



## CLUB SWIMMING FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. [What is SDMS?](#)
2. [Why was SDMS created?](#)
3. [Why is the club team limited to South Des Moines, Norwalk & Carlisle?](#)
4. [Why do Carlisle and Norwalk swim with this team?](#)
5. [What is the difference between Club Swimming, USA Swimming, and Middle School Swimming?](#)
6. [How much does it cost to be on the team each season?](#)
7. [How is my registration fee used?](#)
8. [How are practices divided?](#)
9. [How many times a week is practice?](#)
10. [When and where is practice held?](#)
11. [Does my child have to be at all the practices each week?](#)
12. [What is the Gold Team or Gray Team?](#)
13. [How are club swim meets organized?](#)
14. [How long do swim meets last?](#)
15. [Are swim meets scored?](#)
16. [Are there awards or ribbons for swim meets?](#)
17. [How do we sign up to compete in swim meets?](#)
18. [What events does my child swim?](#)
19. [How do you decide what lane my child swims in at meets?](#)
20. [How do parents sign-up to help at meets?](#)
21. [Should I keep track of my child's times?](#)
22. [My child has a birthday during season. Which age-group do they swim in for meets?](#)
23. [What is the Conference Championship Swim Meet?](#)
24. [Are the team suits mandatory?](#)
25. [Does my child get a team t-shirt?](#)
26. [Where can I get the gold FAN SHIRTS other parents are wearing?](#)

### What is SDMS?

SDMS is the abbreviation of South DM Swimming, a federally recognized non-profit swim club. The official club name is South Des Moines Swim Club. But since we can only have 4 letters for our USA Swimming team code, we dropped the "C". The club mascot is a Seahawk.

## Why was SDMS created?

The club team was created to expand the swim options to our participating families. In order to be a USA team, you have to be a standalone organization. The club goals remain the same, to provide quality swim programs to the Southside of Des Moines, Norwalk and Carlisle.

## Why is the club team limited to South Des Moines, Norwalk & Carlisle?

One of the goals of the club team is further the legacy of Southside swimming. This includes at the high school level with school records, state events, wins in the conference and more. Because of this, the team is only for swimmers who live in the Lincoln High School district (or would swim for Lincoln from an outlying community). There are swimming programs available in all areas of town should a swimmer live in another part of the city.

## Why do Carlisle and Norwalk swim with this team?

Carlisle and Norwalk swim at Lincoln High School if they'd like to participate in a school-based team (middle school or high school). To help build friendships, a sense of community and companionship, we encourage swimmers from these communities to join the club team now. That way they'll be very familiar with their teammates, coaches and the facilities when joining the school team.

## What is the difference between Club Swimming, USA Swimming and Middle School Swimming?

**Club Swimming:** For all ages 5-18, it's the main program we offer. This team will participate in meets each summer and winter. It is a great way to get involved in competitive swimming. During club meets, athletes swim by age and sex-specific groups. This ensures your kids are always swimming against kids their own age.

**USA Swimming:** For our more advanced club swimmers, we offer the opportunity to swim at USA meets. These swimmers are part of the USA Elite group, pay an annual membership to USA Swimming and some extra fees to participate at meets all over Iowa and the Midwest.

**Middle School Swimming:** For middle school age swimmers (6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade), there is a short four week season for girls and boys offered through Lincoln High School. All Des Moines high schools offer middle school programs. The other high schools charge an extra \$40 for this; we include it in our club team fee and program. This means middle school kids will get the benefit of swimming at middle school meets at no extra charge. The girls season is in the fall and the boys season is in the winter.

## How much does it cost to be on the team each season?

That depends on your child's skill level and if it's the shorter summer season or longer winter one. It can also vary if you pay annually for swimming (only available in February-April) or pay per season. Generally club swimming starts at \$140 for Novice and Intermediate swimmers and \$160 for Advanced and USA Elite

swimmers. For more details on the cost of swimming, please visit the online store: [www.southdmswimming.bigcartel.com](http://www.southdmswimming.bigcartel.com). Compare our fees to other similar programs and you'll find most charge \$800-\$1500 annually per child to compete.

