



TOPS SWIMMING HANDBOOK

2025 – 2026

Mission Statement

TOPS seeks to provide a safe, healthy, positive, and disciplined age group training program for our pre-team to National level swimmers.

Our training environment will enable our athletes to reach their personal level of excellence in competitive swimming.



TOPS Swimming philosophy is rooted in:

*The foundation of the TOPS Swimming program is built on three core values:
Trust, Open Communication, and Personal Responsibility.*

TRUST

At TOPS, swimmers and their families trust that coaches will create a training environment grounded in proven teaching practices—supporting both athletic development and personal growth. In return, coaches trust that swimmers and their families will represent TOPS with care, respect, and integrity in both word and action.

OPEN COMMUNICATION

Clear, respectful, and honest communication is essential to the strength of our TOPS community. Coaches prioritize constructive dialogue during instruction and encourage swimmers and families to share concerns in a timely and appropriate way. All communication—whether on the pool deck or beyond—is expected to reflect civility, kindness, and mutual respect.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

TOPS coaches are committed to designing and delivering training programs that support the development of every swimmer. Swimmers and their families share the responsibility of aligning with team expectations and working in partnership with the coaching staff. Success at TOPS requires swimmers to take ownership—showing up consistently, being coachable, and meeting the standards set for training and behavior.

SUPPORT

TOPS coaches are dedicated to supporting swimmers not only as athletes, but as individuals. This commitment is demonstrated through honest feedback, thoughtful evaluation, and attentiveness to each swimmer's unique needs. In turn, swimmers and families are expected to contribute to a supportive environment—through encouraging words, positive actions, and a consistent presence at practices and meets.

Supporting Our Mission and Philosophy

TOPS COACH EXPECTATIONS

**Coaches are committed to fostering swimmer development and upholding the values of the TOPS program.*

**Teach and support swimmers both in and out of the water*

**Provide guidance before practices and races*

**Offer constructive feedback during practices and after races*

**Counsel swimmers on goal-setting and nutrition*

**Model good behavior and sportsmanship*

**Instruct and supervise practices appropriate to swimmers' training levels*

**Use a multi-sensory approach to support different learning styles*

**Select USA Swimming meets for the season*

**Submit entries for USA meets*

**Attend designated USA meets*

**Maintain an up-to-date team roster*

**Prepare line-ups for dual meets*

**Communicate with parents' weekly*

**Our coaches select meets and list them under the Team Events section. Swimmers and families are responsible for committing to meets and selecting their events within the guidelines*

**Maintain required coaching certifications and support Safe Sport practices*

TOPS PARENT EXPECTATIONS

**Parents are essential partners in creating a positive and structured environment for swimmers.*

**Be positive, encouraging, and supportive of your swimmer*

**Be familiar with the TOPS training philosophy*

**Ensure your swimmer arrives on time for practices and meets*

**Pick up your swimmer promptly after practice*

**Inform coaches of any ongoing health issues (e.g., concussions); doctor's clearance is required before returning from injury*

**Pay all entry fees for USA, mid-season, and championship meets*

**Support the swimmer's requirement to participate in a MA season ending championship meet.*

**Communicate schedule conflicts, questions, or concerns directly to coaches or board members via the official TOPS email only (not social media or text)*

**Fulfill volunteer responsibilities at all TOPS chosen meets*

**Regularly check your family folder, email, and the TOPS website for updates*

**Do not approach coaches on deck during practice; arrange to speak afterward*

**Allow your swimmer to manage their own belongings from the deck*

**Support and uphold Safe Sport practices (e.g. do not use swimmer locker rooms, etc.)*

TOPS SWIMMER EXPECTATIONS

**Swimmers are expected to take ownership of their development and represent TOPS Swimming participates in a series of USA Swimming–sanctioned meets throughout the year, including:*

**Short Course Season (September–April)*

**Long Course Season (May–August)*

**Arrive on time for every practice*

**Use the restroom before practice begins*

**Help with pool equipment setup and takedown*

**Inform the coach ahead of time if needing to leave early*

**Work cooperatively within your lane; practice as a team*

**Follow all rules at practice and competition facilities*

**Respect personal space and others' belongings*

**Wear TOPS spirit wear at TOPS chosen meets*

**Support and uphold Safe Sport practices*

****High School swimmers:** During HS season, attend at least two TOPS practices per week.*

**** Prelim/Finals meets:** If a swimmer makes finals; he/she is expected to swim at finals.*

IS YOUR CHILD READY FOR TOPS?

