



**PFL Aquatics Academy and
Competitive Team
Parent Handbook**

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PFL AQUATICS is a Level 1 USA Swimming Member Club. Founded in 2009, PFL AQUATICS has coached two Senior National, eight Junior National, and more than 50 Sectionals/TAGS qualifiers.

CONTACT US

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Houston, TX 77065
Phone: 346.786.1101

Email: teammanager@pflaquatics.org
Accounting: pflaccounting@pflaquatics.org

Communication is always open between parents and coaches. In line with USA Swimming athlete protection policies, PFL coaches do not communicate directly with athletes via electronic devices. Phone calls, emails, etc. must originate from the parents' device.

PFL AQUATICS MISSION

To lead, train and encourage our athletes through the sport of swimming with the skills needed to be successful in LIFE

THE PFL AQUATICS DIFFERENCE

- 100% Athlete-Centered Approach = We will always put the swimmer first
- Low Swimmer-to-Coach Ratio = More personal time and specific training for each swimmer
- Focus on Technique vs. Distance = More speed and fewer injuries
- Hire and Keep Top Coaches = Continuity and a personal connection with our swimmers
- No Fundraising = Instead of holding 3-4 fundraisers per season as other swim clubs, our tuition and enrollment fees cover what fundraisers would. We understand the time commitment for families is very limited.
- Coaching Commitment at Meets = Swimmers Will always have a PFL Coach on deck = Active engagement at all times and all levels

Our #1 Objective is to keep athletes swimming and excelling in every aspect of their life.

PFL AQUATICS VISION

We seek to provide competitive training and racing opportunities for school and college-age swimmers to achieve their highest level of performance, ability, commitment, and desire. Our goal is to build a competitive team of swimmers who are driven to perform at their top ability level, develop a strong work ethic, work well with others, display good sportsmanship, and demonstrate those traits that will enable them to be successful in life and become good contributors to the community.

We want our athletes to be proud of their team and respect their competition.

ATHLETE AND PARENT EXPECTATIONS

Athlete Code of Conduct

Because we are very proud of our swimmers and our team, it is very important that each and every swimmer understand and agree to the following policies regarding behavior and deportment:

- **Respect Others.** Treat every person on the team and associated with the sport with respect. This includes, but is not limited to other swimmers, all coaches, officials, and facility personnel.
- **Respect your 'House'.** Treat all of the facilities we attend with the utmost respect. Damage to any facility (pool, hotel, bus) caused by a swimmer will be the responsibility of the swimmer and their parents.
- **Keep your hands and feet to yourself.** Personal physical contact between swimmers is not permitted.
- **Play Well with Others.** Hazing, bullying, or harassment of other swimmers is strictly prohibited and will not be tolerated. Swimmers do not have to like everyone on the team, but they must get along with everyone on the team.
- **Display Good Sportsmanship.** Good sportsmanship is the standard of behavior expected at all times. Congratulate and encourage other competitors. Cheer each other on. Overt emotional displays (either positive or negative) are strongly discouraged.
- **Zero Tolerance for Drugs/Alcohol Use.** Use of prohibited substances including drugs, alcohol, banned substances (such as steroids), or vaping is not permitted. There is zero tolerance for these actions and will result in expulsion from the team.

A Few Hints for Helping Your Swimmer Be Successful

- **ENCOURAGE.** Your swimmer is trying to reach his or her best, focused on swimming fast and staying legal. Encourage your swimmer to trust his or her coach. Let the coach do the coaching and the parent do the cheering.
- **SUPPORT.** The swimmer is the only one who knows how much effort went into the race. He or she is already under a lot of pressure to perform. What your child needs from you is love and support.

Parent Volunteers for Swim Meet Timing

Parents are expected to volunteer at meets. PFL Aquatics will send out a signup sheet for parents who have swimmers entered in each meet to volunteer as a timer. **IT IS MANDATORY THAT A PARENT VOLUNTEER TO TIME FOR 2 SWIM MEETS PER SEASON.** Meet officials will not proceed with competition until all the timing chairs are filled.

