



2025-2026

Swim Team Handbook

Welcome to The Clark Sports Center Sharks! We are a competitive swim team. We seek to provide a positive atmosphere in which children of all abilities and ages can learn and develop the skills needed in the sport of competitive swimming. The Clark Sports Center Sharks are registered with USA Swimming, the national governing body for amateur swimming in this country. All members of the Clark Sports Center Sharks, our coaches, and all officials at swim meets are registered as members of USA Swimming. As members of USA Swimming, we compete only at USA Sanctioned Meets with registered clubs and athletes.

Membership

Membership in the Clark Sports Center Sharks is open to individuals who meet all the following criteria:

- Must be a Clark Sports Center Member (a Junior Membership is \$205.00 for an entire year)
- Between the ages of 5 and 18
- Must be at least an American Red Cross level 3 swimmer (Must be able to swim 25 yards of Front Crawl, 25 yards of Back Crawl and be comfortable swimming in water that is at least 8 feet deep)
- Payment of USA Swimming, Adirondack Swimming and Program Fees.

The benefits of competitive swimming include the following:

- Opportunity to meet people and make new friends
- Participation in one of the most beneficial forms of cardiovascular exercise
- Development of the lifetime sport of swimming
- Development of time management skills, self-discipline, and sportsmanship

Your swimmer will continue to reap the benefits of participation long after his or her association with The Clark Sports Center Sharks.

Active.com Registration

Program registration on Active Network is where you will pay for the program fees and how you will RSVP for your swimmer and pay for future meets.

USA Swimming Registration

Is required and is to be paid separately from the program fees and The Clark Sports Center Membership.

A link to register with USA Swimming will be emailed to you from Coach Lindsey after Active Registration. Follow the link and prompts to complete the registration. New Swimmers will also need a copy of their birth certificate to be used as proof of age.

The Season

USA Swimming recognizes two seasons within each calendar year. The season beginning around Labor Day and ending mid-March is referred to as the short course (SC) swim season. During the short course swim season, practices and all meets are recognized to include “yard” events. Our short course season runs from October to March. If your swimmer wants to participate (and a coach thinks they are able to) there is also a long course (LC) swim season, which begins for the Sharks the end of April/ beginning of May and ends in July. The long course season means training for “longer” distances. Meet events are recognized as “meter” swims.

Club Communication and Notification

The main means of communication is through both TeamReach and Email. You will receive TeamReach notifications as well as emails mainly from the Active Network system, Coach Mat and Coach Lindsey. It is important for parents and swimmers to get into the daily habit of checking TeamReach and emails for the latest information on practice schedules, schedule changes, meet announcements, newsletters, and so on. Other means of communication include our Facebook Page (search Clark Sports Center Sharks) and the Clark Sports Center Website (www.clarksportscenter.com).

TeamReach can be downloaded right from your phone's app store.

Equipment

In addition to a team suit for competitions, your swimmer will need at least one other practice suit. Goggles are needed for better visibility and protection against the irritation of pool water. Be sure the goggles you buy are comfortable and watertight. We encourage the use of the official team suit and a swim cap at all meets.

It is recommended that team suits only be worn for competition to avoid natural deterioration from exposure to pool water. Wearing the team uniform at meets helps create a team atmosphere and enables coaches and spectators to observe and cheer our Sharks.

Lost and Found

You are strongly encouraged to **label your entire swimmer's equipment**. Labeled equipment found at practice can easily be returned to the swimmer. Unlabeled equipment floats around the pool deck and pool office and generally disappears. Swimmers should keep all swim bags and personal belongings in their locker. Anything of value should be left at home. The locker rooms may be used simultaneously by others. The team and Clark Sports Center are not responsible for lost or stolen items.

The Parent's Role

As the parent of a competitive swimmer, your main responsibility is to provide a caring environment for your swimmer. This support will encourage your swimmer to feel good about his or her interest in competitive age-group swimming. Show your support by ensuring your swimmer's attendance at practices and swim meets.

