



Oyster River Otters Parent Handbook

PO Box 105

Durham, NH 03824

<https://www.teamunify.com/Home.jsp?tabid=0&team=neoro>

Welcome to the Oyster River Otters Swim Team!

Oyster River Otters Swim Team (ORO) is a non-profit youth swim organization serving the community since 1972. In March of 1994, the team was recognized as a USA Swimming team. ORO had grown to approximately 200 swimmers in 2020 and is rebuilding after Covid-19. The team ranges in age from 5 to 18 years old and from beginner to advanced skill levels. Practices are held at the UNH Swasey Pool year-round, the Durham outdoor pool in the summer, and the Jenny Thompson Pool in the spring/summer.

Membership is open to all residents of the community without regard to race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, sex, sexual orientation, national origin (ancestry), disability or any other legally protected status. Membership is granted once the swimmer's minimum level of swimming ability is confirmed by the coaching staff. Membership may be limited based on the number of swimmers that can be safely accommodated in the pool.

The philosophy of the Oyster River Otters is to cultivate and develop an individual swimmer's physical and mental health in a safe environment. Emphasis is placed on self-improvement, good sportsmanship, and personal self-esteem. This is of the utmost importance and shall be nurtured by coaching personnel at all times. Every effort is made to help a swimmer develop to his/her full potential in and out of the water. Coaches will exemplify the ORO values and support the goals and mission of ORO for the continued development and growth of the team.

Otters adheres to federal and state employment regulations and to the policies as set forth by the swim governing bodies of USA Swimming and New England Swimming.

USA Swimming

USA Swimming is the National Governing Body for the sport of swimming in the United States. Otters is one of the members of its 400,000-member service organization that promotes the culture of swimming by creating opportunities for swimmers and coaches of all backgrounds to participate and advance in the sport through teams, events and education.

New England Swimming

New England Swimming is an Eastern Zone swimming committee (LSC) of USA Swimming. New England Swimming is a non-profit amateur sports organization that involves approximately 9,800 athletes and nearly 103 teams in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Hampshire and Vermont.

Mission Statement

Fitness, Friends, Fun in a Safe and Positive Environment

Vision

To inspire and enable our swimmers to learn that self-improvement is more important than medals or ribbons and that such self-improvement will lead to a winning performance in areas both in and out of the pool. We are committed to providing a safe and positive environment for all members.

Team Philosophy

The cultivation and development of an individual swimmer's physical and mental health is stressed. Emphasis is placed on self-improvement, good sportsmanship, and personal self-esteem. This is of the utmost importance and shall be nurtured by coaching personnel and parents at all times. Every effort is made to help a swimmer develop to his/her full potential in and out of the water.

Otters Organization

- Board of Directors
 - The Board of Directors establishes policy and is responsible for the management of the business and properties of the Otters. They provide oversight in coordination with the Head Coach and in the best interest of the organization. This group of volunteers ensures that services are provided in a way that is both fiscally responsible and advances the organization's mission as a non-profit community youth swim program.
 - Board members are required to register with NE Swim, complete a background check, and complete the athlete protection and concussion training courses.
 - The board consists of a president, vice president, treasurer, secretary and other board members. The Head Coach is not a voting board member but does attend the meetings. They meet monthly, no less than 8 times a year.
- Coaches
 - Head Coach directs all Otters activities in the pool and will perform other tasks associated with operation of Otters, as directed by the Board of Directors. All coaches work under the direction of the Head Coach to execute the plan and vision of the developmental program.
 - Associate Coaches work extensively with swimmers. They assist the head coach with organizing the coaches for each practice, meet entries, development of workouts, communication with parents.
 - Assistant Coaches are responsible for training swimmers in their assigned lanes at each practice. They assist at meets when needed and may write workouts.
 - Junior (16 and 17 years old) and high school coaches (15 years old) are responsible for training swimmers in their assigned lanes at each practice. They assist at meets when needed and may write workouts.