### How is my registration fee used?

On team expenses. Our biggest expense is payroll. Unlike many teams around Des Moines, with two or three coaches on staff, SDMS has 6-10 any given season. This allows for more tailored instruction and a better practice environment, but it also costs more money. The fees are also used to pay team expenses like pool rental, insurance, conference dues, meet expenses, splash fees, ribbons and much more.

### How are practices divided?

Practices are broken into four categories: Novice, Intermediate, Advanced and USA Elite. To be a novice swimmer, your child needs to be able to swim 25 yards (one length) without stopping. For all other practice slots, there will be minimum time standards that need to be met to sign up for that practice level. These standards can be found within the item description for [the online store](#).

### How many times a week is practice?

Novice and Intermediate practices are three days a week. Advanced and USA Elite practices are four days a week. Novice and Intermediate practice together (so do Advanced and USA Elite) but in separate lanes based on ability. Each season, you can pick your practice time slot since at least two options are available for each skill level. However, these slots are capped to prevent over-crowding so early registration is recommended.

### When and where is practice held?

Practices are held at Lincoln High School. The times and dates vary depending on the season (summer or fall/winter). But generally, summer practices have a morning and an evening slot. Winter practices have two evening slots and Saturday practices. For specific practice days, please refer to [the online shop](#).

### Does my child have to be at all the practices each week?

No. We understand that kids are involved in many activities and these schedules may conflict. It's one reason we believe we charge a reasonable fee for up to 17 weeks of practice and meets. If your child needs to miss a practice, that is fine. You can also plan on only coming twice per week, if needed.

BUT, be sure to check and read your emails frequently so you don't miss out on online meet sign-ups or other important information. Because we organize almost 200 swimmers in a computer program (HyTek) for events and times, we can't sign-up athletes for events after the sign-up deadline has passed.

## What is the Gold Team or Gray Team?

These are “sub-teams”. To help keep meets shorter and the stands less crowded, we divide our team into two parts, a Gold team and a Gray team. These teams are NOT DIVIDED ACCORDING TO ABILITY. It’s simply a random split across the age groups and sexes. Families, of course, are on the same team. The team your child is on each season may or may not change. A roster for each team can be found online during season.

The Gold team (also called Gold Seahawks) and the Gray team (also called Gray Seahawks) will swim at separate meets against different teams, possibly on different nights. We will clearly post which meet is for which team on the [Practice & Meet Schedules](#) page under Club Swimming.

For the Conference Championship meet, we swim together as one team.

## How are club swim meets organized?

Club swim meets (and USA meets) are organized first by event, then by age and sex. All kids will receive event numbers that correspond to what they are swimming. We recommend writing their event numbers on their hand so it is easier for them to remember. We will email this list out to all parents in advance of a swim meet, so you will have them. Kids can sit in the stands with parents, and can leave the meet when their last event is done. They do not need to wait until the last event if they are not swimming in events at the end.

## How long do swim meets last?

Club meets last around 2.5 hours. Middle school meets last less than an hour. USA meets are a full weekend event. Regardless of the meet, kids need to be ready to report to the clerk of course at the pool when they see that their event is being called.

## Are swim meets scored?

Club and Middle school swim meets are not scored. We only score the Conference Championship Meet at the end of the season.

## Are there awards or ribbons for swim meets?

Yes, the top six finishers in each race get a ribbon. Please remember, it is the top 6 overall, not just the top six for your child’s heat. So, if we have 20 eight year old girls swimming the 25 free, only the top 6 get a ribbon.

## How do we sign up to compete in swim meets?

You will sign up your child online about a week in advance of the meet. If the meet is on a Monday, we post the sign-up button the previous Monday. The last day to sign up will be the Thursday before the meet. We always have the sign-up timeframes for each meet of the season posted within the sign-up page so you can confirm you are signing up for the right meet.

Note – during the Winter season there are often USA and Middle School meets that will have online sign-ups too. If you are a club swimmer only, look for your team’s button (Gold or Gray) to sign up. USA and Middle School swimmers have their own sign-up buttons and will also need to sign up for their meets online in addition to any club meets. These meets will have different sign-up timeframes as noted on their respective sign-up pages.

