

Rockville Racers Swim Team Parent Handbook

The Rockville Racers is a summer rec league swim team associated with the Rockville Center. We are a team of less than 100 swimmers that strives to focus primarily on stroke and technique development as well as fun.

Team Membership

In order to join the Rockville Racers, your family must have a summer pool membership to the Rockville Center Community Pool. Children ages 18 and younger are eligible to swim. In order to join the team, swimmers must be able to swim one length of the pool with either a basic freestyle or backstroke. There is a Jr. team for children (typically ages 5-7) who can swim but are not yet ready for competition. A date will be scheduled at the beginning of the season for mandatory evaluations of young swimmers to determine if they can join the Jr. team. Once your swimmer has been evaluated, the coaches will communicate with parents regarding their child's readiness for the swim team or Jr. swim team. The Rockville Racers is comprised of swimmers at all skill levels. Swim team is a great way to learn all four strokes and improve in an encouraging and fun environment regardless of age or skill level.

For meets only, the Rockville Racers combine with Dolphin Club, a swim team out of the JCC in Richmond. Our team swims in the Greater Richmond Aquatic League (GRAL). In the 2019 season, GRAL found themselves with an odd number of teams, which led to major scheduling issues. Dolphin Club (due to circumstances beyond their control) does not have a home pool and is unable to host meets. Furthermore, both teams were extremely small. As a result, Rockville and Dolphin Club combined as one team for meet purposes only. Our team's name for GRAL is Rockville Dolphin Club, or RVDC. Our scores combine with Dolphin Club, so we win or lose a meet together. If we have relays, they may have a combination of kids from both teams. However, each team has their own practices and their own coaches.

Practice

Evening practices in mid-May, dependent upon the pool being ready and the weather cooperating. Evaluations for the Jr team are held during the first week of practice.

In order to accommodate as many families as possible, there are both morning and evening practices held throughout each week once school is out. You do not have to attend all the practices. You pick and choose the ones that work for your schedule and how many times a week you would like your child to practice. You merely show up when you can at your child's assigned time (based on age and skill level). There is no need to let a coach know if/when you will be at practice. Regular practice attendance will typically result in significant learning and improvement for a summer league

swimmer over the course of the season. Therefore, we encourage you to bring your child to practice as frequently as possible.

Meets

Season Schedule

The season consists of six meets held weekly (usually on Wednesdays). Holidays can affect the schedule, and the last meet of the season is always on a Tuesday to accommodate preparation for our Champs meet.

If your child qualifies for Champs, practices will continue through July and the Champs meet is held on the weekend in July approximately 10 days after the last regular season meet.

Meet Schedule

For home meets, check-in begins at 4:30 and warm-ups are at 5PM. If you are going to be late, you must text or call Hunter at 804-516-0050 to ensure that your swimmer is not scratched from his/her events. Competition starts at 6PM.

Meets begin with 8 and under relays and all 8 and under individual events are in the first half of the meet. Typically, the first half is over by 8PM. Older swimmer relays are the last events of the night.

For away meets, you will receive all necessary information a few days before the meet. Typically warm-ups at away meets begins at 5:20pm.

Meet Attendance

You are not required to attend all six meets of the season. If you have a vacation scheduled, go have fun! But you must declare no later than 48 hours before the meet in SwimTopia if your swimmer will be attending. If you don't declare, your children will not be entered into any relays. Missing swimmers especially impact relays and it is not possible to reseed all the relays at the last minute if the coach finds out later that a swimmer will be absent. If a last-minute issue comes up that means you will be unable to attend, please call or text Hunter at 804-516-0050 as soon as possible.

What to Expect at a Meet

When families check-in, there will be a printed list of events that each child will be swimming. Each swimmer's assigned events is also posted on the website as a file attachment to each meet (under the Schedule tab). A swimmer may not enter more than three individual events plus one relay event per meet. The swimmer's entries are pre-determined by the coaches and are not negotiable.

We suggest you use sharpie markers to write events on your child's hand and even your own. GRAL rules state the children may only write their events on their hands or forearm; they may not write anything else anywhere else on their bodies. The only exception is dive certification, which is noted on the swimmer's upper arm.

Swimmers line up at the clerk of course prior to swimming their events. Only those parents who are working at the clerk should be in that area. It will be the swimmers' responsibility to be at the clerk of course when their event comes up. The event numbers will be announced and there will be a display at the clerk, but children will not be called individually or searched for. If your child misses his/her event, s/he cannot make it up.