Equipment List

All PFL Aquatic Competitive Team Members of RAIN must have:

*Kickboard *Pull Buoy *Extra Goggles

All other PFL Aquatic Competitive Team Members must have:

*Kickboard *Pull Buoy *Extra Goggles

*Hand Paddles * Fins *Snorkel

Equipment is ordered through PFL Aquatics.
Please contact the Team Manager for the Order Link.

PFL AQUATICS FEE INFORMATION

Tuition information can be found on the PFL website: <https://www.pflaquatics.org/power-for-life>

- Tuition for the team covers the season of enrollment. Anyone who enrolls after October 1 will be enrolled until May 30 and will then pay summer tuition.
- If swimmers withdrawal for a period, they have to pay a new enrollment fee upon returning in the same season

Meet Fees are as follows:

Daily Entry Fee: \$12.00

Per Entry Fee: \$15.00

- **When you opt in for a meet you acknowledge that you will be billed for meets.**
-

Late Fees & Missed Payments:

If a payment cannot be processed an email will be sent to the parent email on file. If there is no response to email communication after three attempts parents will receive a phone call.

Withdrawal From the Club

- Must have submitted the withdrawal form 60 days prior to the 15th of the month that withdrawal will occur to stop payments.
- Once payment has been received, there are no refunds.
- The Enrollment fee is non-refundable, with no exceptions.
- \$95 withdrawal fee will be charged to the account for processing and opening athlete enrollment space to the public.

Medical Leave/Suspension of Practice

- If a swimmer has an injury/illness that prevents them from practicing, their slot will be held open IF
 - A withdrawal form is submitted along with a doctor's note.
 - Tuition will be credited by 50% to the account from the date of suspension for no more than for 30 days. After 30 days tuition will resume as agreed though the enrollment process.
 - Payment for tuition ensures swimmer will still be enrolled in the program.
- Suspension of Practice due to extracurricular activities/sports/school activities is not allowed. An athlete's enrollment (tuition) is for the year, not month to month.

- In order to keep the athlete's enrollment, you must pay tuition as scheduled (the facilities, staff and expenses continue) regardless of other activities that may be in conflict.

USA Swimming Memberships

USA Swimming Membership is mandatory for all athletes.

For first-time athletes, parents must sign their swimmer up within 15 days of enrollment to join the club. Payment is made by the parents for the first year. If the athlete returns to PFL Aquatics the following year – the club will reregister the athlete and pay the membership fee.

- Shark School/Swim Up – Flex Membership
- Thunder1, 2, 3 Lightning 1,2 and Rain – Athlete Membership

NEW SEASON TRYOUTS AND PROMOTIONS

New Swimmer Tryout Procedure

The following procedure is in place to streamline the process of new swimmers trying out for Shark School or PFL Competitive Teams.

Tryout Approval is based on:

1. Age
2. Skill
3. Coaches' recommendation/approval
4. Parent's approval

Tryouts are on Mondays and Wednesdays between 4:50 PM and 7:00 PM and are done by a request to the Team Manager for scheduling.

If a swimmer is approved to join Shark School or a PFL Swim Team this will be discussed by the head coach or Shark School director, the day of the tryout. Once approved, the parent and swimmer have 48 hours to decide or the spot will open up to the 'next in line.'

The head coach or tryout coach will notify the Team Manager and the Team Manager will do the following by the next day provide the potential swim member information and links for:

- a. Registration fee and tuition links
- b. USA Swimming Membership and links
- c. Equipment needs if on a competitive team and link for ordering
- d. Practice Times
- e. For competitive swimmers – pull a t-shirt and swim cap for new swimmer at first practice

The parent will be required to complete the enrollment process within 48 hours to keep their acceptance slot on the PFL team. Once the swimmer is registered and paid, they may begin to attend practices/classes.