To ensure every swimmer has a positive, safe, and productive training experience, certain readiness criteria must be met before joining the program. These standards allow coaches to create a fair, efficient, and effective training environment—especially important given limited pool time and shared resources.

8 & Under Requirements:

**Perform a legal dive from the side of the pool*

**Legally swim one length (25 yards) without stopping in two competitive strokes*

**Practice Expectation: 2–3 practices per week*

Ages 9–10 Requirements:

**Perform a legal dive from the side or starting block*

**Legally swim 50 yards in two different strokes*

**Execute a legal flip turn*

Practice Expectation: 3–4 practices per week

Ages 11–12 Requirements:

**Perform a legal dive from the starting block*

**Legally swim 100 yards in two different strokes*

**Execute a legal flip turn*

Practice Expectation: 4–5 practices per week

Ages 13–14 Requirements:

**Perform a legal dive from the starting block*

**Legally swim 100 yards in two different strokes*

**Execute a legal flip turn*

Practice Expectation: 5–6 practices per week

Ages 15 & Over Requirements:

**Perform a legal dive from the starting block*

**Legally swim 100 yards in two different strokes*

**Execute a legal flip turn*

Practice Expectation: 5–6 practices per week

Important Note:

Meeting these criteria is essential for providing an honest assessment of each swimmer's readiness for team training. With limited pool availability, our top priority is to maintain a safe, structured, and educational environment for all TOPS athletes.

Please note: *The head coach reserves the right to adjust a swimmer's practice group based on ability, attendance, or overall readiness.*

TOPS REGISTRATION PROCESS

TOPS Swimming, established in 2014, is a USA Swimming–sanctioned club in the Middle Atlantic (MA) Local Swimming Committee (LSC).

When registering with TOPS, families commit to joining a program focused on athletic development, sportsmanship, and community. Below is a breakdown of what you can expect during the registration process.

Registering with TOPS

**A one-time registration fee is required per swimmer.*

**Families with multiple swimmers will receive a per-child discount during the registration process (first child- standard; second- discount, etc.)*

Payment Options

Fees are broken into **10 monthly installments and are processed securely via credit card through the TOPS website.*

OR

Families may choose to **pay in full (check, only) **before** the season begins.*

- A 5% discount will be applied to full, upfront payments.

COMMITMENT to TOPS

**Swimmers registered with TOPS are expected to swim exclusively for TOPS and may not participate in other swim programs (e.g., YMCA, SAL, or other age-group clubs)*

**Swimmers are expected to participate in a season ending MA Championship meet representing TOPS.*

****Note:** Participation in High School Swimming is permitted and encouraged.*

Information Required

**To comply with USA Swimming and Safe Sport policies, the following information is collected at registration:*

**Swimmer's address and contact numbers (including emergency contacts)*

**Medical conditions and special needs*

**Health insurance details*

**Signed liability waivers and Code of Conduct*

**Acknowledgement of MAAPP (Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy)*

**Photo release form*

**Confirmation that the TOPS Handbook has been read*

**All submitted information must be kept current throughout the swim season*

Financial Hardship

**If program costs are a barrier to participation, families are encouraged to contact Coach Bill Draves at topsswimming@gmail.com. Assistance options are available through a confidential application process.*

USA SWIMMING

**TOPS Swimming participates in a series of USA Swimming–sanctioned meets throughout the year, including:*

**Short Course Season (September–April)*

**Long Course Season (May–August)*

**Coaches select meets and list them under the Team Events section and USA tab on the TOPS website. Swimmers and families are responsible for committing to meets and selecting their events within the guidelines provided.*

Meet Guidelines

**Swimmers may select up to three events per day at a USA meet.*

**Events are based on the swimmer's age on the day of the meet.*

**Distance events require each swimmer to provide their own timer and counter.*

**Relay entries will be submitted by the coach. Final relay team decisions are made at the meet, based on attendance and performance — this is standard USA Swimming practice.*

Swimmers must select either **COMMIT or **DECLINE** for each meet offered. If a swimmer remains in the UNDECLARED category, Coach Bill will select events and enter the swimmer in the meet. Families will be responsible for all associated meet fees.*

****Prelim/Final Meets:** Swimmers compete in their event during the morning session. If a swimmer finishes in the top 8, 16, or 24, they are expected to return and swim the same event during finals. Families are not charged for finals swims. ***TOPS expects all swimmers who qualify for finals to participate in the finals session***

