimmer does not swim.
- Once coaches have assigned and approved events, you can view your swimmer's entries on the meet event page. Please review your swimmer's entries carefully once they are available and contact your coach immediately if there is an error.

Swim Meet Procedures and Behavior

- HSA warms up as a team at all meets. Warm-up typically begins one hour before the start of the session, with specific times communicated by email at least one day before the meet. Swimmers must be ready to enter the water at the start of warm-ups. Swimmers arriving more than ten minutes late for warm-up must prepare on their own.
- HSA swimmers are expected to wear the HSA team suit and cap during competition. Swimmers are also encouraged to wear team warm-ups and T-shirts while at the meet. A list of t-shirt colors for each day is typically provided in the warm-up announcement email.
- For deck-seeded events, each swimmer is responsible for checking in at the Clerk of Course within the designated time period, normally before the team warms up. This also applies during prelim/finals meets. If a swimmer qualifies for finals, they are expected to communicate with their coach and follow the terms of the meet invitation to positively check-in or scratch for finals. Swimmers must not scratch any events without first consulting their coach.
- HSA maintains a team area at all meets. All swimmers are encouraged to sit together as a group to promote team unity and spirit.
- Swimmers are expected to be aware of their event numbers and report to their lane promptly when their event is called. Any discussions with the coaching staff regarding races should happen before this time.
- Swimmers should report to their coach directly following each event to review the race.

- The coaching staff determines all relay teams. Relay selection is based on a variety of factors including speed, team scoring, and maximum participation. Please check with the coaching staff prior to leaving a meet regarding any relay obligations.
- All swimmers are expected to always be courteous to meet officials, workers, and opponents. Know and adhere to proper behavior in all public places — your actions reflect not only on HSA, but on your family and community.
- Keep the team area neat and clean. A team area full of debris reflects poorly on our team.
- Team spirit is an important part of swim meets. Swimmers are encouraged to cheer for teammates and remain invested in each other's swims rather than spending time on cell phones and electronic devices.
- Swimmers are expected to rest and conserve energy between events and remain in the team area while at the pool.

Travel

What is a Team Travel Meet?

Team travel means swimmers travel, stay, eat, and compete as a group with HSA coaches and approved chaperones. Parents may attend the meet, but swimmers participating in team travel must travel and lodge with the team. Team travel is most often used for regional invitationals and national or championship-level meets where a structured team environment is important.

Team trips offer swimmers and parents the excitement of visiting unique places while competing at higher levels of competition. For team trips to succeed, everyone involved must respect the rules of good behavior set forth by coaches, chaperones, and the host team.

Supervision

Swimmers are supervised by HSA coaches and approved chaperones throughout the trip. All chaperones must be USA Swimming non-athlete members and follow HSA, USA Swimming, and Center for SafeSport policies. HSA strives to provide at least two adult supervisors — coaches and/or chaperones — on all team trips to ensure two-deep leadership and safe supervision. For certain championship or national-level meets where only one coach attends, travel may occur with a single coach provided all USA Swimming and SafeSport requirements are met and written parental permission is obtained.



Parents are not required to attend team travel meets but are encouraged to stay informed and supportive. The team accepts no responsibility for any swimmer traveling by any other means to a meet.

Hotel Room Assignments

Swimmers are roomed with other swimmers of the same gender and similar age. Room assignments are made by the coaching staff. Athletes may not share hotel rooms or sleeping arrangements with adult supervisors unless the adult is the athlete's parent. Male and female athletes may not be in each other's hotel rooms under any circumstances. Mixed gender settings may occur only in open hotel lobbies during set times according to the travel itinerary.

Curfews and room checks are enforced. Room checks are conducted using two-deep leadership in observable, interruptible environments.

Transportation

Transportation is arranged by HSA. Athletes must remain seated and wear seat belts at all times. One-on-one transportation between an adult and a minor athlete is not permitted unless an approved exception and written parental consent are on file. Swimmers of legal driving age may only drive to and from team travel competitions with the approval of the head coach. A note of permission from the parent must accompany the request. Other swimmers may not travel with a swimmer/driver unless permission is specifically given by the coaching staff.

Behavior Expectations

Swimmers are expected to conduct themselves in an exemplary manner at all times during team travel. Specifically, swimmers are expected to:

- Follow all directions from coaches and chaperones.
- Be respectful of teammates, hotel guests, and property.
- Use appropriate language and behavior in all public and private spaces.
- Remain with the team at all times unless given permission by a coach or chaperone to do otherwise.
- Respect curfews, lights-out times, and all team schedules.
- Adhere to the HSA Code of Conduct and Team Travel Code of Conduct at all times.
- Wear HSA team gear as directed by the coaching staff.
- Stay in their assigned hotel room.