GRAL uses flyover starts for swimmers 9 and older for all events except backstroke. Flyover starts are starts that happen while the previous group is still in the water. After the swimmers finish their race, they stay in the water, to the side of the block, until the next heat starts. At that point, they may climb out of the pool.

What to Bring to a Meet

- Extra towels
- Extra goggles: it's a good idea to always have a back-up pair
- Extra hair bands for swimmers with long hair
- Swim Cap: we strongly encourage you to wear the RVDC cap
- Camp Chairs and/or blankets to sit on, especially at away meets
- Sweatshirts: it can get chilly at the night goes on
- Money for concession items
- Things to keep your swimmer busy while they are waiting to swim (books, cards, games, etc.)

Meet Events

Each regular season meet consists of age group relays and individual events in each stroke. Some events are only offered every other meet.

Meets 1, 3, and 5 have these events: Long course freestyle (50 for 8 & under, 100 for 9 & up), Backstroke (50 for 13 & up), Breaststroke (100 for 13 & up), Butterfly (50 for 13 & up), Short course freestyle (25 for 8 & under, 50 for 9 & up), and Freestyle relays.

Meets 2, 4, and 6 have these events: Individual Medley (aka 100 IM), Backstroke (100 for 13 & up), Breaststroke (50 for 13 & up), Butterfly (100 for 13 & up), Short course freestyle, and Medley relays.

Girls' events are even numbered and boys' events are odd numbered, with the exception of relays that are mixed.

For the 8 & under 25 Freestyle and 25 Backstroke, the events are split into A and B. A is for 6 & under swimmers and B is for 7 – 8 year old swimmers. Those two events score those age groups separately.

Relays

Swimmers are placed in relays at the coach's discretion.

There are two types of relays: Freestyle and Medley. In odd weeks, Freestyle relays are run and all four swimmers swim Freestyle. In even weeks, Medley relays are run with the strokes in this order: Backstroke, Breaststroke, Butterfly, Freestyle.

There are two divisions of relays: Advanced and Senior Varsity. Only swimmers with Novice or Advanced times in the stroke and distance s/he is swimming can be in an

Advanced Relay. Senior Varsity Relays must have at least one swimmer with a JV, V, or SV time in that distance/stroke. Advanced Relays can be mixed or single gender, but Senior Varsity Relays must be mixed Gender.

Swimmers should not leave the meet before notifying a coach, even if they think they are not in a relay. Relays are changed often and if someone leaves early, it may scratch an entire relay.

Scoring and Ribbons

Each meet will have a designated area where event results are posted. Ribbons are handed out the day after a meet at practice. Swimmers compete against other swimmers of the same gender, of the same age group, and of the same basic ability. The age group is determined by your child's age on June 1st of the current year. Children are grouped as follows:

6 & Under (separated for 25 Free & Back only)

8 & Under (7 and 8's are separated for 25 Free & Back)

9 – 10

11 – 12

13 – 14

15 – 18

GRAL classifies your child as a Novice, Advanced, Junior Varsity, Varsity, or Senior Varsity swimmer, according to the top time s/he holds in each stroke. This allows for up to 30 ribbons (5 each of first through sixth place) to be awarded per event. Swimmers are seeded slowest to fastest, and multiple heats are common. Thus, a swimmer can win his/her heat but not necessarily win a place in the event. Also, because of pre-seeding, it is not uncommon to see empty lanes in any heat.

GRAL publishes new time standards at the beginning of each season if they have changed. The standards generally change every other year. Swimmers beginning the season without times will be placed as Novice swimmers in all strokes. GRAL times are carried over from the year before.

When your child achieves an Advanced time in an event, he/she will then swim as an Advanced swimmer for that particular event. Therefore, your child may swim Advanced in one event, and may eventually become a Varsity swimmer or even be a Novice in another. However, as your child's age increases, his/her Varsity time may become a Junior Varsity time in an older age group because of the new time standard for that age group. If your child swims a slower time in the next meet, s/he does not lose his/her Advanced, Junior Varsity, Varsity, or Senior Varsity status.

Each child who qualifies in at least one event (in the current season) for a Junior Varsity, Varsity, or Senior Varsity time will be invited to Champs. Champs is usually the third weekend of July and is held at the SwimRVA facility in Richmond. Last year's times do not count for Champs in the current year, but will be used for seeding.

Relays are done a little differently. They are classified as either Advanced (must include Novice and/or Advanced swimmers) or Varsity (must include Junior Varsity, Varsity, and/or Senior Varsity swimmers and be mixed gender). Champs relays have different regulations.

Dive Certification

All diving is done in the deep end only in pools where the shallow end (called the turning end) is less than 4' deep. Therefore, the timers will move to the other end (at most pools) when the 8 & unders are swimming their 25M/Y events. For the 8 & under relays, swimmers 2 and 4 will have to start in the water.