The accountant will notify the team manager, head coach and Shark School director once the swimmer is enrolled.

The team manager will provide the Head Coach with the enrollment details to verify USA Swimming Membership.

Swim Team Promotion

The following procedure is in place to streamline the process of promoting a swimmer from one program to the next level (Shark School to Swim Up | Swim Up to Rain | Competitive Teams).

Promotions are based on:

5. Age
6. Skill
7. Coaches' recommendation/approval
8. Parent's approval

Promotional prospects will be accessed the 3rd week of each month by the head coach or Shark School director. This will be based on their birth date and skill. If there are no promotional prospects, the procedure is complete.

If a swimmer ages out (birthday) of a specific program and has the skill to be promoted, the head coach or Shark School director will speak to the swimmer and parent to discuss promotion.

Promotion from Shark School to the competitive team will include both a tuition increase and an enrollment fee increase.

The head coach will provide the information regarding the promotion. The team manager will notify the accountant of the promotion and any changes that need to be made in the member's account.

The team manager will send revised enrollment details to the parents of the swimmer so they are aware of any increases or changes in practice days and times, as well as any equipment needed.

The team manager will provide the promoted swimmer (from Swim Up to Competitive Teams) with a t-shirt and swim cap at their first promotional practice.

PRACTICE INFORMATION

Practice Locations

Our home pool is the James E. Taylor High School Natatorium at 20700 Kingsland Blvd in Katy, Texas. For more information on pool locations, check "Practice" on the website for all practice schedules or changes. If a practice has to be cancelled, changed or relocated you will receive a notification from the PFL Aquatics REMIND app.

Remind App

Last minute changes and weather-affected practice changes are texted via Remind 101. **Parents are required to have the REMIND app downloaded to their phone. The school name is PFL Aquatics & Shark School.**

REMIND CLASS**CODE****PFL Aquatic Competitive Teams (Thunder, Lightning, Rain)****@pflco****Shark School/Swim Up****@sharkschoo**

Shark School and Swim Up Programs

SHARK SCHOOL -- For school age children who are able to swim and need to improve their technique before joining the competitive community.

All swimmers must be able to complete two lengths of the pool in freestyle and one length in backstroke across the deep end.

- Fun environment with age appropriate drills to encourage skill development
- Three levels allow targeted instruction customized to skill level
- 2 practices per week, 40 minutes each (Monday/Wednesday or Tuesday/Thursday)

Swim Up—Designed as a development program to the competitive team. All swimmers must be able to pass all three levels of Shark School to participate.

- 2 practices per week, 40 minutes each, Monday and Wednesday
- Curriculum includes 100 Individual Medley (IM)

PFL AQUATICS COMPETITIVE TEAM

Thunder I is our elite, competition-based group for swimmers aged 15 and up who have achieved outstanding performance and dedication to USA Swimming. Qualifications include:

- Aim to qualify for National level meets
- Qualified for Sectionals
- Achieve qualifying T-30 results
- Demonstrated dedication to USA swimming
- Must attend USA meets throughout the year
- Must maintain seasonal IMX score
- 5 practices per week (2.5 hours each)
- High School Graduate / College Student
- May not participate in summer league as an athlete

Thunder II

- Ages 14 & up
- Placed by the Head Coach
- Focus is primarily high school swimming
- Must attend at least 2 USA meets per year
- 5 practices per week (1.5 to 2 hours each)

Thunder III

- Ages 13 & up
- Must attend at least 2 USA meets per year
- Focus on technique with introduction on training methodologies
- Up to 5 practices per week (1.5 to 2 hours each)

Lightning I

- Ages 11 & up, age 10 with IMX
- IMX/IMR score encouraged
- Placed by Coach
- Must attend at least 2 USA meets per year
- Focus on technique in an atmosphere that promotes learning and fun
- Up to 5 practices per week (90 minutes each)