Communication

- Website
 - Register for meets and RSVP for team activities.
 - Check your account balance
 - Gain access to your swimmer's times
 - Check calendar for practice and meet times
 - Resources for parents and swimmers

- Email
 - All families are to have regular access to email or pair up with a family that will get the info to you.
 - You may enter as many as 3 email addresses.
 - Please make sure your email address is listed correctly with the team. If using an account that has limited storage capacity, be sure you have cleared out unwanted mail so that our messages can get through to you. Once a message has been sent out by email, the information is considered common knowledge and it is the swimmers' & their families' responsibility to know the content and respond in a timely manner if that is required.
 - Do not ignore emails. They are sent out for specific reasons. The coach has taken the time to provide you with vital information and you need to read what is sent.
 - A communication "Blast" is emailed on Wednesdays alerting you to changes in the schedule, upcoming deadlines, and points of interest.
- Texts
 - Text messages will be sent in the cases of practice cancellations. You must enter your SMS number and carrier into your account information. These have a very limited number of characters. If confusing, check email as an email will always be sent each time a text message is.

Parent Responsibilities

- The success of the Oyster River Otter Swim Team depends on its parents. When you sign your swimmer up to become a part of the Otter team, you step into roles that will allow you to share the sport with your child. All families are asked to participate in various team activities as well as the general running of the team. Parents who have swimmers in a meet are assigned jobs for that meet.
- The team makes every effort to meet schedule obligations that you may have. Please ask if you have any questions. If any unusual circumstances arise which prevents you from fulfilling commitments to the team during the season, it is your responsibility to speak to the parent coordinator or head coach as soon as possible.
- After you have been with the Otters for 3 seasons, at least one member of your family is expected to attend a training session to become a certified Stroke & Turn Official. We understand that being an official is not for everyone, but until you try it, you won't know. As you gain more experience, you will be trained to be a starter and then a referee. This helps distribute the workload and meets the requirements within the leagues.

The Importance of Volunteers

- The Otters Swim Team can accomplish all it does and keep fees reasonable because of the involvement of our parents.

- Our board of directors which oversees the administration of the team is composed of parents. These individuals develop policies and procedures, develop budgets, approve spending, organize and distribute team apparel, and prepare payroll.
- Our parents who work the meets as timers, runners, computer operators, deck parents, and Colorado operators enable us to provide 6 or 7 home meets per year and an annual March championship meet at no additional charge to our families. They help provide a safe and fair environment for our competitors.
- Our parents who volunteer to train and work as officials make it possible for us to host meets. Without meet referees, administrative officials, starters, and stroke and turn officials, the Otters could not host meets and would have to ask families to pay additional fees to attend meets hosted by other teams. They, too, help provide a safe and fair environment for our swimmers.
- Our March championship meet is a revenue producer for the team. Without this meet, our fees would be higher.
- The parents who step up to help with odd jobs throughout the year enable the coaching staff to offer a more varied program, to offer small incentives for our swimmers, and build a family of swimmers and parents.

Meet Jobs (An * indicates this job would be GREAT for parents with small children or children who need mom/dad around during the meet!)

- *Bring Items: Occasionally, we will ask parents to bring in items either in lieu of or in addition to a regular job. This may be food, drinks, pumpkins etc.
- *Decorations: For certain meets you will arrive early (at time specified by Head Coach) to decorate the pool area.
- *Candy/Caramel club: You are responsible for providing the candy (Smartees and Starbursts/Tootsie Rolls) and then handing them out to swimmers after their heat if they have improved their time or attempted a new event. You will need a few bags of individual candies. You will sit down on the pool deck for the entire meet.
- ***Cleanup Crew: Please clean up the bleachers/pool deck/hallway/locker rooms after the meet. You will find trash bags typically downstairs where the lifeguards keep their belongings. This is great for families of young swimmers.
- Colorado: need to have been trained and apprenticed. This involves managing the equipment that records the times during the meet. You would be sitting at the table at the far left of the pool by the starting blocks.
- Colorado Trainee: learn how to use the Colorado timing console from an experienced operator. Great for someone who is interested in technology and loves to be busy during the meet!
- Computer: need to have been trained and apprenticed.
- Computer Trainee: learn how to use Hytek Meet Manger software from an experienced operator. Great for someone who is interested in technology and loves to be busy during the meet!