Please remember, we can’t add events or athletes to a swim meet the day of the meet.

## What events does my child swim?

Your child can swim a maximum of four events in one meet. This can be three individual races and 1 relay or 2 individual races and 2 relays. You work with your child to decide their individual races. If you’re new, the short distance Freestyle events are great starting point. You can also ask your child’s coach if you have questions. Coaches assign relays based on who’s signed up for the meet each week. After the first meet, all swimmers and parents will have a better understanding of the process. Remember, club meets are set up by age so be sure to pick the right sign-up form online.

## How do you decide what lane my child swims in at meets?

For all normal club meets and middle school meets, the lane assignments are random. In each heat, we just want to have the same number of SDMS swimmers verse our opponents. For USA meets and Conference Championship Meets, the meet will be “seeded” so a swimmer will be racing next to someone with a time close to their own.

## How do parents sign up to help at meets?

We are always in need of some volunteers to be on deck timing at meets. Being a timer doesn’t require special training, and you will have the best seat in the house! If you want to help, you can email [Coach Weber](#).

## Should I keep track of my child’s times?

We recommend it! While we have a system that tracks swimmers’ times during the season and try to provide a season summary, it’s best to also keep track of your swimmer’s best times. Many parents like to keep track of times in a little notebook so they can always tell their child right away how their time compares to a previous race. Others like to save the meet results on their computer at home so they can track from year to year. We will post all meet results online within a day or two, so parents can go back and reviews times. The results remain posted until the start of the next club season.

## My child has a birthday during season. Which age group do they swim in for club meets?

The Winter conference uses December 31<sup>st</sup> as the determining date on which group they should swim in. The age groups are broken down like this:

- 8 and under
- 9-10
- 11-12
- 13-14
- 15 and up

We will use their age on Dec. 31<sup>st</sup> as their competitive age-group for the entire season. So if they are 8 in October, but turn 9 in November; they will swim in the 9-10 bracket the entire season.

The process is the same for the summer club season but the date is May 31<sup>st</sup> instead.

## What is the Conference Championship Swim Meet?

The Conference Meet is held at the end of each club season. There are 10-12 teams in the metro area that compete in the same conference. The conference meet is held at two places, splitting the conference into two sides. SDMS/Lincoln has been asked for a few years to host both the summer and winter conference meets, and we won the Conference Meet four straight seasons! The meet is split by age, so all swimmers ages 11 and older swim on Friday evening, and all athletes ages 10 and younger swim on Saturday. The following Monday we always have a big party for the kids to come have fun, jump off the diving board, eat treats, and collect ribbons and medals from the Conference Meet.

## Are the team swim suits mandatory?

No. We offer a team suit that parents can choose to purchase at the beginning of each season. Annually, we select a team suit (starting with the summer team) and the same suit is offered to the winter team. This way, we hope parents will only need to buy one team suit each year. Other programs offer a suit as part of their entry fee, but the cost increases another \$50-\$70. We want parents to have the choice to spend the extra money. We do require your child have a one piece swim suit for competition. We also don't recommend wearing the team suit to practice. Once a new design is picked, feel free to use the old one as a practice suit.

## Does my child get a team t-shirt?

Yes. Everyone on the team will receive a team t-shirt each season as part of the entry fee. These shirts are ordered when season starts and normally handed out during the first month. Additional t-shirts can be purchased on our online store, [www.southdmswimming.bigcartel.com](http://www.southdmswimming.bigcartel.com) for parents and other fans.

## Where can I get the gold FAN SHIRTS others are wearing?

These shirts will be available at home meets located right inside the main doors to the pool area. They sell for \$13 each; sizes S/M/L/XL/XXL are available. These shirts were designed by Lincoln High School parents a few years ago, using the idea that we wanted ALL of the Southside swimming programs to support each other. This shirt is recognizable at meets because of the gold color. Plus, you can wear it for all Club, USA, Middle School, and High School swim meets to show your Southside Swimming pride!