



# French Creek Rubber Ducks

## Swim Team Handbook 2025-26



**French Creek Family YMCA**

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# Swim Team Contacts

## Coaching Staff

### Head Coach:

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## YMCA Contacts

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# About The Rubber Ducks

The YMCA of Greater Cleveland's Swim Teams provide opportunities for swimmers of all abilities to develop their skills, build confidence, and experience the excitement of competitive swimming. Now in its second year, the French Creek Rubber Ducks Swim Team provides swimmers of all abilities with structured training, skill development, and a supportive, community-driven environment.

## Mission

To inspire success and lifelong enjoyment in the sport of swimming through programming that builds a healthy spirit, mind, and body for all.

## Areas of Focus

The French Creek Rubber Ducks and The YMCA are for Youth Development, Healthy Living, and Social Responsibility

## Vision

To help swimmers achieve their goals in competitive swimming, no matter how big or small, while developing successful, confident kids, and first class citizens.

## Values

The character development core values of caring, honesty, respect, responsibility, and faith will guide all our interactions and decisions.

# Registration and Fees

## YMCA Swim Team Program Fees

YMCA of the USA competitive swimming rules require that all participants have a youth or family YMCA membership. There is a one-time \$100 fee at the time of registration and a monthly program fee for each group. If there is a need to cancel, you must do so by the 15th of the month prior.

**Fluffs** - \$100/month

**Ducklings** - \$115/month

**Ducks** - \$130/month

**\*Additional registration and entry fees may apply depending on meets. Fees for registered swimmers will be collected through your YMCA Account.**

## Registration

1. New swimmers must be evaluated prior to registering for the team. Evaluations can be conducted during try-outs prior to the season beginning. Evaluations do not guarantee a spot on the team.
2. Ensure your YMCA membership is up to date, or for new swimmers be sure to open a YMCA membership. The YMCA membership grants full access to all Greater Cleveland YMCA Branches.
3. Registration is **in-house ONLY** Please register at the front desk.

# Practice Groups

Swimmers will be divided into three groups based on age and ability. Within the three levels, emphasis is placed on progressively mastering the four competitive strokes and related techniques, increasing practice distance and intensity, instilling good practice habits and team involvement, and building leadership skills and self-confidence. The three practice groups will be known as Fluffs, Ducklings, and Ducks. Swimmers will be placed by the coaches into assigned groups at the beginning of the season. Any changes or questions regarding placement in practice groups should be directed to the Head Coach.

**Fluffs** (Beginner): Introduction to competitive swimming, with a focus on basic stroke development, water safety, and confidence-building.

**Ducklings** (Intermediate): Swimmers refine stroke techniques, build endurance, and begin learning race strategies

**Ducks** (Advanced): Advanced swimmers focus on competitive techniques, race preparation, and achieving personal bests.

**High School Ducks:** High school swimmers who are interested in continuing to compete at the YMCA level. Practice requirements are reduced

## Practice Schedule

	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
FLUFFS	Off	6:30-7:15	6:30-7:15	6:30-7:15	Off	OFF	OFF
DUCKLINGS	5:30-6:30	5:30-6:30	5:30-6:30	5:30-6:30	5:30-6:30	OFF	OFF
DUCKS	5:30-7:00	5:30-7:00	5:30-7:00	5:30-7:00	5:30-6:30	OFF	OFF

## Group Assignments for All Levels

Our goal is to place each swimmer in a training group with other swimmers of similar age, commitment, stroke, endurance ability and goals in order to better facilitate instruction and training. Assignment placement in the respective groups will be made by the coaching staff, with the final decision in all cases being made by the Head Coach.

Although group changes are a decision made by the coaching staff, coaches will communicate with the parents prior to initiating the move so that parents can prepare for schedule and fee adjustments and address any concerns they may have. The following criteria are used to evaluate each swimmer for the best placement:

1. Age and maturity
2. Skill level and ability to handle the training
3. Level of commitment, attendance, work ethic, and attitude

## Practice Philosophy and Conduct

Swimming is a sport that requires a consistent training commitment for the swimmer to improve. The more consistent you are with practice attendance, the faster you will improve.

Swimming is more than a sport—it's a way to build character. Our goal is to develop not just strong athletes, but great individuals who succeed in and out of the pool. We teach life lessons in commitment, resilience, and teamwork, shaping swimmers into confident and responsible citizens.

