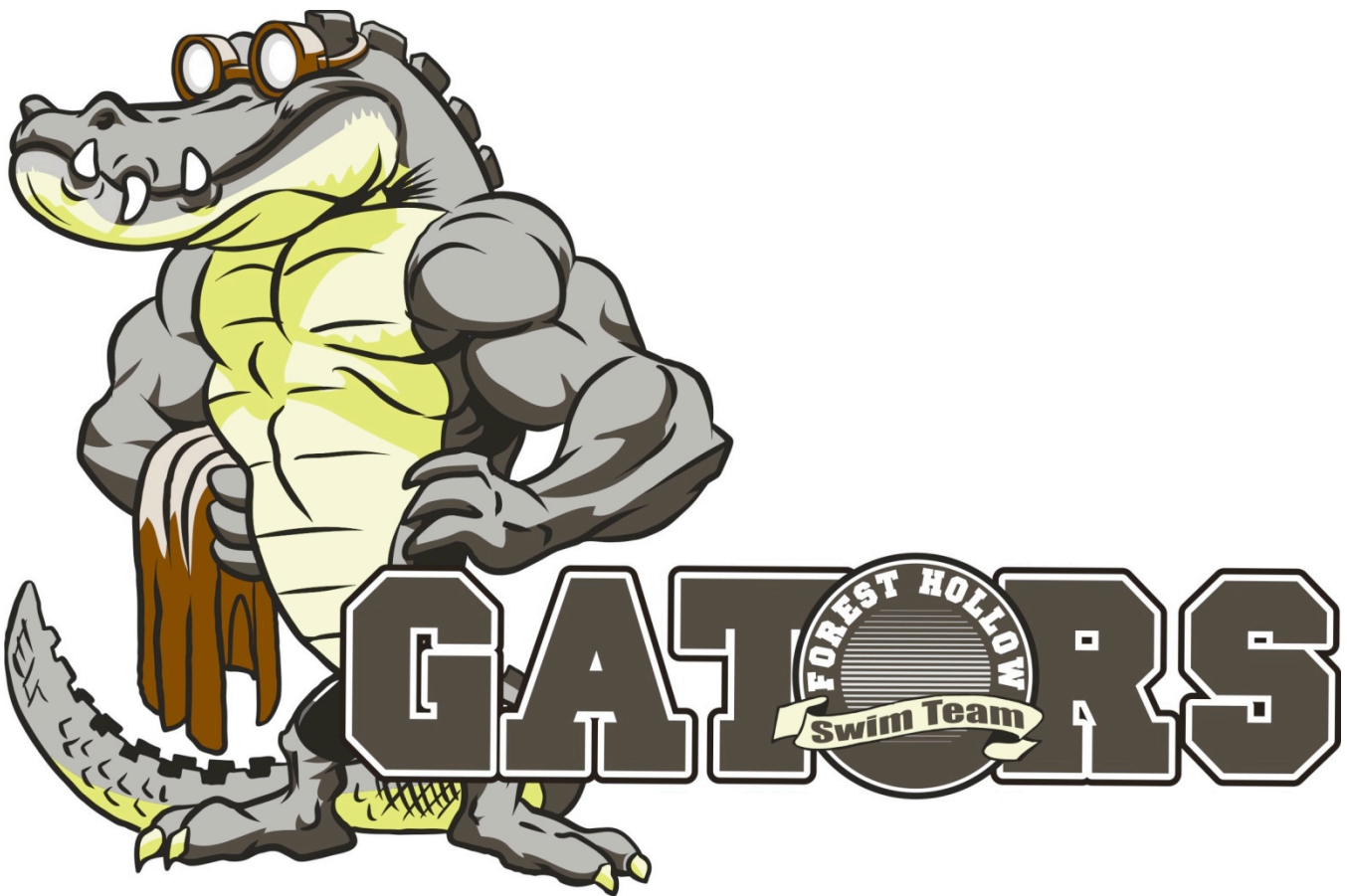


New Gator Parent Guide



2013

NEW SWIMMER INFORMATION

You are a member of the Forest Hollow Swim Club and your child has just joined the swim team. And you're wondering, "What's going on?" We've all been there. Hopefully, this packet will provide some basic information about Forest Hollow and about swimming for the Forest Hollow Gators to help you better understand the sport of swimming. Please ASK questions!! Feel free to talk to your Team Reps, Coaches and fellow swim team parents.