Lightning II

- Ages 9 – 12
- Must attend at least 2 USA meets per year
- Focus on technique in an atmosphere that promotes learning and fun
- Up to 4 practices per week (75 minutes each)

Rain

- Ages 7 & 8
- Must attend 2 USA meets per year
- Focus on technique in a fun learning environment
- 3 practices per week (M/W/F for 1 hour each)

PE Waiver Program

We participate in the Katy ISD PE Waiver program. Students must practice with PFL a minimum of 5 hours per week to achieve a passing grade. Because of the practice time requirement, this program is not available to Shark School swimmers. The annual pre-paid fee for this program within PFL Aquatics is \$150.00. This offsets the cost of reporting to Katy ISD every six weeks (total of 6 reporting periods) with a grade and attendance.

PFL Referral Program

1. Must be a NEW registrant to PFL Aquatics for the full season they are trying out for. PFL will not pay the new registrants' USA Swimming fee during bulk renewal. *(This does not include any late or mid-year registrations. New registrants must be enrolled at the beginning of the season).*
2. **One referral discount per swimmer per season, maximum.**
3. The referral must be registered to try out with the Team Manager. The team manager will schedule the tryout and keep record of qualification of referral and registration status.
4. The new registrant must have paid their final tuition payment by April 20th and not canceled or withdrawn from the academy during the season.
5. Both the Referrer and Referral must have all FEES and INVOICES paid in FULL prior to discount being applied.

RULES FOR PARENTS AT PRACTICES/CLASSES AT TAYLOR NATATORIUM

PARENTS & THE POOL DECK: Parents are not allowed on the pool deck. The pool deck is the area past the officials box and team manager table at the entrance.

Parents are allowed to view their swimmer for short periods of time from the entrance and ask the team manager questions (Monday & Tuesday), but not stay the duration of the practice/class. Recently we have had issues with congestion at the entrance for swimmers coming into the Natatorium. Please wait for your swimmer outside of the Natatorium, in the hallway.

The registered swimmers with USA Swimming are the ONLY ones covered under the insurance policy. Parents on the deck are a safety hazard and a distraction during practice.

FOAM MATS AT THE NATATORIUM - the foam mats at the end of the Natatorium hallway are Katy ISD property. Please do not allow children to climb or roll the foam mats. Damage to the mats or injury to children are not covered by PFL Aquatic insurance.

WANDERING HALLWAYS & SCOOTERS - Please do not wander the hallways during practice/classes. Taylor HS security and maintenance employees are required to report anyone in the building past 3 PM as a trespasser if not in at an allocated location for after hours. PFL Aquatics has permission to enter the building at Entrance 28 and to be in the hallway and natatorium only. If we are not compliant and stay within the rental requirements and the natatorium area, we will **not** have a pool to utilize in Katy ISD. **Please be considerate and watch your children.**

Please do not allow children to ride scooters, play with motorized toys or wheel shoes in the hallways. The hallways are often wet, which can lead to injuries. The scooters and toys also leave marks on the flooring.

Damage to flooring and injuries are not covered by PFL Aquatics insurance, only the swimmers enrolled in the program. This is a personal liability with Katy ISD.

MEET FAQS

What is the difference between "Short Course" and "Long Course?"

The swim year is divided into two seasons:

- Short Course Season (25 yard or meter pools) runs September through March
- Long Course Season (50 meter pools) runs April to August

How Frequently Are Meets Held Through the Year?

USA Swim meets are offered once a month at various levels for all age groups. Our competition area is managed by Gulf Swimming, Inc. You can find out more about Gulf Swimming on their website.

USA Swim Meets take place over weekends, often starting on Friday evening. At **Open Meets**, Saturday and Sunday events are often split into two Sessions with a group warm up at the beginning of each session. Younger swimmers can expect to compete in the afternoons and older swimmers in the mornings. This may change from year to year, however. Open meets do not have finals.

How do I find out information about my meets?