Athletes must attend all team meetings, warm-ups, practices, competitions, meals, and other scheduled activities unless excused by a coach. Athletes may not leave the hotel, competition venue, restaurant, or any team gathering location without the knowledge and permission of a coach or chaperone.

Cell Phones and Electronics

Guidelines for cell phone, computer, and social media use will be established by coaches for each trip. Athletes are expected to follow all posted or announced rules regarding electronics during team travel.

Financial Responsibilities

Parents are responsible for all travel expenses unless specifically included in the published cost of the trip. Swimmers and families are responsible for:

- Incidental charges such as room service, movies, and phone calls.
- Any damages or theft at hotels or venues.
- Late cancellation costs.
- Change or cancellation fees for airfare once tickets are purchased.

For some national-level meets, HSA may cover the cost of airfare. Once purchased, tickets are considered the swimmer's responsibility. Any changes, baggage fees, or costs associated with unused tickets may result in charges to the family.

Families should notify coaches as soon as possible if a swimmer needs to cancel a trip. Late cancellations may result in financial responsibility for travel, lodging, or other non-refundable costs. Be considerate when canceling, as late cancellations increase the overall cost to other participants.

Prohibited Items and Behaviors

The following are strictly prohibited at all times during team travel:

- Tobacco, alcohol, or illegal substances.
- Use of another athlete's prescription medication.
- Inappropriate physical contact.
- Illegal, disrespectful, or destructive behavior.

Disciplinary Action

Violations of the Team Travel Code of Conduct may result in:

- Being scratched from events or sessions.

- Removal from the meet or trip at the family's expense.
- Financial penalties.
- Suspension from future team travel.
- Suspension or expulsion from HSA.

Required Forms

Parents and guardians must provide written consent for team travel and lodging prior to each trip. Required forms include the HSA Team Travel Policy and Code of Conduct and medical release forms. These will be distributed by the coaching staff in advance of each trip.

Parent Information

Parent Responsibilities

Parents play a vital role in the success of every HSA swimmer. The relationship between parents, coaches, and athletes is at the heart of our program, and we ask that all HSA parents commit to being positive, supportive members of our community. The following guidelines will help you be the best possible advocate for your swimmer and for the team.

Support your swimmer and the coaching staff. The best advice a parent can give their swimmer is to do their best and follow the coaches' direction. Avoid coaching your swimmer from the stands or pool deck — this can create confusion and undermine the work being done in practice. If you have concerns about your swimmer's training or progress, please reach out to their coach directly and privately. Make your swimmer see their coach after each race — post-event analysis is most effective within 60 seconds of completing an event, and your swimmer will benefit far more from their coach's feedback than from coming to the stands first.

Be a positive role model. Children learn behavior from the people around them, and parents have the greatest influence of all. Your attitude toward coaches, officials, opponents, and teammates sets the tone for your swimmer. Model the good sportsmanship, team spirit, and positive attitude you want to see from your child. Keep in mind that nonverbal messages — a look of disappointment or frustration — often speak louder than words. Here are some specific tips to keep in mind:

- Model good sportsmanship. Encourage and support all swimmers, control your emotions when upset or frustrated, and abide by coaches' and officials' decisions even when you disagree.

- Model team spirit and loyalty. Cheer for your team and have only positive things to say about the team and coaching staff.
- Let go of your own ego. Put your child's development and desires ahead of your own and examine your motives for their participation.
- Have fun. If you are enjoying the swimming experience, it is more likely that your child will do the same. If you complain and don't enjoy yourself, your child will pattern that behavior as well.

Support swimmer independence. One of HSA's primary goals is to help each swimmer take full ownership of their sport. This is best achieved when swimmers are empowered to communicate directly with their coaches, advocate for themselves, and take responsibility for their own preparation and performance. We encourage parents to support this independence by resisting the urge to intervene on your swimmer's behalf in situations they are capable of handling themselves. Encourage your swimmer to speak directly with their coach about goals, concerns, and questions — this builds the communication skills and self-reliance they will carry into all areas of life.

Invest in your swimmer's mindset. How parents respond to both setbacks and successes has a significant impact on swimmer mindset and long-term development. A missed qualifying time or a difficult meet can be just as valuable as a personal best if it is processed in a healthy, growth-oriented way. HSA will share resources, articles, and guidance on the parent role in athlete development throughout the season via email and the team website. We encourage all HSA parents to engage with these materials.

Stay informed. Read the weekly email updates, check the HSA website regularly, and attend training group parent meetings. Staying informed helps you support your swimmer and avoids misunderstandings about schedules, meet entries, and team expectations.

Follow the communication chain. If an issue arises, please follow the communication steps outlined in the Introduction section of this handbook — starting with your swimmer's coach, then the Head Age Group Coach or Head Coach, and finally the HSA Board President if needed.

Summer League Swimmers

HSA fully supports swimmers being able to participate in both HSA and Summer league swim seasons. Participating in both at the same time is common practice. HSA coaches work with summer league schedules to navigate both commitments as effectively as possible. Please reach out to your swimmer's coach at the beginning of the summer league season to discuss scheduling and meet participation expectations.



High School Swimmers

Families with high school age swimmers should be aware that there are additional considerations that apply during the high school swim season. When a swimmer participates in their high school swim program, their availability for HSA practices and meets may be affected. HSA coaches work with high school age swimmers to navigate both commitments as effectively as possible. Please reach out to your swimmer's coach at the beginning of the high school season to discuss scheduling and meet participation expectations.

Parent Code of Conduct

HSA expects all parents to conduct themselves in a manner that reflects positively on our team and creates a supportive environment for swimmers and coaches alike. The HSA Parent Code of Conduct applies at all practices, meets, and events and is available as a separate document. All HSA families are required to review and acknowledge the Parent Code of Conduct as part of the annual registration process. Please direct any questions about the code of conduct to the HSA office or your swimmer's coach.

Volunteering

Volunteer support from HSA families is essential to the success of our program. HSA hosts multiple meets throughout the year, and these events depend entirely on parent volunteers to run smoothly. Running successful home meets is an important part of HSA's financial health and benefits all of our swimmers.

There are many volunteer roles available at meets, from timing and officiating to hospitality and administrative support. No prior experience is necessary — we will train you! Volunteer sign-ups are managed through the HSA website. Detailed volunteer requirements, available roles, sign-up procedures, and buy-out options are outlined in the HSA Volunteer Policy.

HSA also encourages parents to become certified USA Swimming officials. Officials are essential at every meet, and the certification process is a great way to deepen your understanding of the sport. Information on how to become a certified official is available on the HSA website and through the Southeastern LSC.

Financial Obligations

Participation in HSA involves a number of financial obligations including monthly training fees, USA Swimming registration, meet entry fees, and fundraising participation. HSA is



financially supported through monthly training fees, fundraising efforts, and the hosting of swim meets, and the participation of all families in these areas is important to keeping the program strong.

Full details on HSA's fee structure, billing procedures, payment methods, accounts receivable policy, and fundraising expectations are outlined in the HSA Financial Policy. Please review this document carefully and direct any questions to the HSA office or your swimmer's coach.

USA Swimming Safe Sport Club Recognition

The USA Swimming Safe Sport Club Recognition Program (SSRP) is a voluntary program that allows USA Swimming member clubs to formally demonstrate their commitment to creating a safe, healthy, and positive environment for all athletes. To earn recognition, clubs document their athlete protection policies, staff and volunteer screening procedures, and reporting mechanisms for misconduct. Clubs are also awarded points when athletes and parents complete Safe Sport online training courses and when in-person Safe Sport training is hosted. Recognized clubs receive a badge for display on their website and are designated as Safe Sport Recognized in USA Swimming's Find-a-Team search tool.

HSA is already compliant with all U.S. Center for SafeSport policies and is actively working toward becoming the first Safe Sport Recognized club in the Southeastern LSC. HSA already performs many of the practices outlined in the SSRP checklist for parent-board owned clubs; the primary remaining requirement is reaching the participation threshold for family and athlete online training. Parents can complete "Parent's Guide to Misconduct in Sport" (~30 minutes) through their USA Swimming family account, and athletes can complete "SafeSport for Kids Ages 5–12" or "SafeSport for Youth Athletes Ages 13–17" (~15 minutes each). Families may also attend monthly USA Swimming Safe Sport Zoom training sessions. Beginning in August 2026, HSA will require "SafeSport for Volunteers" training (~15 minutes) for a number of volunteer roles, with updated details outlined in the HSA Volunteer Policy. Links to all training resources are available at swimhsa.org/safe-sport.