The 2013 Forest Hollow Team Rep is: Merari Chollette (merarihc@yahoo.com; 301-938-0250 (cell). The "B" or Developmental Meet Rep is Bob Elkins (bobelkins17@aol.com; 703-531-9126). We are all happy to answer any questions you may have!

The Gators focus on improving swimming skills, learning good sportsmanship, self-discipline, and having fun. We aim to create a healthy environment that encourages kids to do their best, recognizes their accomplishments and is enjoyable for the entire family.

In addition to this *New Parent Handbook*, please refer to the "*Gator Guide*", which contains additional details about the team. We also have published our guidelines about "B" or developmental meets, called the "*ABC's of Developmental Meets*". And, if your swimmer is a Mini Gator, check out the "Mini Gator Guide." We also encourage you to check the website www.foresthollow.com on a regular basis for reference material and updates throughout the season. Regular communications will be sent via our website to keep everyone informed of meets and other events. All "guides" or handbooks are on the website.

The Sport of Swimming

Swimming is a sport. That means there is competition. Swimming offers different levels of competition, that helps to ensure a better developmental fit for your child. The Forest Hollow Gators are happy to have your child swim with us, even if they don't want anything to do with competition just yet – it is a sport that will grow on them as they catch the Gator and swim fever.

Practices

The Forest Hollow Gators hold practices on a daily basis throughout the summer swimming season. Practices are a means for your child to make friends, learn to swim, or improve their swimming skills. Practices are set up by age group and ability. Practices, while not mandatory, are the way your child becomes part of the team – something bigger than just their ability to swim. For specific practice times, see the website at www.foresthollow.com

Parents are welcome at our practices. We ask, however, that during a practice, parents and siblings do not interfere with the practice – let the coaches’ work with the swimmers for their hour – parents and siblings should relax, lounge under an umbrella or under the pavilion. No one, besides the registered swimmers, is allowed in the swimming pool during practices.

The Meets

There are two “types” of meets held throughout the summer season. They are called “A” meets and “B” meets. Each is explained below.

“A” Meets (League Meets) -- Open To Qualified Swimmers

The NVSL season consists of five **Saturday morning meets**, one against each of the other five teams in our division. Each meet consists of 40 individual events and 12 relay events. The events are divided by age and gender. The appropriate age group is determined based on your swimmer’s age as of June 1, based on NVSL Rules. Along with a mixed age relay, the events are:

Age Group	Freestyle	Backstroke	Breaststroke	Butterfly	Relay
8 & Under	25 meter	25 meter	25 meter	25 meter	Freestyle
9 – 10 years	50 meter	50 meter	50 meter	25 meter	Medley
11 – 12 years	50 meter	50 meter	50 meter	50 meter	Medley
13 – 14 years	50 meter	50 meter	50 meter	50 meter	Medley
15 – 18 years	50 meter	50 meter	50 meter	50 meter	Medley

The Medley Relay consists of four swimmers. Each swimmer swims his/her leg of the race in the order of backstroke, breaststroke, fly, and free. The Mixed Age Medley Relay is a freestyle relay swum in the following age group order: 11/12; 9/10; 13/14; and 15/18.

“B” Meets (Developmental Meets) – Open To All Swimmers

Developmental, or “B” meets are held on **Monday nights**. “B” meets are not NVSL meets. “B” meets are designed to give developing swimmers a chance to compete in a meet and improve their skills. These meets offer all swimmers, regardless of age or ability, the opportunity to swim. “B” meets include the same individual events as “A” meets, plus some 6 and under events, Mini Gator kickboards or assisted freestyle, and the Individual Medley event for all swimmers. There are no relay events. These meets are less formal than the “A” meets and are not scored for points. Please see *“The A, B, C’s of Developmental Meets”* for more specifics about how Forest Hollow manages these meets and how it impacts your child.

