

The Alief Aquatic Club FAQ's

Q: Why should my child swim?

A: The Alief Aquatic Club is the premier youth sports program in the Alief area. There are many benefits to getting your child involved in competitive swimming, including:

1. Swimming promotes physical development.
2. Swimming develops aerobic endurance and is one of the most beneficial forms of cardiovascular exercise.
3. Swimming enhances a child's natural flexibility and promotes muscle development.
4. Swimming develops superior coordination.
5. Swimming is the most injury-free of all children's sports.
6. Swimming is a sport that will bring children fitness and enjoyment for life.
7. Swimming promotes time management and is one of the top academically achieving sports.
8. Swimming is an important safety skill for young children.
9. Swimming promotes discipline
10. Swimming provides potential opportunities in education

Q: What is the swim team and why would I want my child to participate?

A: It's fun. It's great exercise. It builds confidence. It's a great way for your child to meet other kids in the neighborhood. It's a great way for you to meet other parents.

Q: Who can answer my questions about the swim team?

A: Send your email questions to the Board President at president@alacswim.org or call Coach John Berry at 832-567-6157 or to any board member present at the pool in the lobby.

Q: What strokes do the swimmers use in competition?

A: Freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, and butterfly.

Q: What swimming strokes does my child need to know to join the team?

A: If your child is 5 to 18 and can swim a lap of the pool then they should come to swim team practice and have the coach evaluate them for the team.

Q: What is a tryout and what should I expect?

A: A tryout is an evaluation done by our coaching staff to place each swimmer in the best possible group level. We start accepting swimmers out of lesson . Each swimmer is different and may or may not be ready. The tryout will last about 10 minutes. Swimmers should be ready to swim with swimsuit, goggles, and a towel. If you are a high school swimmer, please send us an email at CoachJohnBerry@Live.com before coming to a tryout.

Q: What to wear?

A: Swimmers must come to the evaluation session ready to swim. This includes:

- Proper swimming attire. Call or email if you are unsure what this means.
- Goggles and a swim cap if the child needs one.

Q: How do I schedule a tryout?

A: We offer drop in tryouts at the Ness Natatorium. If you would like to schedule one ahead of time, please call 832-567-6157.

Q: I just want my child to learn how to swim better. Do they have to swim in competition?

A: You should discuss this with the coach.

Q: I see that there are different age groups for the swimmers. How does that work?

A: The age groups are 8 & under, 9-10, 11-12, 13-14, 15-18. Every other year your child will have an "up" year when they are the oldest in their age group and a "down" year when they are the youngest in their age group. The system generally works well.

Q: What entities regulate the sport of competitive swimming for the team?

A: Gulf Swimming (GU) www.gulfswimming.org and USA Swimming (USAS) www.usaswimming.org are the governing bodies of competitive swimming in our area and the U.S.A. respectively.

Q: How can I join The Alief Aquatic Club?

A: Congratulations on your decision. Here are the steps to follow:

- 1) Contact us at 832-567-6157 or come by Ness Natatorium 12400 High Star Dr. Houston, TX 77072 and discuss with us your swimming experience. You can get a feel for which group might be right for your swimmer by reading the group descriptions. The coach may ask you to attend a practice session to be evaluated or to come in for a 10 minute evaluation depending on the group and experience.
- 2) After agreeing with the coach on which group is right for you, fill out the registration forms and turn them into a board member in the lobby of the pool.
- 3) If you've trained/competed under a previous USA Swimming-affiliated club, complete a Gulf Swimming (GU) Transfer Form. Send this form along with your registration form to a board member.

7) Spend some time reviewing the Alief Aquatic Club website at www.alacswim.org – there is a lot of information available to you. If you have more questions, always feel free to ask one of the Coaches, or Board Members. We are all available to help.

Q: What if my swimmer wants to take a break from swimming for a couple of months?

A: If you wish to become inactive from the club, we need to be notified to stop billing. Also, if you paid a yearly registration fee, you will not have to pay it again upon return. The registration fee is good till the beginning of the next short course season. The beginning of the short course season is typically from September to August.

Q: Who do I talk to if I have a question on my bill?

A: If you have a question on your bill, send your inquiry to board member in the lobby of Ness Natatorium.

Swim Team Practices:

Q: How do I know which training group is right for my child?

A: Returning swimmers must have coach's approval before changing practice groups. New swimmers should use information from the Groups Descriptions to narrow down their choices, and then may attend trial practices and work with coaches to find the best fit. Coaches will always make the final group placement decisions. For a coach-to-parent discussion of your child's needs please stop by the pool.

Q: When and where are practices for my child?

A: Practices are held at Ness Natatorium. Each group has a designated time slot. These times are listed with the group descriptions, and calendars are posted within our monthly news letter every month.

Q: How do I know what training equipment my child needs?

A: Look at the Group Descriptions for a list of workout equipment that your swimmer will need. All swimmers (if wearing a swim cap) MUST wear the ALAC logo cap. We do this so ALL swimmers become part of a team and not remain an individual. If you are new, there is a grace period. Team caps are also required at all meets. Swim caps can be purchased in the lobby of Ness Natatorium.