Parents are not participants on their child's team but contribute to the success experienced by the swimmer and his or her team. Parents serve as role models, and children often emulate their attitudes. Strive to be a positive role model. Most important, show good sportsmanship at all times toward coaches, officials, opponents, and teammates.

Be enthusiastic but remember that your child is the swimmer. Swimmers need to establish realistic goals. Parents should not impose their own standards. It is far better to set goals of improvement than goals of winning.

Volunteering

All parents of Sharks have mandatory volunteering that will have to be accomplished by the end of the season. There are many opportunities throughout the season, we will be hosting several meets at The Clark Sports Center this season and attend many more. We as a team need every family's involvement for success. It is the volunteer efforts of individual parents that allow for the existence of our team. This season, we will be introducing a **Volunteer Point System** to keep track of participation. Each family is

expected to earn **25–30 points** by the end of the season. Points can be earned in a variety of ways, and opportunities will be posted and updated throughout the year.

Safety and Behavior

The Clark Sports Center and Sharks coaches want all Shark activities (practices and social activities) to be safe for swimmers, coaches, families, and spectators. To this end, we ask that all members follow the rules of the facility being used, listen to coaches, and follow directions. We ask that all athletes and parents read, sign and return (to your coach) a team code of conduct before the first practice of the season.

Practice is not a time for fooling around. Swimming can be one of the safest sports available to youth. Yet, just one incident can turn it into a dangerous or deadly activity. Swimmers must act responsibly for their own safety and for the safety of others. Disruptive behavior and not following protocol set forth by the coaches are detrimental to the swimmer and the team. Coaches receive the support Sports Center in benching swimmers during practice. If swimmers are benched for the evening, they are not allowed to leave practice early. They must participate in any cleanup of equipment their group is responsible for, and they must stay until their group is dismissed.

The Clark Sports Center reserves the right to terminate the membership of any individual whose behavior places The Clark Sports Center Sharks in an unfavorable light or jeopardizes our participation in any pool use or sporting event. All Clark Sports Center Sharks swimmers are expected to demonstrate good sportsmanship and act as appropriate ambassadors for the facility. They should act as role models for other swimmers when wearing The Clark Sports Center Sharks logo.

USA Swimming Safe Sport

USA Swimming has established several different requirements that swim club must follow.

- **Athlete Protection Training** – is for all non-athletes, swimmers and parents. Non-Athletes (Coaches, Officials etc.) must complete this training on a yearly basis. Swimmers are asked to take it when they turn 18 years old and it is available for swimmers and parents of all ages to take it as well.
- **Background Checks** – All staff that interact with the swimmers on a yearly basis as well as newly hired staff. The Clark Sports Center has been using background checks in their hiring process for years.
- **Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy (MAAPP)** – addresses one-on-one interactions, social media and electronic communications, travel: local and team, locker rooms and changing areas and massages, rubdowns and athletic training modalities. Every USA Swimming club, Zone and LSC is required to implement the MAAPP in full. Parent and Swimmers must read and sign an acknowledgement form.
- **Bullying Policy**- USA Swimming requires each swim club to have an action plan to address bullying.

Locker Rooms

Coaches are not in charge of supervising swimmers once they have entered the locker rooms. Individual families must be responsible for their own swimmer in the changing areas. Locker rooms should be used with quickness and left in the same state in which they were found.

The Central Valley Swim League has a locker room policy in which all swimmers must conduct themselves appropriately in the locker rooms. Horseplay will not be tolerated. Violation of such policy could result in being pulled from a Central Valley Swim League Meet.

Accidents or Injuries

For both practices and meets it is procedure to have a lifeguard on at all times. For small injuries we know that sometimes kids don't mention things right away. In the event of an accident or injury, no matter how minor, please let one of the coaches know immediately. We need to fill out an accident report. At all meets accidents are subsequently reported to USA Swimming. When a report is filed, you will receive a form from USA Swimming discussing USA Swimming secondary medical coverage. If you have concerns about safety please let one of the coaches know.