Each team enters 3 swimmers in each event. The coaches and team reps select swimmers for “A” meets based on swimmer’s times from time trials, “A” and “B” meets of the current year. Swimmers scheduled for “A” meets can change from week to week, due to improved times, absences or other factors. Forest Hollow does not participate in “swim offs” for times; times must be achieved at time trials, “A” or “B” meets. The coaches develop a meet strategy each week. This determines the strokes swimmers will

swim. Swimmers will be notified on Wednesday or Thursday if they are scheduled to swim on Saturday. Parents are also notified via e-mail from our website.

While we try very hard to know who is available for each Saturday meet - sometimes, however, due to illness a swimmer may become unavailable to swim at the Saturday meet; in those cases we make every effort to fill the slot with another swimmer making last minute phone calls to fill the slot. Your child should not panic if called at the last minute and they shouldn't think this is a bad thing! We encourage each child to be ready and jump at the opportunity for a coveted "A" meet slot should the opportunity arise. They will have fun and enjoy the team atmosphere!

Occasionally there are also unfilled spots, especially in some of the older age groups, and a younger swimmer may be asked to "swim up", that is, swim in an older age group. This gives swimmers the chance to better their times, and an opportunity to swim in the meet.

Questions about seeding the A meets should be directed to the Team Reps, Head Coach, or Assistant Head Coach for the Gators.

The basic rules for "A" meets are as follows:

- No swimmer may swim more than two individual events in one meet.
- A swimmer can swim in only **one** age-specific relay.
- Four boys and four girls may also swim in the mixed age relay, which consists of one swimmer from the 9-10, 11-12, 13-14, and 15-18 age groups. The mixed age relay swims 50 meters, not 25 meters.
- Points are awarded to the top three finishers in each individual event: 5 points for first place, 3 points for second place and 1 point for third place.
- Relays are scored 5 points to the winning team, 0 points to the losing team.
- The point totals for the teams determine the meet winner. At the end of the season, the team with the best record is the division champion.

Meet Locations

For both "A" and "B" meets, Forest Hollow hosts some meets (home meets) and travels (away meets) to other pools. A meets can be anywhere within the Northern Virginia area depending upon the other teams within our division (there are 6 teams per division), which changes each year. Forest Hollow tries to have all of our "B" meets within a short distance of Forest Hollow to encourage greater participation from all of our swimmers. The location of the weekly "A" and "B" meet can be found on our website calendar. The Team Rep may also send out reminders each week on the location of the meets.

Home meets – Swimmers usually need to be at the pool about one hour (the exact time will be posted for each meet) before the meet starts for warm-ups. During this time, parents help to set up the pool – arranging chairs and setting up the concession area. After the meet, we need to rearrange the chairs and put away the concession items. If everyone helps it goes very quickly!

Away meets – Maps and directions to the pool will be available on our website so each family can pull the information they need. At the designated time, we meet in the Forest Hollow parking lot and “caravan” to the host pool. Upon arrival, the team gathers and walks in as a big group, cheering loudly. We love to have decorated cars with window flags, decals, and window art that declare the Gators are coming!

At each meet we are assigned a team area. Encourage your child to stay in the team area and cheer for their teammates. Parents of younger swimmers are welcome to sit in the team area. Each pool has a concession area – usually offering hamburgers, hot dogs, nachos, candy, chips, soda, etc. (The Forest Hollow Gator Grill, however, is the best of the best in the NVSL!) It’s a great way to have a good meal and support the swim teams. Please have your child wait until after they are finished all their events before they eat.

Always check with the Head Coach/Assistant Head Coach if you need to leave a meet before the last event to make sure your child is not scheduled to swim in any more events that day.

The Strokes

The four strokes used in competitive swimming are freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke and butterfly. Each stroke has specific rules designed to ensure that no swimmer gets an unfair advantage over another swimmer. Each A-meet includes races in these four strokes plus relay events. The length of the race is 25 meters (one pool length) or 50 meters depending on the swimmer’s age. Swimmers in freestyle, breaststroke and butterfly races start by diving off the side of the pool. Backstroke swimmers start in the water.