Q: Can I stay at the pool and watch my child's lesson?

A: Parents may sit/stand in the spectator seating area to watch their child's practice. However, we respectfully request that you do not interfere with the practice session being given and remain a bystander. Our highly trained coaches know the best way to instruct your child and parental guidance is not necessary during this time. Due to insurance regulations, parents are not allowed on the pool deck at all.

Q: Can I leave my child at the pool unattended?

A: If your swimmer is in the Beginner Learn to Swim Program or the Intermediate Program please do not leave your child at the pool unattended. We are not responsible for your child once the practice is over, and need you present in case of any emergencies.

Q. Which program should my child be in? How much does it cost to be a member?

A. These types of questions can be answered by calling 832-567-6157.

Q. When is a good time in the year to start swimming?

A. Anytime! The seasons begin in late August and Mid-March so those would be the BEST times to begin. But you are always welcome.

Q. Is the club associated with the school district?

A. No. Although the club is not formally connected to the school district, we have always had a close relationship. The district has allowed the club to use its pools for training and the facility should be respected along with its rules.

Q. Can I join a club like ALAC if I'm already swimming for my high school and/or neighborhood summer league team?

A. Absolutely. The high school and summer league seasons are too short for those that love to swim. Our more advanced programs always have high school swimmers who train with us as well as their school during the year. We even have a program, High School Supplemental, specifically for the High School swimmer who wants additional training time to increase their chances of high school success. Also, the majority of high school swimmers that advance to regional and state meets and the summer league swimmers who go to the top invitational meets are "year-round" swimmers. Coaches are well aware that many swimmers are swimming for both teams. They will work together to make your season as successful as possible. Swimmers in our developmental groups frequently do both Summer League and ALAC. Only swimmers in the more competitive programs are asked to refrain from summer league swimming due to their training requirements.

Q. Do you have to be a fast swimmer to make the team?

A. No. ALAC is open to anyone with an interest in swimming. While we do perform evaluations to tryout, the purpose is to properly place each swimmer in the appropriate group that meets their needs. Some swimmers will go on to swim in college and at national meets, many other will simply have a lot of fun, get great exercise and compete against other swimmers at the same level as themselves. Unlike some sports, there are no "bench warmers" in swimming. Meets are held throughout the year for swimmers at all levels.

Swim Meets

Q: Where do I find information on upcoming swim meets that my child may be eligible to enter?

A: Refer to the Gulf Swimming website at www.gulfswimming.org. Click on the meets tab located on the left side of the webpage. From here you will find a season list of previous short course, and long course seasons, as well as the current season. This will be listed by course and year. When you click on the appropriate season, find the meet we will be attending and click the blue ANN file. It will open the invite information in a .pdf format.

Q: How do meet entries work?

A: In the lobby of Ness Natatorium there is a bulletin board with the information for the next meet we will be attending. There are also entry forms in the lobby. Simply fill out the appropriate events, and turn in the form with the appropriate payment to a board member.

Q. Where are meets held?

A. Most meets are in the Houston area. Occasionally, the club travels to an out of town meet in Texas or even other states. The best way to get an idea of exactly where meets are held during a typical season is to look over the schedules on the Gulf Swimming website.

Q. When are the meets held and how long do they last?

A. They are usually scheduled for Friday night (6:30-9), Saturday and Sunday (9am-1pm). These times are approximate. Sometimes the meets are only Saturday and Sunday. The events scheduled for Friday night are usually longer distances for older kids. (500 Free, 400 IM, etc.) Although the start times are pretty consistent the finish times vary widely depending on the number of swimmers entered.

Q. Can I use my best summer league times when I enter a meet?

A. No, you can only use times from a sanctioned USA meet. You are allowed to enter a meet without an entry time if you've never swum the event at a USA meet. It's referred to as entering with a "no time" (NT).

Q. How much does it cost to enter a meet?

A. Typical costs for a Gulf hosted meet is about \$4.50 per individual event and \$6.00 for relay events, if you enter ahead of time. If you wait until the day of the meet and "enter on deck" you will be charged double. Fees are typically higher for championship meets (TAGS, Nationals, etc.). Also, prices for heat sheets are usually about \$5.00 (\$10 for championships and big invitationals).

Q. Where do my seed times come from that are in the heat sheet?

A. The team keeps a database of all times swam by each swimmer. When the events you've chosen for a meet are entered into the computer it selects your best time for that stroke and distance to use as your seed time.

Q. What's the difference between a pre-seeded meet and a deck seeded meet?

A. In a pre-seeded meet all of the swimmers will swim their events in a lane and heat determined by their entry time as submitted as submitted prior to the meet. If a swimmer doesn't show up for his/her event then the lane they were assigned to will be empty. That is allowable. In a deck seeded meet the heats and lanes are not determined until about 45 minutes before the event. This allows swimmers to enter and scratch from events on the day of the meet. The main purpose of this is to prevent having empty empty lanes in a heat which slows the meet down. It can also be a disadvantage to swimmers who have to swim next to empty lanes or even in a heat by themselves. Most meets in the Gulf are deck seeded meets so don't forget to "circle in".