Every child must be certified to dive prior to diving in practice or at a meet. The coaches make this determination. Those not certified will have an "X" written on their upper arms at the meet so that the Starter knows that they need to start the event in the water. Some swimmers will be certified to dive off the side or edge of the pool, but not the blocks. They will have an "O" on their upper arms. Coaches will certify divers in the deep end of the pool and will attempt to get all swimmers certified prior to the first meet. However, some children may not be able to dive at all during the season.

Judging and Disqualifications

At each swim meet there are four strokes and turns (S&T) Judges and a referee on the deck of the pool. Their job is to ensure that each swimmer swims their stroke properly with no unfair advantage over another swimmer. The dominant principal is: "Fairness to all competitors, giving the benefit of the doubt, in every instance, to the swimmer."

If you see a S&T judge raising his/her hand indicating a disqualification, please do not discuss it with him/her. It should be discussed with your team's coach and **only** a coach can dispute the disqualification with the referee. Remember that these judges are parents too, as well as volunteers, and they are there to make things fair for all swimmers. No one enjoys disqualifying a swimmer. Additionally, the judge is watching up to four swimmers and it is often difficult to tell for which swimmer the judge is raising his/her hand.

A disqualification card (DQ Card) should be considered a learning tool for a swimmer to learn to swim the stroke properly. It should be discussed in a positive manner with encouragement towards improvement. DQ cards are typically discussed at the practice following the meet. If a parent or a swimmer would like more information about the disqualification, please see one of the coaches.

The most common reasons (but not the only reasons) for a DQ card are:

Freestyle:

- Pulling with a forward movement on a lane line or wall
- Pushing off of the bottom of the pool giving the swimmer forward momentum
- Walking on the bottom of the pool
- Swimming completely underwater after the start (resubmerging)

Backstroke:

- Turning over onto the stomach (past vertical towards the breast); this usually happens just before they touch the wall
- Incorrect turns

Breaststroke:

- Feet and Hands not moving simultaneously
- Order of movement: should be pull, then kick, only one of each
- Hands below the hips in the propulsion part of the stroke (not on the start)

- A non-simultaneous two-hand touch (or one-hand touch) at the turn and finish. (Number one reason for a DQ in Breaststroke!)

Butterfly:

- Hands not moving simultaneously and recovery is not over the water
- Legs not moving up and down simultaneously (i.e. flutter or scissor kick)
- A non-simultaneous two-hand touch at the turn and finish. (Number one reason for DQ in Butterfly!)

Individual Medley:

- In addition to the above, swimming the strokes out of order (the correct order is Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke, Freestyle)

Relays:

- In addition to the above, starting before the prior swimmer touches the wall
- Swimming the Medley Relay out of order (the correct order is Backstroke, Breaststroke, Butterfly, Freestyle)

Rain Delays

In the event of thunder or lightning, everyone must clear the pool deck.

Postponements are to be decided by the meet director, pool management, and parent representatives (one from each club) after a 30-minute delay. A 30-minute waiting period is to be enforced before swimmers may begin to swim after the last sighting of lightning or sound of thunder. If a meet has to be stopped at 10:30pm or later due to weather related issues, the meet shall be postponed and will be finished on the agreed rain date. If the 8 & under relays were swum, then the 9 & older relays can be swum on the postponed date, provided event 44 is in the water by 10:30pm (on the make-up day). The meet must begin by 8:30pm and must be finished no later than 11:30pm.

Volunteering

All families must volunteer in order for your children to swim for the Rockville Racers. Meets are made possible solely by the efforts of our amazing parent volunteers! With approximately 50 positions to fill for each meet (each position is for either first or second half, NOT the whole thing), it is mandatory that at least one member from each family volunteer one half of each meet. No matter what position you fill, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO WATCH YOUR CHILD SWIM! Most positions require no formal training (like timing—you get to watch all the swimming and get to know other swim parents) and are easy and fun. A few (such as strokes & turns official) require training and certification by GRAL. You must sign up for volunteer slots on the website, under the Schedule tab. Find the meet in which you are signing up and click on the green “Job SignUp” tab. If you don’t choose a job you would like to do, you will be assigned what is left when you check-in at the meet.

Volunteer Positions

Announcer

The announcer makes the mandatory announcements at the beginning of the meet. During the meet, s/he announces the event numbers (given to him/her by the

clerk of course) that are lining up at the clerk (each event is give a first, second, and final call).