### Our two core rules:

1. **Always show respect**—Respect your coaches, teammates, competitors, and yourself. A positive and supportive environment starts with mutual respect.
2. **Bring a positive attitude**—Every practice is an opportunity to improve. A strong mindset and a willingness to learn make all the difference.

## Practice Attendance Policy

All swimmers are encouraged to attend practice on a regular basis. In order for swimmers to achieve at the highest possible level, they must attend practice regularly. Consistently missing practice will mean missing out on valuable instruction and hinder the development of the swimmer.

- **Fluffs, Ducklings, and Ducks** are required to attend a minimum of **two (2)** practices per week.

We understand that circumstances may arise that prevent attendance. If a swimmer experiences a prolonged absence due to illness or other reasons, please notify the head coach as soon as possible.

## Observing Practice

Parents/guardians are welcome to observe practice, however, please respect distance from the coaches and team so that program quality is never compromised or interrupted. Coaches have a responsibility to inspire, motivate, and train athletes. We ask that, when observing practice, you do so in a respectable fashion while connecting with other families and strengthening relationships that unite the team and organization.

**Parents are welcome to observe practices from the designated viewing room upstairs, located next to the weight room.** For safety and to minimize distractions, parents are not permitted on the pool deck during practice. If you need to speak with a coach, please do so either before practice begins or after it concludes.

**\*It is a YMCA requirement that all swimmers ages 12 and under need to have a parent in the building for the duration of practice**

Prior to and following practice, parents and swimmers can wait/be met in the hallway outside of the pool deck. Swimmers should come prepared with their suit, cap and goggles, a water bottle, and equipment.



## Equipment

Items that are required for practice include a bathing suit, cap and goggles, water bottle, and a towel. Items that are not required but **highly** encouraged include kick board, pull buoy, fins/flippers, and deck sandals.

## Lane Assignments

Swimmers will be divided into lanes for training depending on the group level. While there are no permanent lane assignments within each group, the coach has the authority to place swimmers in the lane they believe will benefit the swimmer the most for their training. If problems such as behavior, bullying, attentiveness, etc., arise the coach has the authority to assign a required lane.

## Practice Cancellations

Practices may be canceled occasionally for various reasons. Examples include inclement weather, pool closures, etc. Many times, we do not know about these cancellations until the last minute. We will communicate these changes by email and the Remind App.

If something occurs at the facility that forces practice to be canceled at the last minute and swimmers have already been dropped off for practice, they will be instructed to call their parents to be picked up early. In such cases, a coach or YMCA employee will always remain at the practice site until all swimmers have been picked up.

# Swim Meet Information

Swim meets are a fun and exciting opportunity for swimmers to measure progress, experience the thrill of competition, and strive for individual and team accomplishments. They provide a break in the practice routine, as well as a “test” of how well you are practicing. Competition brings about several opportunities for personal growth through both success and failure, adversity and challenges, and responsibility.

Meets will emphasize race strategies and the long-term development for all swimmers by the coaches. The swimmers will be prepared to peak in their performance during the championship season. It is important for all to focus on the season-long journey of improvement and the process, not the outcome of any given race.

## Dual Meets

These are smaller meets between The French Creek Rubber Ducks and one other YMCA team. Dual meets will be held at the opposing teams YMCA and last about 2 hours. There are no entry fees and no place awards or ribbons. YMCA Zone and National cuts may be made at these meets.

Team information, location, time, meet line-ups, and remaining details will be provided prior to the meet. The coaches will be responsible for creating the meet line-up and will take into consideration attendance and performance at practice and the swimmers strengths and weaknesses. The coaches will encourage each swimmer and do their best to give everyone an opportunity to compete in all events throughout the course of the year.

## Dual Meet Expectations

- Come on time and prepared to race wearing the team suit, cap, and shirt.
- Bring goggles, a water bottle, towel, snacks, and warm clothes
- Swimmers are expected to sit in the designated team area or cheering for teammates when not swimming.
- Swimmers, coaches, families, and anyone representing the Rubber Ducks are expected to show good sportsmanlike conduct and respect to all swimmers, coaches, officials, volunteers, and families, of our team and the opposing team

## Invitationals

A larger meet in which several other teams compete. Usually held in a larger venue. Invitationals are optional but highly encouraged and swimmers compete in individual events THEY choose. **Additional registration and entry fees may apply and will be communicated prior to registering for the meet.** All entries and fees must be submitted by the designated date in order to be entered in the invitational as no late entries are permitted. The coaches will designate relays, if applicable. Ribbons, medals or trophies are typically awarded to top finishers. YMCA Zone and National cuts may be made at these meets.