Practices

The Clark Sports Center Sharks practice in the pool here at The Clark Sports Center. Practice times are dependent on the group your child is in and what other programs are going on at the Clark Sports Center. Practice groups meet Monday- Friday. The head coach determines specific practice groups. Swimmers are placed according to what is appropriate for their ability. The head coach makes this determination. Parents should not expect that their swimmer will be placed in the group of the family's choosing for other reasons, such as carpool purposes, established friendships, preference for time and days of a practice group, or parents' opinion regarding the swimmer's ability. Swimmers who show steady improvement will be moved as necessary to another group. These moves can occur at any time in the season to accommodate the individual swimmer.

Practice Groups:

- **Red Group** (Developmental): Swimmers who are working on swimming basics including all 4 strokes, turns and a racing start.
- **Purple Group** (Developmental): New or Returning swimmers that are working on all 4 strokes, basic drills, endurance and racing starts.
- **Blue Group**: Swimmers who are working on "Legal", by USA Swimming regulations, all 4 strokes, turns and racing start.
- **Orange Group**: Swimmers who can display a "Legal", by USA Swimming regulations, Breaststroke, Butterfly, Freestyle, and Backstroke, racing starts and turns. These swimmers are working on building endurance and improving technique.
- **Green Group**: Swimmers who have competitive swimming experience and are working to achieve long-term goals through more intense training. These swimmers are invited to join the Senior Team.

Attendance Requirements

The Sharks require a minimum number of practices each week, one of which is the Wednesday Team Practice Day.

- **Red Group (Developmental)**: 2 Practices a week (including Wednesday)
- **Purple Group (Developmental)**: at least 3 Practices a week (including Wednesday)
- **Blue Group (Age Group)**: at least 4 Practices a week (including Wednesday)
- **Orange Group (Age Group)**: at least 4 Practices a week (including Wednesday)
- **Green Group (Senior)**: 4-6 in water Practices (including Wednesday)

Practice Schedule for 2025-2026 Short Course Season:

Practice GROUP	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday (Required Team Practice)	Thursday	Friday
Red Group		4:00-5:00 pm	4:00-5:00 pm	4:00-5:00 pm	
Purple Group	4:00-5:00 pm		4:00-5:00 pm		4:00-5:00 pm
Blue Group	4:00-5:00 pm	4:00-5:00 pm	4:00-5:00 pm	4:00-5:00 pm	4:00-5:00 pm
Orange Group	3:30-5:00 pm	3:30-5:00 pm	3:30-5:00 pm	3:30-5:00 pm	3:30-5:00 pm
Green Group	3:30-5:30 pm	3:30-5:30 pm	3:30-5:30 pm	3:30-5:30 pm	3:30-5:30 pm

What is Age-Group Swimming?

USA Swimming Age Group programs and rules govern participation in competition. The USA Swimming program provides fair and open competition for USA Swimming members age 18 and under. Its purpose is to encourage maximum participation, provide an educational experience, enhance physical and mental conditioning, and develop a rich base of swimming talent. Participants compete in different age groups depending on their age on the first day of the meet. The Sharks belong to the Adirondack district. Typically, meet competition falls in the following age groups: 8 and under; 10 and under or 9/10; 11/12; 13/14; and senior. Swimmers always compete with their own sex. Graduating up to the next age level of competition is referred to as “aging up.” This occurs on the swimmer’s odd-year birthday.

Time Standards

Knowledge of USA Swimming time standards helps swimmers and their families chart progress and realize personal goals. They also provide swimmers with an opportunity to find out how they measure up against other USA Swimming age-group swimmers. They are available from USA Swimming’s website (www.usaswimming.org) and are included in the back of this handbook.