PFL Aquatics will provide as much information about the meet as soon as we receive it via email to those entered in the meet and also on the website under Swim Meets.

You may also do the following:

Meet details including dates, qualifying times, cut-offs, event limits, directions, and maps to the pool can be accessed from the Meet Invitation posted on the Gulf Swimming Website under their "Meets" link.

The Wednesday before the meet, the Gulf Swimming Website will be updated with the warm-up session start times and lane assignments for each team, plus the estimated timeline for each event offered. However, remember that the timeline is an estimate and that the meet may run faster or slower. You should always plan on arriving early. We recommend arriving before the time posted for the first warm-up of the session.

What Should We Bring to the Meet?

- **Official PFL competition suit**
- **Team cap (plus a spare – they can rip)**
- **Team t-shirt**
- **Goggles (plus a spare – they can break)**
- Towels – 2 to 3
- Beverages to re-hydrate – water or sports drinks

- Snacks to refuel – carbohydrates, protein, fruit (no candy or greasy food). There is usually a snack bar, but they may not offer appropriate selections
- Chairs –depending on the pool facilities, you may or may not need them
- Print-out of the meet timeline. warm-up sessions, times, and lane assignments from the Gulf Swimming Website. Look for "PFL."
- Pen, highlighter

What do we do when we arrive at a meet?

Arrive in time for the **first warm-up** of the session. For long course meets, generally swimmers must “**Circle In**” (check-in) for certain events to be eligible to swim. Check with your coach if you need clarification. Near the entry to the pool, locate the swimmer listings which are typically posted on poster board and organized by gender, then by age-group. On each age-group poster board, you will see the events of the day, with a listing of each swimmer who entered the event. The swimmer needs to circle the number next to their name for every event they entered for that particular day.

Lists are pulled by the host team 45 minutes prior to the start of the meet

Locate other Power for Life swimmers and parents in the stands. In some venues, swimmers sit on deck and parents sit outside or in bleachers. If so, you can come in to watch your swimmer race.

Swimmers should start getting ready to warm-up. When the session is about to start, the swimmer should proceed to the pool deck and locate the PFL coach for instructions. *Swimmers are not allowed to enter the pool without a coach on deck.*

Parents must stay in the designated seating area unless they are timing. Only swimmers, coaches and officials are allowed on deck. Some helpful parent tasks:

- Purchase a heat sheet if they are available. (Heat Sheets are a listing of all swimmers entered in each event.) If not available for purchase, heat sheets will be posted in an area where spectators can view them.
- Double-check to make sure your swimmer circled in all of his or her events
- When the swimmers finish warm-up, review with your swimmer what events he/she is competing in that day.
- Encourage your swimmer to drink or eat something if they are not scheduled to swim for at least 30 min. Hydration is very important.
- ***Please remain positive and encouraging with your swimmer. They are working hard to do their best! The PFL coaches will review race strategy and suggest areas for improvement with each swimmer after each race.***

Can my swimmer talk to the coaches during the meet?

YES! In fact, this is an expected and extremely important part of a swimmer's training.

- **BEFORE THE RACE.** After swimmers get their heat and lane assignments, they are expected to talk to their coaches to get race instructions and to discuss their race plan. Only after speaking to the coach should the swimmer proceed to his or her

assigned lane. Once there, the swimmer must check with the TIMER to make sure they are in the correct spot. Mistakes happen! Always verify.

- **AFTER THE RACE.** Immediately after each race, the swimmer is expected to speak to their coach to get feedback on their race. Swimmers will be told what they did correctly and what they need to work on to improve, regardless of how well they did or did not do in the race. They will be asked about their race plan and whether they accomplished it.

What is a “warm-down?”

Warming down (swimming slow laps) helps to loosen strained muscles and reduce the lactic acid build-up from the race. By warming-down, the swimmer’s muscles recover sooner for their next race.