Q. What does it mean to "circle in".

A. At a deck seeded meet the host team will post a list of all swimmers who have entered each event. You must find your name on the list for each event that you intend to swim and circle the number next to it. This tells the host team that you are there and you still intend to swim the event. If you do not want to swim a particular event then do NOT circle in for that event. The list for each event will be taken to the scoring computer about 45 minutes prior to the expected start time. If the number next to your name is not circled then you will be scratched from the event. If you DO circle in and then do NOT show up when your heat is called to the blocks you will be penalized by being fined \$5 by the Gulf Board.

Q. What is meant by "Short Course" and "Long Course"?

A. These terms generally refer to the length of a pool. Short Course is a 25 yard (or meter) pool and Long Course is a 50 meter pool. However, the names are also used for the two seasons in USA Swimming. September to March is the Short Course season when meets are held in 25 yard pools. April to August is the Long Course season as meets are held in 50 meter pools. Most 50 meter pools such as Don Cook Natatorium can be configured as either long course or short course by running lane ropes length-wise or width-wise or by inserting a bulkhead in the middle of the pool.

Q. What is TAGS?

A. TAGS is the acronym for Texas Age Group Swimming but the term is usually used to refer to the TAGS meet or its qualifying times ("TAGS times"). The Texas Swimming Association organizes two end-of-season TAGS Championship meets each year, one for short course in early March and the other for long course in late July. These meets are the top

championships for swimmers in the state that have not yet achieved a Jr. National qualifying time. Time standards are published annually for the TAGS meets. Swimmers must achieve the qualifying times for each event during the season in order to enter that event at TAGS. The location of each meet varies. Short Course TAGS meets have recently been held in Midland, Dallas and at Texas A&M. Long Course TAGS meets are usually held at the University of Texas in Austin.

Q. What is the meet called "Last Chance TAGS"?

A. That just tells you that it is the last meet of that season where you can get a TAGS qualifying time that can be used to actually enter the upcoming TAGS meet. Entries then have to be sent to the team hosting the TAGS meet within a few days. It's exciting to watch swimmers trying their hardest to earn their way to the state championship meet.

Q. What is an "unattached" swimmer?

A. No, it doesn't just mean that they're single. According to Gulf Swimming rules, if a swimmer switches from one USA Swimming club to another, he or she must enter meets as unattached for a period of 120 days since they last competed for (not practiced with) their old club. That means that they cannot score points for their new club or swim on relay teams. You'll usually see unattached Alief Aquatic Club swimmers listed in heat sheets as swimming for UALAC. The main purpose of this rule is to prevent swimmers from switching clubs just before an important meet so they can add to the new team's point total.

Q. I've heard people refer to "Junior Meet" and "Elite" meets. What does that mean?

A. USA Swimming publishes time standards for boys and girls by age group that can be used as a scale to gauge a swimmer's level of achievement in each event. They are, from slowest to fastest, B, BB, A, AA, AAA & AAAA. Trying to reach the next level in a particular event can be motivational to swimmers. Meets are often restricted to swimmers above or below a certain level to limit the number of entries. For example, to enter an event at an Elite meet you must have at least 3 A times or better to enter that meet. Other times age is used to limit entries to a manageable number. (11 & Up, 10 & Under)

Swim Meet Officials

Q: What steps are involved in becoming an official?

A: By following these steps:

Attending a Gulf Official Clinic

- Taking the written GU/USA Swimming Official test
- USA swimming Non-Athlete registration

Q: Do officials get paid?

A: Meet officials do not get paid at meets, but they get volunteer service hours credit for the sessions they work.

Q: How often do I have to work if I am an official?

A: You are required to work a minimum of 4 sessions per year to maintain certification.

Q: Who can I contact for more information on becoming an official?

A: You can contact John Berry at 832-567-6157, or any board member.

Social Events

Q: How do I find out about social events?

A: All events are announced on the bulletin board in the lobby of Ness Natatorium.

Q: What kinds of social activities can I expect will be available to my child?

A: Alief has outings to go to movies, dinners, laser tag, and a few other events. Most events occur at the pool at Ness Natatorium.

Q: How do I volunteer to help organize social events or offer ideas?

A: Please contact any board member or John Berry at 832-567-6157.

Team Fundraising

Q: Where can I give a donation check?

Checks can be donated in the lobby of Ness Natatorium during any workout, or through arrangements with a board member.

Make your check payable to the Alief Aquatic Club, and we appreciate your support.

Q: What are the tax benefits of making a gift to CFSC?

A: Your gift is tax-deductible as specified in IRS regulations. The Alief Aquatic Club is registered as a charitable organization and for more information please contact John Berry at 832-567-6157 or talks to any board member. Gifts of securities may have additional tax benefits. Bequests, trusts and other planned gifts can offer significant tax benefits.