Officials

All USA Swimming meets are required to have swim officials on deck. These are the people you see wearing white shirts and navy-blue shorts. They start the events and also walk up and down the sides of the pool watching the swimmers. They are all volunteers, trained by and registered with USA Swimming. Most of them are parents just like you. If you are interested, the procedure for becoming an official is simple:

- Attend a 4-hour training clinic.
- Complete a take-home, open book test on USA Swimming rules and regulations.
- Pass a background check
- Perform an apprenticeship with an experienced official for four meets.

Training clinics are usually held each fall. For more information about becoming an official, please contact Coach Mat.

Swimming the Strokes

There are specific standards set forth by USA Swimming for all strokes, starts, and turns. For details, refer to the publication “USA Swimming Rules.” Rules are modified from time to time, and coaches will keep swimmers informed.

In **freestyle**, the competitor may swim any stroke he or she wishes. The stroke most often seen in freestyle events is the front crawl stroke. The alternate overhand motion of the arms and alternating up-and-down flutter kick characterize this stroke. The forward start is used. Any type of turn is acceptable, but when turning, some part of the swimmer’s body must touch the wall. The swimmer finishes when some part of the body touches the solid wall or timing pad at the end of the pool. A common reason for disqualification is failure to touch the wall when turning.

In **backstroke**, the swimmer swims on the back using an alternating motion of the arms and a flutter kick. Some part of the swimmer’s body must touch the end of the pool on turns. The swimmer is not permitted to turn over onto the front during the race except when performing the backstroke front flip turn. The coach will teach this turn to your swimmer when he or she is ready. The coach will let the swimmer know when he or she is ready to use the turn in competition. The finishing of the backstroke occurs when some part of the swimmer touches the solid wall or timing pad at the end of the pool. A common reason for disqualification is failure to remain on the back.

In **butterfly**, the swimmer performs a simultaneous overhand stroke of the arms while doing an undulating dolphin kick with the legs. In the kick, the swimmer must move the legs together and may not use a flutter, scissors, or breaststroke kick. The swimmer must touch the wall with both hands simultaneously when turning and when finishing. Underwater recovery of the arms and one-hand touches on turns and finishes are common reasons for disqualification in both the butterfly and the breaststroke.

In **breaststroke**, the swimmer is required to move both arms underwater simultaneously in the same horizontal plane. The kick is similar to the action of a frog. No flutter, scissors, or dolphin kick is permitted. Except on the pullout after the start and on each turn, the swimmer’s hands are not allowed to pull past the hip line. On the turn and at the finish, the swimmer must touch the wall with both hands simultaneously with the shoulders in line with the surface of the water.

In the **individual medley**, the swimmer swims one, two, or four laps of each of the four strokes in the following order: butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, and freestyle.

Swim Meets

By its very name, the purpose of competitive swimming is to compete and that means attending swim meets!

For many new swimmers, taking the first step and going to their first competitive meet is a big undertaking. Our coaches understand this and are happy to share information about each meet.

As a Team we participate in 2 different types of meets:

- As a team we participate in The Central Valley Swim League within our Adirondack (LSC) district. These meets are for any swimmer, unless cutoff times are listed in advance. Swimmers are placed in heats according to their seed times, swimming slowest to fastest. The swimmers with the fastest six times (or eight depending on how many lanes there are), without regard to heat assignments, win awards.

For Central Valley League meets the Coaches pick which events your child will swim. Your child may swim up to 3 individual events. These meets do not count toward the Adirondack Championships 1 meet requirement

- We also participate in bigger sanctioned meets. These meets are sanctioned through USA Swimming and are usually held in a bigger facility with more teams.

Depending on your swimmers' abilities and goals these meets may work for them.

USA Meet events must be chosen by the swimmer and parent and require payment per event (within the max number) and a swimmer fee.

When you are notified of meets, you should read the meet announcement carefully and ask your child's coach whether that meet would be appropriate for your swimmer. If your coach suggests that your swimmer's friend participate in a meet but doesn't make the same suggestion to your swimmer, the coach surely has a good reason. There are appropriate and inappropriate meets for all swimmers.