Meet Fees

- *A per-event fee is required for each USA meet.*
- *Funds must be available in your family account for meet entries to be processed.*
- *If sufficient funds are not available, your swimmer will not be entered into the meet.*
- *Payment information and deadlines will be posted in advance of each meet.*

Parent Volunteers

- *USA meets rely heavily on volunteer support.*
- *Parents of swimmers attending USA meets are expected to volunteer (e.g., timers, runners, etc.).*
- *Details on volunteer roles will be shared prior to each event.*

TOPS Attire & Gear Expectations

All new swimmers will receive:

- One (1) TOPS T-shirt*
- One (1) TOPS silicone cap*

Competition Cap Policy

- *At meets, swimmers must wear a TOPS team cap.*
- *Extra caps are available for purchase if lost or damaged.*
- *For practices, swimmers may wear:*
 - A TOPS competition cap*
 - A generic or fun cap*

-Swimmers are not to wear team caps from other programs (e.g., high school, summer league, or winter team gear).

Team Suit Policy

**Team suit color: [Royal Blue](#)*

**Suits can be purchased through:*

-Swim Outlet (via the TOPS Website)

-Toad Hollow, Paoli, PA

**Swimmers may choose a suit style and fit that is comfortable for competition, with the following requirements:*

-Must be solid royal blue

-No tie-back suits (female swimmers) are permitted for meets

Tech Suit Guidelines

**Tech suits are permitted only for rest/taper meets, as designated on the TOPS USA meet schedule.*

**Per USA Swimming regulations, swimmers under 12 years old may not wear tech suits.*

**If unsure, consult your coach before purchasing or wearing a tech suit.*

Spirit Wear

TOPS Spirit Wear is available for purchase in two ways:

**Seasonally through the Google Form provided each year*

**Year-round via our affiliate Swim Outlet page, accessible through the TOPS website*

- Purchases through Swim Outlet also help support TOPS Swimming.

REQUIRED SWIM EQUIPMENT

Each swimmer is expected to bring the required equipment for their age group to every practice.

A complete list of required gear is available through our personalized Swim Outlet page, accessible via the TOPS website. Purchasing through this link not only provides convenience, but also helps support TOPS Swimming.

Alternatively, gear can be purchased locally at Toad Hollow in Paoli, PA.

8/under and 9/10 Equipment Needs

**Goggles- Jr. Vanquisher is a good goggle that should last. Clear lenses are best for indoor swimming.*

**Kickboard*

**Training fins*

**Tennis balls (2)*

**Mesh Equipment Bag*

11/12, 13/14 & Opens Equipment Needs

**Goggles*

**Kickboard*

**Training fins*

**Pull Buoy*

**Finis Snorkel with valve*

**Tennis balls (2)*

**Hans Paddles – Coach Bill will place an order for these paddles. They are around \$ 12.00 per pair.*

**Mesh Equipment bag*

**Swim Sleeves - Recommended for 14 and older swimmers (not mandatory)*

***Swim bag:** *In each swimmer's bag should be the following:*

- Two pair of goggles (please see the recommended goggles for purchase)*
- Towels*
- Sharpie to write events on hand (younger swimmers)*
- Highlighter for heat sheets*
- Compartment for safe keeping of personal items: glasses, iPods, Phones, etc.,*
- Inhaler - Only swimmers with a doctor's diagnosis of asthma are to use/handle an inhaler. Inhalers must be labeled.*

RUNNING A SWIM MEET

**If you have a child participating in a meet, please expect to work that meet in some capacity.*

**If you have any questions, please ask a coach or a member of the parent board. We hope you will find a job that you'll enjoy.*

MEET POSITIONS

**When we participate in the Middle Atlantic Closed Dual meets, the following positions may need to be filled.*

Starter-Referee - Home meets- MUST BE CERTIFIED; referee settles any disputes or judgment calls; starter calls the swimmers to the block, starts them with beep.

Stroke and Turn Judge: One from each team needed at each meet, home and away; MUST BE CERTIFIED; watches swimmers for legal strokes and turns.

Console operator: Only at home meets, operates the timing console (registers place and times from the electronic pad and buttons).

Scorer/Meet Manager Operator: One for each team needed at each meet, home and away. At home meets, operates the meet manager computer which

interfaces with the timing console and stores the meet results. Makes changes to line-ups and keeps running score.

Timers: No experience needed and watches will be provided.

Runner: Collects place judge cards and give to head scorer.

Announcer: Needed for each home meet to announce events.