- **Freestyle** – Swimmers can use any stroke or kick to swim across the pool. The usual stroke used is the “front crawl”.
- **Back Stroke** – Swimmers can use any stroke as long as they stay on their back. The usual stroke used is the “back crawl”. Swimmers learn to use the lane lines and overhead backstroke flags to keep track of where they are in the pool.
- **Breaststroke** – Breaststroke consists of two parts – the arm pull and the kick in an alternating sequence. Elbows must stay below the water except for tagging the wall at the finish. The kick is the “frog” kick. Turns and finishes require a simultaneous two-hand touch on the wall.
- **Butterfly** – Butterfly arm pull consists of the arms moving simultaneously with the elbow breaking the surface of the water during the recovery part of the stroke. The kick is a dolphin kick – the legs stay together and move simultaneously. Turns and finishes require a simultaneous two-hand touch on the wall.
- **Individual Medley (IM)** – An IM is a race in which a swimmer swims each of the four strokes in this order – butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, and freestyle. The IM is

not swum at “A” meets. Swimmers may swim the IM at “B” meets, our Todd Pott’s IM Carnival, and divisional/all star events.

- **Relays** – Relays are only swum in our “A” meets and at divisional relay events. There are two types of relay events – the freestyle relay and the medley relay. Each relay consists of four swimmers, each swimming one quarter of the distance for a total of 100M or 200M depending on the age of the swimmers. In the freestyle relay each swimmer swims the freestyle stroke. In the medley relay each swimmer swims a different stroke in this order – backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly and freestyle. Each swimmer must wait until the previous swimmer touches the wall before they can take off.

DQ’s - Disqualifications

During each meet, trained officials (parent volunteers) observe the swimmers to ensure compliance with the technical rules for each stroke. If a swimmer violates a rule they have DQ’ed. If a swimmer disqualifies they will not receive an official time. Disqualified swimmers in “A” meets do not receive official meet ribbons, but “B” meet receivers receive a “participant” ribbon. Technical DQ’s occur when a swimmer fails to touch the wall at the turning end of the pool, does improper flip turns or performs some component of the stroke improperly. Some other common reasons for disqualifications are false starting, touching the bottom of the pool and pulling on the lane lines. Officials will always give the swimmer the benefit of the doubt. A DQ is issued only when the official is 100% sure an infraction occurred.

When an official sees a violation during a race, the official will raise their hand to signal the referee that they have observed a rule violation. The official then writes what was observed on a “DQ slip” and takes it to the meet referee. The referee verifies that a rule was broken and can question the official about the violation. One copy of the DQ slip goes to the Team Rep and one copy goes to the scorer’s table. At the conclusion of the meet the Team Reps give the DQ slips to the Head Coach/Assistant Head Coach who uses them to identify skills that need to be worked on in practice. DQ’s are never fun for anyone, but they reinforce proper technique and are designed so no swimmer is advantaged in a race.

False Starts

Swim meets use an official starter and a series of whistles to begin a race. The starting device allows all swimmers to start equally and gives the appropriate signal for timers to begin timing the race. False starts occur when a swimmer moves towards the water after the “take your mark” command has been given, but before the Starter has started the race. Sometimes the swimmer falls into the water, but not always. If a false start is detected before the starting signal, the swimmer is removed from the race. If the starting signal has sounded, the race will not be stopped, but the offending swimmer will be disqualified.

Clerk of Course

Prior to each race, swimmers go to the Clerk of Course. The Clerk of Course is a designated area where swimmers wait to walk over to their events. A volunteer Clerk organizes them into the order of their race and into the proper lane. They then send them to the start when their heat is ready to swim. Coaches try to help the younger swimmers remember when to get to the Clerk of Course, and in “B” meets oftentimes escort them there. The coaches can not coach the children at the Clerk of Course and parents are not allowed into the area. The Clerk is trained to maintain order and work with children to ensure they get to their race on time.

Swimmer Apparel and Accessories

Swimsuit - Racing suits are designed to fit snugly so a swimmer will not have any “drag” while swimming. Girl’s suits should be high in the front and back. Boys wear either a brief or jammer style suit. Many boys will not want to wear these suits at first but will soon realize they are much better for racing than baggy cotton suits. Racing suits are available at specialty swim stores and large sporting goods stores. The Gator team suits are available from Sports Fair on Lee Highway and at our parent meeting. Due to vendor changes, we will begin purchasing new suits every season. Team suits are optional. If you purchase a team suit for a young swimmer plan on it lasting one summer – let them wear it, don’t “save” it for meets – chlorine is hard on fabric, and it probably won’t fit next year, anyway!