NOTE: If a swimmer is attending a meet, that swimmer must have a parent or guardian in attendance; it is not acceptable to drop off a swimmer at a meet and leave him or her unsupervised.

Within the 2 types of meets there are categories:

A **developmental meet** is a USA Swimming meet, following all rules and regulations set forth by the governing body. Fastest swimmers are generally excluded. Swimmers who swim faster than the established cutoff time are typically awarded a certificate announcing their achievement. At USA Swimming meets, the swimmers' awards are given to the coach at the end of the meet. The coach will then distribute them to individual mailboxes at the next practice.

Participation in a **district championship meet** is restricted to swimmers who are members of that district. Cutoff times are established for championship meets. Adirondack typically offers a developmental championship meet (Silvers) and a Junior Olympic championship (Gold') meet at the conclusion of the short course season in March.

ADIRONDACK SILVERS CHAMPIONSHIPS: is a district championship meet where swimmers who are slower than the gold cut off times but have attended 2 sanctioned USA meets can end their season. It is held at TBA in the Albany area.

ADIRONDACK GOLDS CHAMPIONSHIPS: is a district championship meet where swimmers who are meet gold cut off times and have attended 2 sanctioned USA meets end their season. It is held at RPI in Troy NY.

About Registration for Meets

Registration will take place online only at Active.com. Remember your username and password AND save your payment information.

The Team Registrar has established registration dates for all meets; these dates are final. Due to the paperwork process no late entries can be given.

CVSL Meets require payment by the required due date on the Meet sheet. The entries for these are chosen by the coaches.

USA Meets require you and your swimmer to pick events from the events list posted for them to swim. Fill out a meet registration form (can be found near the entrance to the pool office) and return both the registration form and payment to the pool office. Payment is usually per event plus a swimmer charge.

Announcements for both CVSL meets and USA Swimming meets can be accessed by clicking the Meet tab on the top of the Adirondack swimming web page.

Coaches, not parents, sign swimmers up for relays. **Relays** consist of four swimmers of the same sex and age group. The coach will determine the swimmers for each relay, submit the entry form, and the club will pay the fee. When swimmers are chosen for relays, they need to plan to stay for the event. Swimmers who do not stay for relays may be excluded from subsequent team relays. It is very difficult for the other swimmers when one leg of their relay departs from the meet, leaving them unable to participate. Relays are usually same sex and same age-group swimmers. They are offered in distances of 100, 200, and 400 yards and meters. USA Swimming teams will offer both freestyle relays and medley relays, in which each swimmer is assigned a stroke as his or her leg of the relay. Relays can be very exciting for both the swimmers and the spectators.

Signing Up for a Swim Meet

ALL Swim meet entries will be collected Online at www.active.com . Remember your username, password and save your payment information. You will be automatically billed the following Wednesday after the meet.

1. Announcements for both Central Valley Swim League meets, and USA Swimming meets can be accessed by visiting the Adirondack swimming website at www.adirondackswimming.org and clicking on the meets tab at the top of the page. The list of meets that we are attending this season are on our website www.clarksportscenter.com under the Sharks Swim Team page
2. Read all the information carefully. Some meets exclude fast swimmers, and some meets exclude just developing swimmers. Pay attention to things like cutoff times, how many events are allowed per swimmer, the fees for each event, and the per person surcharge for USA Meets.
3. For CVSL Meets, the entries are chosen by the coaches. For a USA Meet, the entries are chosen by the swimmer and parent. To do this find your swimmer's age group in the meet announcement. Swimmers may sign up only for their own age group with the exception of any swimmer being able to swim events labeled "open" or "senior." Swimming in these groups, when not your own age group, should be done only

by experienced swimmers and with the coach's recommendation. Most swimmers should only enter events in their own age group.