Swimmers **MUST** “warm-down” after a race if the facility has space available (most do). Only after completing the warm-downs should the swimmer return to his seat and/or speak with parents.

How Do I Know Which Meet My Swimmer Will Attend?

PFL Aquatics swimmers attend meets **as a team**. Swimmers must be accompanied by a coach in order to compete and will attend the meet location assigned to PFL. A meet location and associated information will be posted on the PFL website as soon as it is released by Gulf Swimming.

The meet level your swimmer will attend is decided by their fastest official USA Swimming Times and their age. Open Meets are available to all swimmers including those with no official recorded times. Thunder swimmers may also attend Senior Circuit meets.

First-time USA Swimming competitors will be entered with an indication of No Time (NT) for each event they swim. Experienced competitors will be placed in heats based on their fastest recorded official time.

Swimmers compete within an age category, against their own gender, based on their age on the day of the meet. A swimmer may change age groups mid-season and will begin competing with the higher age group at the next available meet. Age groups are:

- 8 and under
- 9 - 10
- 11 - 12
- 13 - 14
- 15 & up

Can My Swimmer Pick His or Her Favorite Events?

The coach will determine which events your swimmer will compete in. This decision may be done with or without input from the swimmer. This policy ensures that the swimmer is competing in appropriate events for their personal development. During the course of the season, coaches work with swimmers on age-appropriate technical aspects of competing. It is

critical for the swimmer's development that he/she be able to apply those aspects during competition, not just at practice, if he/she is going to be able to swim at their full potential at their end of season championship meet.

Swim meets leading up to the season championship meet are focused on "placing" and on technical improvement. Technical improvements result in faster swimming, but not always right away. Swimming fast is important, but so is technique, endurance, and race strategy.

What is an IMX or IMR score?

IMX is a motivational program that allows swimmers across the nation to compare themselves to the thousands of other athletes in their age group. All you have to do is swim a combination of events, at least one time per season, and USA Swimming will automatically give you your ranking.

IMX stands for "IM Extreme" and IMR stands for "IM Ready." During each season, whenever you swim an event the time is registered on the USA swimming web site. Then a score is calculated on the web site and the score is compared to other swimmers of the same age. Learn more about how IMX/IMR points are calculated at the USA Swimming Powerpoint Calculator

I am annoyed that an official DQ'd my swimmer. Can I talk to him?

NO. Only coaches are allowed to approach officials to question a call or to inquire if a swimmer can be placed in a subsequent heat due to missing their race. If you have a question for an official, please speak to one of the Power for Life coaches at the meet. Officials have the authority to remove parents from the pool area if they are abusive or interfere with the running of the meet. Parents should at all times conduct themselves in a manner which upholds the PFL athletes' Code of Conduct and which models polite behavior for our swimmers.

My kid is having all the fun! How can I get involved?

USA swim meets are run solely by volunteers, each critical to the success of the meet. No matter what your level of swim experience, there is a volunteer job for you!

TIMERS. Timers are required from all teams for every meet. Each team is assigned a number of lanes or seats for which they are responsible. Those assignments are based on the number of swimmers the team has entered in the meet. The host team provides a head timer which provides stop watch backup.

For PFL Aquatics, there will be a Sign-Up Genius posted before every meet. **For timing information for parents, please see the Timing Section of this handbook.** Meet officials will not proceed with competition until all the timing chairs are filled.

Want to Dive in Deeper? Become an Official. The Meet Referee, Deck Referee, Starters, and Stroke & Turn Judges have all gone through a rigorous USA Swimming certification program for each position they fill. Many fill more than one role during the meet. Unlike many officials in other sports, USA Swimming officials are not there to "catch" swimmers doing something wrong. They are there to "observe" and to make sure the races are conducted fairly.

Disqualifications are not viewed as a penalty, but as an opportunity for the swimmer to learn what he or she did incorrectly so that they can work with their coach in correcting the mistake. If parents qualify as Officials at meets, we will pay for training, and certifications.