## Championship Meets

### Division Championships

To be eligible to swim in the Division Championships, **swimmers must have represented his/her local YMCA Swim Team in any combination of at least three (3) dual meets or invitationals with their respective team** (note: Double Dual Meets count as two meets). This meet is held at the end of every dual meet season in each of the divisions that make up the YMCA Swim League. All swimmers and teams in their respective divisions compete.

The coaches have the final decision in what events each swimmer will enter. At this meet, swimmers participate for team and individual honors. Ribbons are awarded for top finishers as well as team trophies. It is from the Division Championship meets that swimmers qualify for the League Championship meet. YMCA Zone and National cuts may be made at these meets.

### League Championships

To be eligible to swim in the League Championships, **swimmers must have also participated in their Division Championship Meet**. If for some reason they were absent and did not swim the Division Meet, they are then not eligible to be used, even as an alternate in the League Championships. This meet **consists of the top three (3) finishers** in the 8 & under, 10 & under and 11-12 age groups and the top two finishers in the 13-14 and 15 & up age groups in each event from each Division Championship Meet. Based on the remaining fastest finishing times at all Division Championship Meets, additional swimmers are qualified in order to fill three full heats for each event for the 12 & under age groups and only two heats of each event for the 13 and older swimmers. At this meet, swimmers participate for team and individual honors. Ribbons, medals and team trophies are awarded. YMCA Zone and National cuts may be made at these meets.

## Zone Championships

This meet hosts swimmers from teams in Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Kentucky, and West Virginia and they compete for both Team and individual honors. Swimmers qualify for specific events by meeting or surpassing strict cutoff times set for every event. Qualification can be achieved at any of the inter-association meets listed above. It is a three-day meet that moves its location annually. Time cutoffs for each event may change yearly. This year's time cuts can be found on our team website. Additional events to the regular dual meet venue are available to 12 year olds and older. This year the Zone meet will be held at Bowling Green State University on March 14-16, 2025.

## National Championships

This is the top line competition and final YMCA meet of the season. Swimmers from all across the nation qualify with very strict cutoff times. Swimmers must be 12 years old or older to participate in this meet. It is a week-long event where the best YMCA swimmers in the nation compete. Y Nationals will be held in Greensboro, NC.

## Swim Meet Attendance

**Aligning with the Divisional Championship requirements, swimmers are required to participate in three (3) meets throughout the course of the swim season in any combination of dual meets and invitationals.** Meets are a great opportunity to show off their skills, track improvement, experience competition, and build team spirit—all while having fun with teammates. Every meet is a chance to grow, celebrate progress, and create lasting memories in the pool!

Situations where swimmers are unable to meet the minimum requirement of swim meets can be addressed separately with the head coach.

## **Tentative Swim Meet Schedule Coming Soon!**

**\*Please check our website for the most up to date schedule**

## Additional Meet Information

1. Please arrive 20 minutes prior to our warm-up time, with your buddy assignment completed and ready to go at the designated time.

2. Please sit in the designated team area or cheering on your teammates so we don't have to track you down for your events.

3. During meets, it is the responsibility of the coaches and/or parent volunteer to make sure the swimmers are at the blocks at the correct time if the child is 10 years old or younger. 11 year olds and older are responsible for being on time to

4. We will gather after warm-ups for a team cheer and pep talk by the coaches. ALL swimmers are expected to be present and enthusiastically participate in this cheer

5. Swimmers are expected to wear their team suit, cap and shirt to all meets.

6. After each event, swimmers are asked to talk to a Coach. This allows the coach to give immediate feedback or corrections to swimmers.

7. Swimmers should congratulate the other swimmers in their events and show good sportsmanship at all times.

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## Items to bring to a Swim Meet

- Team suit, cap, and goggles
- Team t-shirt and additional warm clothes
- Towel
- Deck sandals
- Water bottle and snacks
- Any medication needed
- Buddy assignment

# Buddy Assignments

The Swim Buddy Program assigns older, more experienced swimmers with younger and/or less experienced swimmers to help them learn the ropes of swim meets. For example, before each meet, buddies will find each other and together, check what events each swimmer will swim. These Buddies are matched for the duration of the swim season.