S/he may also announce the score and other pertinent information regarding weather delays, etc. The clerk of course will give on-the-spot training and direction to the announcer.

Clerk of Course Assistant

The clerk of course assistant assists the clerk in finding swimmers (if they have not arrived by the staging time), helping place the swimmers on the benches, and then moving them from the benches to the lanes in which they are assigned.

The clerk of course assistant also has the chance to help the swimmers (of both teams) get mentally prepared and excited to swim. The clerk of course will give on-the-spot training and direction to assistants.

Clerk of Course

TRAINED POSITION

The clerk of course works to get the swimmers seeded in heats and lanes. The computer seeds swimmers and the clerk works from the computer printouts to make sure all swimmers are in their proper places. The clerk of course has the ability to combine events according to GRAL regulations. The clerk works with the referee to solve problems that arise. The clerk of course shall keep the starter and referee informed of any changes to the number of heats for each event. The clerk shall work with the announcer to give swimmers a first call, second call, and final call for each event. clerks can work in tandem, trading off through the meet, with one clerk seeding the relays, and the other clerk managing the process.

The clerk candidate takes a GRAL administered clerk class at the beginning of the season. After passing the test, s/he then walks a half as clerk, as well as all relays. To maintain certification, s/he must work two halves a season and pass the test every other year. Otherwise s/he must take the class again, but not walk again.

Computer Representative

TRAINED POSITION

Computer rep is a high responsibility and high commitment job. The Computer Rep is responsible for all computer related tasks throughout the season. This requires learning the SwimTopia and Meet Maestro system to monitor registrations and work with the membership coordinator to complete the swimmer registration form. The computer rep works with coaches to ensure entries are inputted correctly and for away meets, makes sure the information is sent to the other team. For home meets, the computer rep receives the entries from the away team and imports them into Meet Maestro. During home meets, the computer rep completes all computer tasks, including printing heat sheets and relay cards, inputting swimmer times, scoring events, printing ribbons, etc. After the meet is over, the computer rep sends the results to the GRAL Computer Coordinator. The computer rep is also integral to completing Champs entries. There is a printed manual that is used as a reference.

Computer Data Checker

The home team provides one computer data checker for each half of the meet. S/he is responsible for making sure that the computer printouts match the handwritten time sheets. If a mistake is made, s/he alerts the computer rep who makes the change.

Computer Data Entry

The away team provides one computer data entry volunteer for each half of the meet. The volunteer calls out the times listed on the timer sheet and the computer rep types them in. It is possible that the computer data entry person may also do some data checking. No prior experience is needed, but the faster the volunteers are at their jobs, the quicker everyone leaves at the end of the night. No times may be entered unless at least one person from each team is involved in the process.

Head Timer

The head timer is ultimately responsible for organizing the timers from his/her team and communicates with the head timer from the other team to make sure timing runs smoothly. The head timer meets with the timers prior to meet start to make sure they understand their assignments. During the meet, the head timer is not assigned a lane but rather starts two stopwatches for each race in case a watch malfunctions. If a timer raises his/her hand indicating a malfunction, the head timer switches watches with that timer. The head timer is responsible for guiding the timers from the starting end to the turning end for 8 & under (25 m/y) races and lets the starter and referee know when everyone is ready.

Heat Winner Prize Volunteer

The heat winner prize volunteer observes the races from the same end where the timers are positioned. S/he watches carefully to see which swimmer finishes first and hands that swimmer a prize from the basket. If there is any question as to who was first, two prizes are provided.

Meet Director

The meet director is the person designated by the host club whose responsibility it is to see that the physical needs of the pool are ready for each meet, including but not limited to, seating areas for spectators and swimmers, meet equipment and materials, and adequate sound and lighting. The meet director, along with the parent reps and pool management, shall work together in accordance with league rules to resolve any weather-related meet delays.

Meet Check-In (often a 2nd job, in addition to something else)

The sign-in volunteers greet the swimmers as they arrive and check them in on their list for positive check-in. The sign-in volunteers also hand out the nametags to check in volunteers for the meet. Thirty minutes prior to meet start, the sign-in volunteers work with coaches to communicate any scratches to the computer rep who will delete those swimmers from the meet. .

Referee

TRAINED POSITION

The referee has full authority over all officials and shall assign and instruct them, shall enforce all applicable rules, and shall decide all questions relating to the actual conduct of the meet. The referee has the final word on swimmer disqualifications and is responsible for meeting with and overseeing all officials. The referee must remain on deck through the course of the meet. The referee shall have final say in all disputes. Therefore, the referee shall remain until the last event has been scored.