- Deck Monitor: At some meets, a parent stays on deck by the stairs and makes sure only swimmers, coaches and other necessary persons are on pool deck. This job requires you to be on deck for the entire meet.
- *Deck Parents: Help the swimmers organize for the meet. They are given a list of their swimmers' names and their events including heat and lane assignments by gender and age group. They keep track of what's going on in the water and when they should be sending swimmers to the blocks. You will send them down by event. They also help maintain order on the bleachers and know where their swimmers are at all times.
- *Hallway Monitor: Primary responsibility is to keep people/swimmers from hanging out in hallway and to keep doors closed. Making sure all people who do travel the hall have shirts and shoes on. Make sure there is no running in the halls. Ensuring that people do not enter the pool through the last door (closest to the women's locker room door) while the meet is on. With multiple hall monitors, parents can move in and out of the pool to watch their swimmer compete.
- Head Timer: Prior to the start of the meet (20 - 30 minutes), you will run the timers meeting in the hallway. Coordinates the timing personnel to ensure that there are 2 timers (with working watches) on every lane for the duration of the meet. If enough people sign-up, feel free to schedule the timing in shifts. Serves as the backup for all timers during the meet and is responsible for training timers. Responsible for stopwatches, clipboards, and pencils.
- Job Check in Person: Checks in parents at start of meet. Also helps get coverage when short jobs last minute. Could be a good job for someone with small children.
- *Locker Rooms Supervisors: All locker room supervisors will meet at the beginning of the meet and plan to check locker rooms on regular 15 minute intervals. People (swimmers/parents etc) should not be loitering in locker rooms. You are also asked to help keep the locker rooms tidy and report any issues to the head coach.
- Official: need to have been trained and apprenticed.
- Official Apprentice: Training to be an official. You will be on deck the entire time. Must attend training session first. Great job for those who like to be close to the action!
- Ribbons: Meet in the stands over by the computer and Colorado. Affixes printed labels to the backs of place appropriate ribbons. Ribbons are divided by teams and given to coaches at the end of the meet.
- Runner: Collects the timer sheets and sends them up to the computer table.
- Safety Officer: Must be an Otters Board Member. Makes sure all safety requirements are being enforced.
- Set up/Break Down: arrive early, set up equipment, then take down and put away equipment. Good for families with small kids (as long as your kids do not need your supervision while you are working). If this is new to you- we'd prefer someone who plans to attend ALL home meets regularly.
- Timer: You need to meet in the hallway 20 - 30 minutes before meet begins for the timers meeting. Training is provided at this meeting. You will likely time for the whole meet. If enough timers sign up it will be possible to time for a shift or have breaks. Each timer is provided with a working watch and each lane with a clipboard and pencil. Timers start their watches at the beginning of the race and stop their watches when the swimmer in their lane touches the

wall. Both stopwatch times are recorded on the timing sheets. If touchpads are used, both the stopwatch and the button are pushed when the swimmer touches are wall.

- 25 Timers: You need to meet in the hallway 20 - 30 minutes before meet begins for the timers meeting. Training is provided at this meeting. You will only time the events that are 25's. If enough timers sign up it may be possible to time for a shift or have breaks. Each timer is provided with a working watch and each lane with a clipboard and pencil. Timers start their watches at the beginning of the race and stop their watches when the swimmer in their lane touches the wall. Both stopwatch times are recorded on the timing sheets. If touchpads are used, both the stopwatch and the button are pushed when the swimmer touches are wall.

Otter Fees

- Otter Fees - All swimmers pay an Otter fee for the season. This can be paid in either installments or in one payment.
- For the fall/winter season the installment payments are billed to your credit card on Oct 1, Nov 1, Dec 1, and Jan 1. The complete payment will be billed to your credit card on Oct. 1.
- The default will be to installment payments. You will need to let us know if you prefer to pay a lump sum (an email reminder will be sent).
- For the spring only and summer only sessions, 2 installment payments are due June 1 and July 1 for the spring only session or July 1 and Aug 1 for the summer only session. The complete payment is billed to your credit card June 1 for spring only session and July 1 for summer only session.
- For swimmers swimming both spring and summer sessions: Installment payments are June 1 July 1, August 1; complete payment billed June 1.
- Families can sign up for 1 of 2 billing options. Both options cover all practices, home meets, and the end of the season meet.
 - Basic: Swimmers attend up to 4 hours of practice per week.
 - Swimmers 9 and up with permission of coach can swim 1.5 or 2 hour blocks at no additional charge as long as the number of hours/week is 4 or less.
 - Swimmers do have the flexibility to move between practices as schedule changes if space allows.
 - Extended: Limited to swimmers ages 9 and up. Swimmers attend more than 4 hours/week.

NE Swim Registration Fee (USA Swim fee)

- All swimmers must be registered with NE Swim/USA Swimming. This is a yearly membership renewed in the fall that goes into effect January 1 for returning swimmers and immediately for new swimmers.
- USA Swimming registration is now an online process for all members. Emails with the link and instructions will be sent to families.
- Fall/winter swimmers: Swimmers are signed up for the yearly membership rate and can attend any number of sanctioned meets (our home meets, SSA meets, Champs, Regionals). Discuss at board meeting if we want to add flex membership.

- Swimmers who have been previously registered with USA Swimming and are returning after more than 1 year away from the sport must be registered prior to the start of practices. A flex membership will be an option for you as a bridge during your trial period. You will be limited to 2 meets and must upgrade for any championship meets you sign up to attend.
- Spring/summer swimmers: Swimmers are signed up for the Flex membership which allows for only 2 sanctioned meets. If a swimmer signs up for a third sanctioned meet, then the membership is upgraded.

Swim Meet Fees

- Meet fees for the home meets and the March Champs meet are included in your Otter dues.
- Meet fees for NE Swim calendar meets such as any SSA meet, Regionals, and Silvers are not included in your Otter dues.
 - These meets are optional.
 - Fees have been the following
 - \$5 per individual event shorter than 400 yards and \$10 for events longer than 400 yards.
 - If prelim/finals meet, \$6 per individual event for swimmers 13 and up.
 - Participation fee of up to \$25 is usual.
 - NE Swim travel fee of \$1.
 - Fees for a 3-day meet where swimmer competes in 10 races could be \$74.
 - Relays are paid for by the team.
 - Charges are billed to your account once the entry file has been accepted by the host.
 - No refunds if you cannot attend.

Refunds

- Otter fees: All swimmers have 2 weeks to decide if the team is a good fit for their family before any Otter fees are charged/paid for the season. No refunds are given after this period unless a doctor's note is provided.
- New England Swim fee
 - Swimmers new to USA Swimming: This is not submitted until after the 2-week trial period. No refunds are given if swimmer decides not to swim after the trial period.
 - Swimmers who have been members of USA Swimming must register prior to returning to practices.
 - Swimmers who are already registered for 2022 are ready to return to practices.
- Meet fees: Once entries have been submitted to the host team, no refunds are given.
- Emergency Cancellation: It may be necessary for the Otters Board of Directors to bring a swim season to conclusion earlier than expected due to circumstances outside of their control, such as pool unavailability or in response to a public health situation. In the event that the Otters swim season is cut short, the following guidelines will be used to determine partial refunds of swimming fees: 1. 10% of each swimmer fee is dedicated to the ongoing expenses associated with the team (even when swimmers cannot practice) and as such is non-refundable. 2. If the swim season is reduced by three or fewer weeks a credit will be given for the cancelled weeks. If the number of weeks swimmers are out of the water is more than 3, then either a refund or

credit could be given at the current weekly rate minus 10%. 4. Refunds and credits will be issued at the end of the season or the end of the suspension of practices. 5. Refunds will be made via our web-based payment system, which deducts a small transaction fee.

Family Discounts

No family discounts are available at this time

Scholarships and Financial Assistance

- NE Swimming and USA Swimming offer an outreach program for those who meet financial criteria. Submit documentation of free and reduced eligibility to the head coach. This can be a copy of the letter you received from the school saying your family/student is eligible.
- If your family is experiencing a financial hardship and do not qualify for free or reduced lunches, you may still qualify for financial assistance. Reach out and talk with a board member or the head coach.
- The NE Swim fee is reduced to \$5 for those that qualify based on the free and reduced lunch program. Some meet fees are covered by NE Swim.
- Scholarships are available on a limited basis. Those who qualify under the USA Swimming guidelines will be funded first.
- Families must request a scholarship/financial assistance prior to September 1.

Practices and Schedules

- The Otters Swim Team is organized by age groups. We believe that it is important for the leaders of an age group to swim with swimmers that are their age. This does not mean that an 8-year-old is limited to swimming with only 8-year-olds, but that an 8-year-old is at a practice with other 8-year-olds. By combining age groups together for practices, a faster 8-year-old gets to lead his/her age peers and be challenged by swimming practices with faster 9 and 10 year olds.
- In general, swimmers 10 and under practice together; swimmers 13 and up practice together. Swimmers 11 and 12 have the option of practicing with the 10 and under swimmers or the 13 and up swimmers.
- Within each practice time, swimmers are divided by skill and endurance. Swimmers may be asked to swim in different lanes with different swimmers depending on who attends a practice. Swimmers can also request to try out a faster lane to see if it is a good fit for them.
- All training groups work on the fundamentals of competitive swimming with the goal of teaching each swimmer to become proficient in these skills. 4 competitive strokes: butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, and freestyle, starts, turns, finishes.
- Extended Practices: Swimmers who want more time in the water, can sign up for an extended practice. The requirements to be in this group include being 9 years old or older, a love for being in the water, and the physical ability to make good use of the extra time.
- Aging Up: When a swimmer moves into a different age group (8-year-old turns 9 and is now part of the 9 - 10 age group), this is known as aging up. When swimmers age up, they can practice with their old age group for 3 months after their birthday or they can move into the older group 3 months prior to their birthday. This is done to help swimmers stay with their school

friends. (Swimmers do compete in the new age group immediately. The age of the swimmer on the first day of the meet determines the age group for competition.)

- Number of practices per week: Swimmers should get in 2 or 3 practices per week to see the most improvement. Coaches do not need to be informed if swimmers will be missing practices.

Locker Rooms

- Swimmers are the responsibility of the coaches when on deck and the responsibility of their parents when off deck. This means that when your swimmer is in the locker room your child is your responsibility.
- Concerned about your swimmer in the locker room? Email the head coach at the beginning of the season so we know you need to be in the locker room. Women cannot go into the men's locker room and men cannot go into the women's locker room so look to friends for help if your child is not the same gender as the parent that brings them to practices.
 - There is a gender neutral/family bathroom on the same floor as the pool that can be used.
- No recording devices, audio or video, are allowed in the locker rooms.
- Swimmers need to be out of the locker rooms within 15 minutes and on their way home.
- Transgender athletes do use the locker rooms. Be sure your swimmer knows how to respond to this situation if it arises.
- If transgender swimmers on the team do not want to use the main locker room, they have the option of using the family locker room in the hallway.

Home Meets

- Entries
 - Swimmers can indicate what events they want to swim on the team website under "Team Events". Changes may be made by the coaches to challenge swimmers or to get updated times.
 - Deadline is usually 2 weeks before the meet. Once deadline has passed, I can accept additional entries if your plans change.
- Volunteers
 - All families with a swimmer in the meet are expected to work the meet.
- Length of Meet Sessions
 - Meet sessions cannot last longer than 4 hours for 12-and-under swimmers and 5 hours for 13-and-up swimmers.
 - If an event is labeled "open" instead of a specific age group and a swimmer who is 12 or younger is swimming in this event, the swimmer may be at the pool longer than 4 hours but not more than 5 hours.
 - Warmups typically add an additional hour to the time a swimmer needs to be at the pool.
- Meet Preparation
 - 1 to 2 days before the home meets, you will receive event number (E), heat (H) and lane (L) assignments.
 - Swimmers should come to the meet with this info already on their hands/arms.

- Make sure it is written in the direction that the swimmer can read.
- Use permanent marker (tip: this is easily removed after the meet using a spray-on sunscreen).

Example: Doe, Janet N - Female - Age: 15 - ID#: 052789EMINRICE - DOB: 5/27/1989 - Ind/Rel: 3 / 2

#15 Girls 9&O 50 Free 31.06 8/1

#31 Girls 13&O 100 Fly 1:13 2/4

#35 Girls 9&O 100 Free 1:09.59 5/3

#11 Girls 15-18 200 Medley Relay (1) 2:15.09 1/3

#51 Girls 15-18 200 Free Relay (2) 2:01.84 1/4

E H L

11	1	3	Med R
15	8	1	50 fr
31	2	4	100 fly
35	5	3	100 fr
51	1	4	Fr R



- For away meets, only event numbers are available on the website. Heat and lane assignments are available after a positive checkin.
- For home meets, an APPROXIMATE timeline is sent out.

NE Swim Calendar Meets

- Entries
 - Swimmers can indicate what events they want to swim. Coaches may change events if coach feels swimmer is not ready to swim an event.
 - Deadline is usually 6 - 8 weeks prior to the start of the meet. Once the deadline has passed, no additional entries will be accepted. Scratches are taken but fees still apply.
- Volunteers
 - Occasionally, we are asked to help with timing. At NE Swim end of the season meets, we may be required to time.
- Length of meets
 - Meet sessions cannot last longer than 4 hours for 12-and-under swimmers and 5 hours for 13-and-up swimmers.

- If an event is labeled “open” instead of a specific age group and a swimmer who is 12 year old or younger is swimming in this event, the swimmer may be at the pool longer than 4 hours, but not more than 5 hours.
- Warmups typically add an additional hour to the time a swimmer needs to be at the pool.

Team Policies

- Copies of the team policies can be found on the website.

Links to Safe Sport Online Classes

- Swimmers <https://www.usaswimming.org/articles-landing-page/2017/04/05/free-safe-sport-training-for-athletes>
- Parents <https://www.usaswimming.org/articles-landing-page/2017/02/16/safe-sport-for-parents>
- Hyperlinks found on team website under “Parent Resources”

Oyster River Otters Swim Team

CODE OF CONDUCT: PARENTS

The purpose of a code of conduct for parents is to establish consistent expectations for behavior by parents. As a parent/guardian, I understand the important growth and developmental support that my child's participation fosters. I also understand that it is essential to provide the coaching staff with respect and the authority to coach the team. I agree with the following statements:

- I will set the right example for our children by demonstrating sportsmanship and showing respect and common courtesy at all times to the team members, coaches, competitors, officials, parents, and all facilities.
- I will get involved by volunteering, observing practices, cheering at meets, and talking with my child and their coach about their progress.
- I will refrain from coaching my child from the stands during practices or meets.
- I understand that criticizing, name-calling, use of abusive language or gestures directed toward coaches, officials, volunteers, and/or any participating swimmer will not be tolerated.
- I will respect the integrity of the officials.
- I will direct my concerns first to the head coach then, if not satisfied, to the appropriate Board president.

I understand the above expectations and that my failure to adhere to them may result in disciplinary action.

Signature(s)

Date

Oyster River Otters Swim Team

CODE OF CONDUCT: ATHLETES

The purpose of a code of conduct for the Oyster River Otters Swim Team athletes is to establish a consistent expectation for athletes' behavior. By signing this code of conduct, I agree to the following statements:

- I will respect and show courtesy to my teammates and coaches at all times.
- I will demonstrate good sportsmanship at all practices and meets.
- I will set a good example of behavior and work ethic for my younger teammates.
- I will be respectful of my teammates' feelings and personal space. Swimmers who exhibit sexist, racist, homophobic, or otherwise inappropriate behavior will be faced with consequences.
- I will attend all team meetings and training sessions, unless I am excused by my coach.
- I will show respect for all facilities and other property (including locker rooms) used during practices, competitions, and team activities.
- I will refrain from foul language, violence, behavior deemed dishonest, offensive, or illegal.
- If I disagree with an official's call, I will talk with my coach and not approach the official directly.
- I will obey all of USA Swimming's rules and codes of conduct.

I understand that if I violate this code of conduct, I will be subject to disciplinary action determined by my coaches and the Oyster River Otters Swim Team board of directors.

Swimmer's signature

Date

Parent's signature

Date