The buddy program is also a mentoring program for the older swimmers to help and encourage the younger swimmers to do their best and learn our traditions. Having an older swimmer cheering on their Buddy to a best time is a great way to show team spirit! Each dual meet there will be a pre-determined buddy assignment for the swimmers to bring to the meet. Some examples include sit with your buddy and cheer them all, packing a snack bag, writing a good luck card, etc

The Buddy Assignment will be included with the meet information. **If a swimmer will not be attending a meet, they are still encouraged to complete their Buddy Assignment and place it in their buddy's mailbox before the meet.** This ensures that everyone feels supported, whether they are present or not. Swimmers are welcome—and encouraged—to deliver their Buddy Assignment during the week leading up to the meet.



# Communication

Communication is vital to any organization and must be done with respect. Coaches will make every effort to convey information to swimmers and parents. They will make regular use the following resources for the swim team. Team members and their parents need to communicate with coaches to avoid misunderstandings and to inform them of things that may affect a swimmer's training and competition.

An updated Team Unify/Go Motion account and checking it regularly for changes that may need to be made to phone numbers, emails, addresses, or swimmer information. Coaches will communicate with you regarding any arising issues or injuries at practice or meets that may need immediate reconciling.

## Website

Our team website serves as a central hub for all important information related to the swim team. Here, families can access important resources such as our Parent & Swimmer Handbook, team policies, schedules, meet qualification time standards. This site will also be used to to declare attendance and register for all swim meets.

## Email

This is the primary way information is communicated and distributed. Please be sure we have your most up to date email address on file for all parents/guardians

## Remind App

Used to send out quick updates, such as practice cancellations, and important reminders. It may also be used for direct communication with the coach. Please make sure you have opted in to receive messages through the app to stay informed.

## Mailboxes

Located on the pool deck, mailboxes are used to exchange items like signed forms, buddy assignments, and meet ribbons. Swimmers and coaches use them to share important information throughout the season.

## Bulletin Boards

Located in the pool area and directly outside the pool and in the front lobby, the swim team bulletin boards will highlight our team and Swimmers of the Month

# The Flock – Parent Committee

The Flock is our parent-led committee that supports the Rubber Ducks Swim Team through volunteer coordination, fundraising, and team spirit initiatives. This group plays a vital role in helping our season run smoothly by organizing events, assisting with meet logistics, and fostering a strong sense of community.

The Flock will work closely with the coaching staff to support team goals, enhance the swimmer experience, and ensure strong communication between families and coaches. They ensure our swimmers and families have the best experience possible. All parents are welcome and encouraged to get involved!

# Fundraisers

Fundraising is essential to keeping our swim team running strong. It helps offset the costs of team gear, equipment, pool expenses, and other necessities that ensure our swimmers have the best possible experience. These funds allow us to maintain a high-quality program while keeping costs manageable for families. Every contribution—whether through participation, donations, or spreading the word—directly benefits our athletes and helps create a positive, well-equipped environment for their growth and success. Thank you for your support in making our team the best it can be!

**Stay tuned for this years upcoming fundraisers!**

# Bullying Policy

The YMCA is committed to providing a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment for all participants. Bullying of any kind—whether verbal, physical, or social—goes against the values of the YMCA and will not be tolerated. This policy applies to all YMCA Swim Team practices, competitions, and sanctioned events.

I understand that:

- Bullying behaviors must be directly observed by YMCA staff or coaches during YMCA activities, practices, meets, or team events in order for disciplinary action to be taken.
- Confirmed acts of bullying may result in consequences that can include warnings, suspension from practices or meets, and/or dismissal from the team.
- All participants are expected to contribute to a positive, respectful, and supportive team environment.

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have read and understand this policy, and I agree to uphold the YMCA's values of respect, responsibility, honesty, and caring both in and out of the pool.

Participant Name (Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Name (Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Checklist

1. YMCA membership
2. Registration for the swim team
3. Signed handbook by parent & swimmer
4. Signed Bullying Policy by parent & swimmer
5. opted into notifications from the remind app
6. Attendance for Swim Meets on Team Unify/Go Motion
7. Ordered a team suit and necessary equipment

# Handbook Acknowledgment

I acknowledge that I have received and reviewed the French Creek YMCA Rubber Ducks Swim Team Handbook. I understand it is my responsibility to read the handbook in full and to follow the policies, guidelines, and expectations outlined within. By signing below, I agree to abide by these policies and understand that failure to do so may result in disciplinary action, up to and including removal from the program.

Participant Name (Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Name (Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_