4. Girls' events are usually odd-numbered events, and boys' events are always even.

Going to a Swim Meet

- Find out where you're going. Most meet announcements will have directions. If not, check the handbook. Consider carpooling, convoying, and so on.
- Find out what time warm-ups begin for your swimmer and when the meet begins. Some meets have sessions—morning and afternoon. You need only attend the session in which your swimmer swims. Allow plenty of time to get where you are going.
- Wear layers! Wear something cool because pool areas are usually hot. Also bring a sweater because the bullpen (the area in which you hang out until your swimmer swims) is usually a gym or cafeteria and may be chilly.
- At all meets your swimmer is required to check in with a coach as soon as they arrive. Some meets require that swimmers check in, a procedure called "positive check-in." Make sure your swimmer checks in with the clerk of the course when you arrive. This is usually right inside the entrance to the meet. Failure to check in at a "positive check-in" meet usually results in the swimmer being disqualified from his or her first event or possibly all events.
- Purchase a meet program. You will find all your swimmer's entry information listed in the meet program along with that of all other participants. Use a highlighter to mark all your swimmer's events, as well as those of other Sharks.
- Locate the Sharks assigned area of the bullpen (gym, cafeteria, etc.). This is the area where you and your swimmer may stay between events. Swimmers roll out their sleeping bags or blankets and parents set up lawn chairs in this area. (Occasionally the swimmers are asked to stay on deck with the coaches.)
- Parents assist with timing. USA Swimming meets are timed electronically with the assistance of two backup human timers. Each swim club represented at a swim meet is required to provide timers for the entire meet. Our timing coordinator (also a parent volunteer) will send out available shifts for timing in advance. Please sign up for at least 1 shift during the season! You will be notified of these assignments by e-mail. All parents are expected to participate. It's the best seat in the house. Don't worry about lack of experience. It's simple, and stopwatches are provided.
- Parents should make sure their swimmer arrives early to the meet so that they can warm up. The swimmer should go down on deck prior to the beginning of the warm-up session and consult with a coach. It is important to follow the recommendations of the coach. After warm-ups, your swimmer should dry off and keep warm. Find out where events are being seeded. Seeding means preparing the swimmers in their correct order. Swimmers should always have their cap and goggles handy.
- After the race, the swimmer goes immediately to the coach for feedback. If the coach is with another swimmer or watching another shark compete, your swimmer needs to be patient while waiting. A printout of the electronic results will be posted in a specified area near the pool, usually

within 15 minutes of the race. Check the results and record your swimmer's time in your program. Later you can record it in your swimmer's logbook.

- Swimmers are occasionally disqualified (DQed) during their event. Reasons for a DQ range from false starts to performing strokes, turns, or finishes incorrectly. DQs are judgments made by the USA Swimming officials. The official will usually explain to the swimmer the reason for the DQ. The coach will reinforce this judgment. Parents should not question the judgment of an official. DQs can be difficult for swimmers and parents to accept, but they do happen to every swimmer sooner or later. It is helpful if the parents accept the fact that USA Swimming has high standards and that the same standards apply to every swimmer. Performing the skills of swimming in accordance with USA Swimming standards is part of the discipline process that makes swimming a character-building sport.

Stuff to Bring to the Meet

Experienced Sharks recommend bringing the following:

- Team suit
- Goggles—well-adjusted and leak-proof
- Extra goggles just in case
- Team swim cap—or two in case one rips
- Sweatshirt and sweatpants—maybe two sets
- Towels—two or three are needed because the swimmer dries off after warm-ups, between events, and when changing to go home
- Plastic water bottle and/or drinks in containers other than glass
- Sleeping bag
- Pillow (optional)
- Quiet activities: homework, books, Walkman, playing cards, and so on
- Highlighter to mark your swim program
- Black Sharpie to write on your swimmer's hand
- Food (almost all meets sell inexpensive concessions: coffee, juice, soda, hot dogs, pizza, sandwiches, baked goods, and so on)
- Money for a program (\$2 to \$10)—they're helpful, but you're not obligated to buy them; equipment is usually for sale
- Good luck charms!!!

Some of these items may seem unnecessary, but when you arrive at your first meet, you will soon understand the value of each and be glad you brought them.