Goggles - Goggles protect swimmers eyes from chlorine and allow children to swim with their eyes open. Goggles need to fit tightly to keep water out. For young swimmers, look for goggles with foam or soft plastic gaskets. These will be the most comfortable. You may want to wait until swim practice begins and let your child borrow a pair and try them out in the pool before purchasing them. Some children just won’t wear goggles! Goggles get lost easily; we suggest having a spare pair that your child likes to wear.

Swim Cap - Each swimmer receives a Gator swim cap for free if they want one. Have your child ask a coach or older swimmer how to put it on – there is a trick to it! Or they can ask for help whenever they need it – you’ll see the older swimmers help each other with caps all the time. Some of our swimmers prefer a silicon cap; the Gators sell these for \$10.

What to bring to practice – Goggles, cap, towel, water or sports drink, and sunscreen. (We also ask that parents bring patience and stand back – let your child go with the coaches and get comfortable with the process!)

What to bring to a swim meet – Swimmers should wear their team swimsuit (or other appropriate competition suit) and team t-shirt to the meet. (Don’t forget to put your swimmer’s name in their t-shirt.) In a backpack or bag, pack goggles, cap, two beach towels (one towel will always end up soaking wet or dirty from sitting on the ground early in the meet), a sweat suit, and sunscreen. You may also want to pack a bottle of water or Gatorade and a light snack.

The Gator Grill

The Gator concession stand, as well as host concession stands, is normally available at every meet, however we remind you that parents are in charge of what their swimmers eat. The concession stand will sell whatever they can, including candy and other items that could make your child feel sick. While it is always a good idea to have your swimmer swim prior to them visiting the concession stand, there are some times when your swimmer may need a boost. Again, you are responsible so don't get angry at the concessions volunteers.

Parents' Role

Encourage your child to do their best without pressure about winning or achieving a “best time” in a race. Encourage your child’s efforts and **point out the positive things**, like working to improve a skill or cheering for the team. Your swimmer won’t get a best time or a record every time they swim. Strive to have a positive attitude and to be a good role model by showing good sportsmanship at all times towards coaches, officials, opponents and teammates. We want our swimmers to enjoy being on the swim team!

Volunteer – Remember there are many volunteer positions needed to run a meet successfully. We guarantee there is one right for each parent and family. If you don’t know how you can help, just ask! Please refer to the Gator Guide and the website for additional information on volunteer activities and opportunities. We expect every parent to volunteer at least 5 hours of time – try it – you won’t regret it!

Have fun, enjoy the community, and take part in Gator Pride!

Use of the Baby Pool During Non-Pool Hours (During Swim Practice Sessions) – *This policy is subject to change based on abuses. Please help by following the rules so that we may continue this through the season and for years to come.*

*This section is application if non-team member siblings will be at the pool during morning practice – remember the baby pool is technically closed, there is no NV Pools guard on duty, and non swim team members are not insured outside of pool hours. We continue to strongly encourage you to bring something for your child to do to avoid any risk of injury. However, we have researched the issue with the county and NV Pools and have determined that parents may accompany their own children under the age of 5 to the baby pool. **No child is allowed without their own parent. Each parent participating must sign a liability waiver stating NV Pools and Forest Hollow are not liable for injuries during this time period.** The parent is responsible for the safety of their child during this time. Should an emergency arise, several of the swim coaches are trained lifeguards. The use of the baby pool is permitted only while an older sibling is in a Gator practice. A coach/pool operator will check the condition of the pool in the morning and record its reading. Abuse of this policy will result in loss of privileges.*

Swimmers during morning practice should only remain at the pool during their practice sessions. We are not staffed to watch children climbing on equipment or doing other activities at the pool. For safety reasons, we ask that your swimmers attend their practice session and then come back to the pool during normal operating hours. At no time are swimmers allowed in the guard office, unless they are being treated for injury or are granted permission from the Head Coach/Assistant Head Coach or a lifeguard on duty.

Attached is a map of the Forest Hollow pool layout for swim meets:

