



Northern Lights Swim Club Boosters Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

The Northern Lights Swim Club (NLSC) is owned and operated by Coach Cliff Murray and facilitated at two locations in Anchorage (Service High School Pool and UAA Pool <currently the UAA pool is closed>) and one location in the Valley (Palmer High School Pool). The Booster Club is a parent-led non-profit 501(c)(3) organization whose purpose is to enhance the swim team experience by supporting the NLSC. The Booster Club provides support in the following manner:

- Swim Meet support: hosting local, regional, state and high school swim meets by providing officials, necessary equipment and meet organization.
- Social Support: creating an informed and engaged membership and hosting social functions for swimmers, other NLSC members and their families.
- Financial Support: raising funds to ensure financial viability of the Boosters as necessary and purchase and maintain equipment, support coach's swim travel, award need based and retention scholarships and other items as determined by the Booster Club.

Parents of any NLSC swimmers are also considered NLSC Booster Club members. The Booster Club Board of Directors typically meets once per month and is operated by the following:

- President: OPEN
- Vice-President: OPEN
- Treasurer: Holly Willman
- Secretary: Kathy Brown
- Meet Director: Zlata Lokteva
- Members-At-Large:
 - Caryn Faignant
 - Michelle Hensel
 - Brian Pinkston
 - Amanda Ruff
 - Lorraine Suci
- Two Junior Athlete Representatives
 - Bentley Altman
 - Zoe Fencil

Annual elections for open positions occur at the NLSC Swim Banquet every May or before the end of the season. In addition, Parent Representatives are available for each Comp Team group to assist parents with reminders, announcements, and any questions that they might have.

- Gold Parent Rep: Adrianna Griffith
- Silver Parent Rep: Jenny Fawcett
- Bronze/Iron Parent Rep: Sarah Murray (MWF) and Chantelle Muffoletto (TThF)

Because of the active, year-round schedule of the NLSC, parents are encouraged to read through all of their emails from NLSC, read the monthly newsletter, check the bulletin boards, and check the website, Facebook and Instagram regularly.



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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

Is my swimmer ready for the comp team?

Did your child successfully complete a learn-to-swim program? Are you now wondering what is next? What are your options for keeping your kids engaged in the sport of swimming?

Learning to swim is great for kids. It builds physical strength, coordination, and stamina. It also builds confidence and competence in a skill that will last a lifetime and may just save a life. But now that you have provided swim lessons for your child, you can further develop their skills through “Comp Team” practices. Try outs for the comp team are held the first and third Wednesday of the month from 6-7 pm.

What are “Comp Team” practices?

In Anchorage, Northern Lights Swim Club (NLSC) offers Comp Team practices at Service High School, and the University of Alaska, Anchorage <currently the UAA pool is closed>, and in the Matanuska-Susitna Valley (Mat-Su) at the Palmer High School pool. The Comp Team is divided into the following groups: Iron (Mat-Su location only), Bronze, Silver, and Gold. The entry point for most kids graduating out of a learn-to-swim/stroke school program is with the Iron or Bronze Group.

How do I enroll in Comp Team practices?

The Comp Team provides the next level of swim skill development following learn-to-swim/stroke school programs. Students are asked to complete a swim test to ensure their readiness.

- In Anchorage, contact Coach Cliff: coachcliff@nlscak.org or 907-277-7946
- In the Mat-Su, contact Coach Matt: coachmatt@nlscak.org or 907-764-0507

Try-outs are held the first and third Wednesday of every month at 6:30 pm at the Service HS Pool for the Anchorage location.

Does my child have to compete in swim meets to be on the Comp Team?

While there are many benefits to competitive swimming and NLSC coaching strongly encourages swimmers to try it, they do not have to actively compete to participate in Comp Team practices.

What happens after my swimmer has been in Iron or Bronze awhile? How do they move up?

Similar to learn-to-swim/stroke school programs, kids must complete a swim test to move to the next level. Inquire with your coach to learn when the next test will be, how ready your child is, and



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what will be included in the test. The exception to this is the Gold group. Moving into this group normally happens the summer after completion of 8th grade.

To access the requirements for moving up in groups, [Click here to go to the NLSC Website - Skills Progression](#)

What are the different Comp Team levels?

Iron 1 – (Mat-Su only) – This group introduces swimmers to competitive swimming in the Mat-Su. Please note that the Anchorage equivalent of this group would be levels 8-9 in the Stroke School portion of the Learn to Swim Program. Swimmers in Iron 2 are encouraged to try most non-championship competitions. There are normally 2-3 non-championship swim meets in the Fall and the Spring. Check in with your parent rep or ask your coach to find out which meets are best to start with.

- One practice per day, up to two practices per week.

Iron II – (Mat-Su only) – Swimmers in this group are continuing to refine the four competitive strokes. Iron II swimmers are also introduced to turns and starts, as well as basic race strategy. Swimmers are encouraged to try most non-championship competitions. There are normally 2-3 non-championship swim meets in the Fall and the Spring. Check in with your parent rep or ask your coach to find out which meets are best to start with.

- One practice per day, up to two practices per week.
- To access the requirements for moving on to Bronze, [Click here to go to the NLSC Website Skills Progressions and the pre-requisites for moving up to the Bronze training group.](#)

Bronze – (Anchorage and Mat-Su) – Swimmers in this group continue to refine the four competitive strokes, starts, and turns. Bronze swimmers are encouraged to compete in all local competitions, as well as any championships in which they are qualified.

- One practice per day, up to three practices per week.
- To access the requirements for moving on to Silver, [Click here to go to the NLSC Website Skills Progressions and the pre-requisites for moving up to the Silver training group.](#)

Silver – (Anchorage and Mat-Su) – This is the advanced training group of NLSC's 14 & Under age group program. Silver swimmers learn advanced techniques and strategies for the four competitive strokes, starts, turns, and racing. Silver swimmers are encouraged to participate in all local meets as well as all championship meets for which they are qualified. Silver swimmers regularly travel to both in-state and out-of-state competitions.

- One practice per day, up to six practices per week.
- To access the requirements for moving on to Gold, [Click here to go to the NLSC Website Skills Progressions and the pre-requisites for moving up to the Gold training group.](#)



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Gold – (Anchorage and Mat-Su) – This is the training group for all High School age swimmers, as well as any under 14 swimmers who have met the minimum criteria for moving to the Gold training group. In addition to stroke, start, and turn refinement, the Gold training group practices to engage specific energy systems in an effort to maximize competitive achievement. Gold swimmers are encouraged to participate in all local meets as well as all championship meets for which they are qualified. Gold swimmers regularly travel to both in-state and out-of-state competitions.

- Up to two practices per day, for nine or more practices per week.

Can my child participate in other sports?

NLSC understands that many of its participants can and do participate in other athletic, and non-athletic activities. Members under the age of 14 are encouraged to participate in other sports and activities. Please communicate with the coaching staff regarding coordinating swim team related activities with non-swim related activities. We have a lot of experience with multi-sport and multi-activity members. We want to help optimize your experience on NLSC and the sport of competitive swimming.

If you have any questions, please reach out to your swimmer's coach, a Parent Representative, or Coach Cliff.

How do I know my child is ready to compete?

There are several ways to determine if your child is ready and interested in competing. To ensure a positive first-time swim meet experience, check in with your child's coach and talk to your child about what they are comfortable, confident, and competent in swimming. You can also take your child to a swim meet to watch their teammates compete to see if they are interested. Lastly, a great way to get their feet wet, is to sign up for a non-championship swim meets – there are normally 2-3 in the Fall and the Spring. Check in with your parent rep or ask your coach to find out which meets are best to start with. You can also sign your swimmer up for only 1-2 events at these meets.

What's my responsibility as a parent?

Signing up for a swim meet can seem complicated, even daunting, at first. Parents are responsible for signing up their child, not the coaches. You are encouraged to read through the following Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), try it online, and if you get stuck, please reach out to your Parent Representative or Coach Cliff.

In addition to signing up your child for a meet, it is also asked that you consider signing up to volunteer. Our swim meets cannot operate without the strong support of parent volunteers. When signing up on the NLSC website for an event, please be sure to sign up to volunteer (see instructions below).



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How do I sign up for a meet?

Click on the “Commitment” button next to the particular event on the Events/Standards tab on the website. [Click here to view upcoming events](#). Click on your swimmers’ name and under the Declaration tab, select the option “Yes, please sign up for this meet”. This will bring you to a section that allows you to select your events. It is a good idea to check the schedule of each swim meet to ensure your swimmer’s availability as some meets, such as Age Groups and Junior Olympics, occur during the school day. Click on the square next to the event and hit Save Changes once you have selected all the events. It is also important to look at the “Maximum Event Entry Limitations”. There are often limits to how many events you can swim per day and per weekend for multiple day swim meets. It is also important to note that each race event you check generates a fee. These fees are automatically paid through your monthly NLSC payment plan and a confirmation of the fee totals will be sent by email.

How do I sign up to volunteer?

There are two types of volunteer jobs: bringing food and donating your time on deck during the swim meet. Signing up to bring an item or two of food for the Hospitality Room is helpful in keeping volunteers and coaches fueled and focused on the swim meet. Volunteering on-deck during the meet is critical to the success of each meet. The NLSC Boosters have a volunteering program that requires families to volunteer for a certain number of hours per year. Please refer to the policy on the website under Parents/NLSC Boosters Volunteer Program (VIP) for more details.

Follow these easy steps to sign up:

- Go to the Team Events page
- <https://www.teamunify.com/team/aznlsc/page/events#/team-events/upcoming>
- Under the particular event, you will see a button labeled “Job Signup”, click there.
- This will bring you to the volunteer jobs signup page which outlines all the responsibilities that our team needs to fill.
- Check the box under all the jobs you are able to fill
- Scroll to the bottom of the page and hit the “Signup” button.
- Please add your phone number and any other information that would be helpful to know (i.e. what you specifically plan to bring for food donations, or who is working your shift if someone other than you) in the “Optional Contact Info” space.
- Hit “Sign Up”.

If you need to remove your name – check the applicable box and hit the “Remove Signup” button.

If you are new to swimming, volunteering to time the racers is a great entry point and very quick and easy to learn. Timers are called on to the deck usually 15 minutes prior to the meet start time for a group training meeting. After you have volunteered as a timer a few times, you are strongly encouraged to try new volunteer roles. Officials are the most needed at any meet as well as volunteers to work the computers and as meet directors. These jobs are all very rewarding and make long hours at swim meets go by much faster. You will also have the added value of your



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swimmer seeing you highly engaged in their sport which they love and appreciate. It takes hundreds of volunteers to facilitate a swim meet, please consider volunteering both hospitality items and your time on deck!

When is the swim season?

The swim season in Anchorage roughly follows the school year, starting in the September ending in the spring with the Alaska Junior Olympics. The swim meets that NLSC participates in are scheduled by one of the teams in Central Area (NLSC, Chugiak Aquatics Club, Aurora Swim Team, YMCA, Wasilla, Valdez), Central Area Swimming or Alaska Swimming and typically occur once or twice a month throughout the school year. Summer Champs are also held every July and are swum in long course meters.

You can sign your child up for any swim meet anytime throughout the year as long they meet the qualifying times. As swimmers become more committed to the Comp Team, parents are encouraged to keep track of the schedule of the meets (finalized by the start of the school year) and try to participate in as many as possible. As swimmers get stronger, they become more integral to the NLSC team, contributing points to the overall team score and annual success of the team. If you do not plan to attend a meet, it is important to let NLSC coaching know by going to the event sign up page and clicking "will not attend."

What is the NLSC Swim Banquet?

The end of each swim season is celebrated with the NLSC Swim Banquet usually mid-May. Each swimmer is recognized by their primary practice coach, awards are presented, and high school seniors give farewell speeches. Swimmers and swim families look forward to this special event. Everyone dresses up and enjoys time to socialize and eating dinner together.

How is my child's age determined?

Swim meets are not based on the Comp Team swim levels (Iron/Bronze through Gold), but rather on your child's age. The age of your child is based on their birthday. If your child's birthday occurs just before a swim meet with qualifying times, your child must meet the qualifying times of their new age to compete.

How many events can I sign my swimmer up for?

In every meet, there are a maximum number of events that kids can compete in each day. It is important to note, that younger kids, kids that are newer to swim meets, or maybe even those that have taken a break, may not have the stamina to compete the maximum number of events every day of the event.

Once you have selected your swimmer's events, you will receive a confirmation with the event #, heat #, and lane # for each event. This will be important information for you to know when your child is competing during a swim meet. They will be marked with this information on deck so it is easy for them to remember and coaches will ensure that they are where they need to be. One



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way that a lot of swimmers keep track is by writing their events on their arms. This is done by taking a black sharpie and filling in the information below. Often this “table” is put on the inside of the forearm.

E	H	L	
1	2	4	50 Free
5	1	6	100 Back
9	4	1	200 Fly

E = Event Number, H = Heat Number and L = Lane Number

In this example, the swimmers’ first event is event 1, in heat 2 and lane 4. The event is the 50 Free. Writing on their arm allows them to know how and where to line up.

What are qualifying times?

When your child is first starting to swim competitively, they will not have any times. You will need to find swim meets and events that do not require qualifying times to enter. Every time your child competes, their time is recorded in the online USA Swimming system. Their fastest times are used to determine which events they then qualify for in upcoming swim meets.

During swim meets, your swimmer’s times will be displayed on the timing boards. It is important to note that these times are not official times. To find your swimmer’s official time, go to the tracking tools described below.

Why is tracking my child’s times important?

It is important to track your child’s times in different strokes and compare them to time standards. This also helps determine what your child might want to swim in the next meet. The qualifying meets are as follows:

- Central Area Championship in Anchorage – typically in December
- Senior Champ Meet (rotates throughout the State) – end of January
- Age Group Championship (rotates throughout the State) – Mid February
- Junior Olympics (JO’s) in Anchorage – late April
- Summer Champs in Anchorage – late July

These meets are posted on the NLSC website - [Northern Lights Swim Club - Events \(teamunify.com\)](http://teamunify.com) and the Alaska Swimming Website - [Alaska Swimming LSC : \(teamunify.com\)](http://teamunify.com).

The Central Area Championship is a meet for the Alaska Central Area which includes the following teams: Aurora Swim Team, Chugiak Swim Team, Northern Lights Swim Team, Valdez Torpedos Swim Club, Wasilla Waves Swim Club and the Anchorage YMCA. The Senior Champ meet includes swimmers from all over the State who meet the USA Swimming Age Group 13/14 "A" Standards. The Age Group Championship meet requires swimmers to meet USA Swimming Single Age "B" Standards for your child’s age on the first day of the meet. Swimmers compete



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for state titles based on their age (10&Unders, 11-year-olds, 12-year-olds, 13-year-olds and 14-year-olds). Senior Champs and Age Group Champs rotate around Alaska each year. In the Alaska Junior Olympics, swimmers compete for state titles in their age group (10&Under, 11-12, 13-14, and 15&Older) and swimmers must meet USA Swimming Age Group "BB" Standards in order to qualify for this meet. JO's is always held in Anchorage at the Bartlett High School pool. The Summer Championship meet is swum in long course meters and swimmers must meet the USA Swimming Age Group "B" Standards. Travel for out-of-town meets, including expenses and arrangements, are considered optional and the full responsibility of parents.

If your child is close to meeting a qualifying time in an event, sign your child up for that event in the next meet to give them an opportunity to qualify for the state title meets. Please note that not every event is provided at every meet. Your swimmer may have to wait a meet or two to compete in a specific event.

To determine whether your child has qualified for one of these meets, please check the list of qualifiers that is updated regularly throughout the season. [Click here for a list of Event Qualifiers.](#)

How do I find times and keep track of them?

There are a couple of different ways to find your swimmer's times and keep track of them. Try a few and see what works best for you.

1. **Meet Mobile App:** You can download this App on to your smartphone. It will allow you to check your swimmer's and the team's final times and standings during and after each meet.
2. **Website:** Go to the Northern Lights Swim Club website (<https://www.teamunify.com/team/aznlsc/page/home>). Sign in to your account. Go to the Events & Competition and click on Meet Results to find your swimmer's Top Times in each stroke and the date and meet that they competed. You can also look up whether your swimmer has met qualifying standards for a specific meet. Pick the event in the "Standards" drop down and hit "Search". Green will indicate those times that meet qualifying times and brown will indicate those times that do not meet qualifying times. You can also see how close your swimmer is to meeting the qualifying times. Please keep in mind the date of your swimmer's birthday in relation to the date of each swim meet to ensure that you are using the correct age group qualifying times.
3. **OnDeck App:** you can shortcut the steps above, by installing this App on your smartphone

What else besides meets should we focus on?

As each swimmer focuses their progress on qualifying for key meets throughout the year, NLSC coaching would also like the swimmers to focus on longer distance challenges. By setting their goals on the IMX Challenge, swimmers will increase their endurance, overall swim performance, and confidence.



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IMX Challenge: The IMX Challenge is a USA Swimming program that NLSC focuses on to encourage swimmers to test their talents in both short and longer distances. To qualify, swimmers must be under 18 years old and must swim all of the required events between Sept 1 and August 31 of the next year. Coach Cliff recognizes all swimmers that complete the minimum requirement for the program as well as those that earn over 1,500 points at the annual NLSC swim banquet. Those that do earn over 1,500 points are also qualified and invited by NLSC to swim at the IMX Challenge meet which occurs annually in November in Mesa, Arizona. For more information, go to <https://www.usaswimming.org/Home/times/IMX-IMR>.

Log in to Deck Pass online or via App on your smartphone, click Scorecard, then IMX to see your swimmer's points. Once all of the required events have been completed, you can confirm your swimmer's points with Coach Cliff's tracking at <https://www.teamunify.com/team/aznlsc/page/home>.

IM Xtreme is a program that allows USA Swimming members to track their times (or coaches to track their team's times) against swimmers all across the nation! Just by swimming a specific program of events, you can see where you rank against your teammates, your region and yes, even across the USA!

NOT QUITE IMX READY? TRY THE IMREADY CHALLENGE!

IM Ready is the little brother of IM Xtreme, tailored toward our younger swimmers. Does 200 yards seem a little much? Then start getting "IM Ready" by swimming shorter distances, and keeping track of your improvements.

Important Note About IMR and IMX Scores

An IMR or IMX score is only established after a swimmer has swum all of the events required for their age group in a sanctioned meet since the start of the current season; both short and long course seasons start September 1 and end August 31 for IMR/IMX purposes. Additionally, a swimmer must complete all of the events in the same course (SCY or LCM) to have a score in that particular course.

IM READY (IMR)

The first step in the IMX Challenge is IM Ready (or IMR). To get "IM Ready," swimmers compete in a series of five events at shorter distances. Below, we've listed the line-up by age groups.

- **9 & Under; 10-year olds:** 100 Free, 50 Back, 50 Breast, 50 Fly, 100 IM (SC) or 200 IM (LC)
- **11-year olds; 12-year olds:** 200 Free, 50 Back, 50 Breast, 50 Fly, 100 IM (SC) or 200 IM (LC)
- **13, 14, 15, 16, 17, & 18-year olds:** 200 Free, 100 Back, 100 Breast, 100 Fly, 200 IM

Once you've swum each event at least once at an official meet, you can log-in to your Deck Pass Account, and find out where you rank against all the other swimmers on your club team. You do not need to complete the IM Ready program to participate in the IM Xtreme. It is simply a stepping stone.



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IM XTREME (IMX)

Ready to move forward? The next step is IM Xtreme (IMX). The IMX ranking includes a series of five or six events at longer distances. Once you've completed the IMX program, you can find out where your IMX score ranks nationally, within your zone, within your LSC rank and on your club.

- **9 & Under; 10-year olds:** 200 Free, 100 Back, 100 Breast, 100 Fly, 200 IM
- **11-year olds; 12-year olds:** 400 Free (LC) or 500 Free (SC), 100 Back, 100 Breast, 100 Fly, 200 IM
- **13, 14, 15, 16, 17, & 18-year olds:** 400 Free (LC) or 500 Free (SC), 200 Back, 200 Breast, 200 Fly, 200 IM, 400 IM

How do I score points?

Rankings in the program are based on power points a system developed by USA Swimming. [Click here for the link to the USA Swimming Power Point Calculator.](#)

How do I participate?

Participation in the IMR and IMX is easy. USA Swimming automatically scores and calculates results for all athlete members! Swimmers only need to sign up for a Deck Pass Account, then compete in each required event, at a sanctioned meet, at least once in a season.

Swimmers have the option of printing certificates that displays their scores for either IMR or IMX. They can also optionally print their national, zone, LSC and/or club rankings for IMX.

Swim Meets-On Deck

What is the best way to prepare for a swim meet?

Whether it's a child's first swim meet or their 100th, it's important that every swimmer arrive 100%. Be sure that your child goes to bed early, gets plenty of sleep, and gets a good, hearty breakfast. Meals and snacks are not provided to swimmers on deck, so swimmers should come with plenty of re-fueling snacks and hydration. If your child is swimming in events after school, make sure they go to school with a hearty lunch, hydrate throughout the day, and refuel on the way to the swim meet.

What's needed for swim meets? Team requirements?

While NLSC does have team wear (<https://www.swimoutlet.com/nlscak>), it is considered optional and not necessary to compete. All competing swimmers will be given a team swim cap on-deck prior to a meet. Prior to each meet, be sure your swimmer has the following: swimsuit, two caps, two pairs of goggles, two towels, warm jacket or sweatshirt, clothes to change into after the meet, snacks, water bottle, and a backpack or large bag to contain it all.



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What happens at the swim meet?

Most meets on Saturdays and Sundays start as early as 8 am and end between 12-2 pm. These can make for long days so please plan accordingly by bringing food, drink, and entertainment for your group of spectators. The spectator stands are typically very limited and fill up between warm-up time and the start of a meet.

Most swim meets in Anchorage occur at Bartlett High School which has two pools. If there are enough Officials, all the girls will compete in one pool and all the boys will compete in the other. The sides switch each day of a meet, so be sure to ask which side your swimmer will be competing on. Otherwise, all swimmers may be competing in the same pool.

Every swim meet has a warm-up time and a start-time. Please drop your child off 10-15 minutes prior to the warm-up time to ensure that they have plenty of time to change and check in with their coach before warming up. Swimmers will be marked with a Sharpie on their arm with their event#, heat#, and lane #. Just prior to the meet, NLSC will gather for a team cheer. Swimmers then are encouraged to stay together at the NLSC team spot on the bleachers. The deck will get very crowded and parents are not allowed on deck unless they are signed up to volunteer. Swimmers can come up to the spectator stands and visit during the meet, but you may only see them a couple of times. Please trust that the coaches and older teammates/mentors will ensure that your swimmer will be where they need to be for each of their events. Swimmers typically check in with their practice coach just prior to their event and immediately after their event for coach feedback.

What if I volunteered?

If you have volunteered to bring food for the Hospitality Room, please bring the food at the beginning of warm-ups unless indicated otherwise. The Hospitality Room at Bartlett High School is located on the north side of the building on the first floor. You will have to go on the pool deck to access it. The Hospitality Room provides breakfast, lunch, snacks, and refreshments to volunteers and coach. This convenience is NOT provided for swimmers or spectators. Please be prepared to bring your own food and drinks as there are typically no vendors on site.

If you volunteered for an on-deck duty, please arrive one hour prior to the start of the meet and check in with the Race Director or Referee. If you volunteered to time, please wait in the stands and listen for the call for timers to come down to the deck approximately 15 minutes prior to the meet.

What happens if my child gets sick or injured prior to a meet?

Alert Coach Cliff at 907-277-7946 as soon as you determine your child will not be able to participate in a meet. If your swimmer is scheduled to participate on a relay team, this becomes especially important. Sufficient advance notice allows coaches time to find substitute swimmers for relays which have the highest amount of points in team competition. If you have any questions, please reach out to your Parent Representative or Coach Cliff.