The referee candidate must have worked four full meets (8 halves) in the last four years as a strokes & turns judge prior to becoming a referee and must have worked as S&T or a starter for the consecutive two years prior. The referee shall successfully pass the league tests in clerk of course, starter, S&T, and referee once every year. The referee trainee shall walk at least one half of a meet as a starter and one half of a meet as clerk of course unless he/she is already certified in either one of these two positions. The referee trainee shall also walk at least one full meet as a referee.

Runner

The home team provides two runners per each half meet. One runner is responsible for collecting the timer papers after every even event from each lane and giving them to the table workers. The other runner collects the swimmer disqualification cards from the strokes and turns judges, delivers them to the referee for signature, and then takes them to the table workers. Despite the name, runners don't actually run on the pool deck because that would be dangerous, but they do need to move quickly. The referee will give on-the-spot training and direction to runners. Runners are provided with a flashy vest to wear if desired.

Set-Up Volunteer

The set-up volunteers work with the meet director to make sure the pool is set up for the meet. The position involves heaving lifting as chairs, tables, and buckets of cement must be moved. The meet director will give on- the-spot training and direction to set-up personnel.

Starter

TRAINED POSITION

The starter starts each event with an electronic starter provided by the team and therefore sets the pace of the meet. A whistle should be available in the case that the electronic starter fails so as not to delay the meet. Often the away team will bring their starter mechanism as a backup. The starter works with the referee and meet director to keep meet delays to a minimum. Referees have the option to signal the beginning of each event, or to leave that up to the starter; the starter works with the referee to determine the method that will produce the most successful meet. If a swimmer false starts, the starter gives the signal and activates the recall rope. A swimmer who false starts twice in the same race will be disqualified by the referee upon mutual agreement between the starter and the referee. The starter is responsible for making sure the electronic starter is charged and ready for each meet and bringing it to away meets.

The starter candidate takes a GRAL administered starter Class at the beginning

of the season. After passing the test, s/he then walks a first and a second half as starter. To maintain certification, s/he must work two halves a season and pass the test every other year. Otherwise s/he must take the class again, but not walk again.

Strokes and Turns Judge

TRAINED POSITION

Each team provides two strokes and turns judges for each half of the meet. Four or more S&T judges are positioned around the pool to determine if swimmers are swimming their strokes correctly and in the right order. When a judge determines a swimmer has committed an infraction, s/he raises his/her hand and writes up and signs a card explaining what happened and gives it to the runner who takes it to the referee for approval. No prior swimming experience is needed to become a S&T judge as GRAL provides the necessary training.

The strokes & turns candidate takes a GRAL administered strokes & turns class at the beginning of the season. After passing the test, s/he then walks three halves at strokes & turns, actually making calls during the third walk. To maintain certification, s/he must work two halves a season and take the class every other year. Otherwise s/he must take the class again, but not walk again.

Table Worker

Table workers check DQ cards as they come in from the runner to ensure they are signed by both S&T judge and the referee. If not, the card is returned to the referee for the final decision. Cards are then matched with a name on the timer sheets, marked with that name, and put in an envelope for the coaches.

Table workers receive the timer sheets from the runner, cut them in half to separate the boys events from the girls, and circle the median time or average the times if only two are listed. They also mark the swimmers who did not swim as "No Shows" (NS) and those that are disqualified (DQ). Timer sheets are then put in lane order and sent to the computer table.

The head table worker (TRAINED POSITION) will give on-the-spot training and direction to table workers.

Timer

Timers meet with the head timer 20 minutes prior to meet start to make sure they understand their assignments and have all questions answered. There are three timers per lane (alternating, one from one team and two from the other). The three timers in each lane designate one timer to write the swimmers' times on the clipboard. Prior to the race, a timer should ask the swimmer his/her name to make sure it matches the sheet. At the start of each race the starter activates a mechanism that emits a horn-type sound (for the swimmers to hear) and a light (for the timers to watch, as this is the most accurate way). As the light flashes, each timer starts his/her watch. If a watch malfunctions, the timer raises his/her hand and receives another watch from the head timer. When the swimmer touches the wall, the timer stops his/her watch. Then the recording timer writes all three times on the correct spaces on the timer sheets on the clipboard. S/he then initials the timer sheet. A runner will collect the timer sheets after every even event. The head timer will give on-the-spot training and direction to timers.

Note that timers may be given 2 watches so that it is easier to record times as races move quickly.

GRAL

GRAL stands for the Greater Richmond Aquatic League. We belong to this league with 27 other teams. The teams are broken into divisions (determined based on past performance and team size). Our division determines the teams against whom we compete. See the [GRAL website](#) for more info.