



**DEVELOPMENTAL ORGANIZED  
COMPETITIVE SWIMMING**

**TEAM & PARENT  
HANDBOOK**

for

**2011-2012 Short Course Season**



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## Team & Parent Handbook for 2011-2012 Short Course Season

### Welcome

Congratulations! You are now a member of the DOCS family. We strive to develop excellent swimmers in all aspects of the individual: mentally, physically, and socially. We nurture the whole athlete, including a positive attitude of sportsmanship, cooperation, and dedication.

By joining DOCS you have decided to join a sport that helps you set goals and provides you the opportunities to strive to achieve these goals. Swimming establishes a positive self-image, provides new friendships and teaches responsibility.

The information contained in this booklet will introduce you to DOCS and to competitive swimming. Please take the time to read the entire handbook. It explains the operation of DOCS and the obligations of its members.

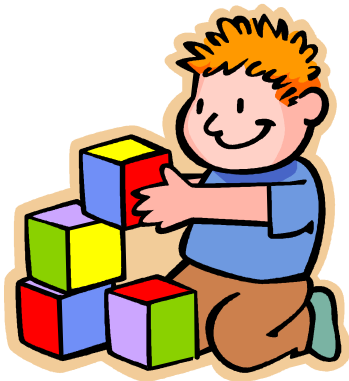
### The DOCS Mission

We provide developmental instruction in competitive swimming so that individuals, through personal dedication and discipline, experience success in the sport to the best of their ability.

### The YMCA Mission

To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind, and body.

### YMCA Building Blocks



**CARING**  
**HONESTY**  
**RESPECT**  
**RESPONSIBILITY**

### About the DOCS Program

We have been providing a year-round, high quality swim program since 1992.

Our team is a member of USA Swimming, Inc. (USA-S), the national governing body of amateur swimming chartered by Congress under the Amateur Sports Act.

We are also affiliated with the Greater Peoria Family YMCA, which provides competitive opportunities to the swimming community through its district, state, and national level competitions.

DOCS is open to boys and girls from early elementary school (starting at age 4) to post-high school, regardless of swimming ability, race, color, ethnic origin, or religion.

We offer a balanced program of practice, competition, and social activities.

Our coaches provide instruction and training in competitive swimming for boys and girls in a highly structured closely supervised, regularly scheduled format.

We encourage participation according to age and ability level in competitions by USA-S and the YMCA to ensure fair competition in a safe setting.

Our team offers just-for-fun social activities including holiday celebrations and end of the season festivities to bring the team together.

### Values of Competitive Swimming

**Swimming has no bench sitters.** Competitive swimming is a sport in which athletes participate in individual events to the best of their ability, while also having the benefit of a team environment.

**Swimming is healthy.** Injuries are few and mild. The sport has been shown time and time again to be the best sport for over-all conditioning of the body. Swimming provides cardiovascular fitness, muscular fitness, and increased flexibility.

**Swimming provides self-discipline.** No one can make a person swim. All swimmers must develop an inner sense of discipline to devote themselves to the sport.

**Swimming is a direct reward system.** In swimming, the harder you work, the greater your reward. The time clock is an objective judge of the result. There are no judges with subjective scores, no dependence on the efforts of others; only you and the clock evaluate your effort.

**Swimming teaches the relationship between team and individual.** Neither team nor individual can exist and prosper in swimming without the other. Swimming teaches people to work with others.

**Swimming teaches organization.** Swimmers have to organize their day to fit in all the life activities they want. Because of their improved organizational skills, swimmers are frequently better students when they are training and competing.

**Swimming teaches people how to win and lose with grace, as well as to help them develop a personal philosophy that will make them long-term successes in life.** Swimmers learn to evaluate their efforts, set goals, and achieve. They develop an athlete's mind that says, "I can control my life, and the results of it. If it is to be, it's up to me."

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### Team Loyalty

We feel that the sport of swimming is an excellent way for families to come together. In addition, we feel that we offer programming to fit the needs of swimmers of all ages and ability levels. As such, it is the expectation of our team that if one swimmer in an individual household swims for the DOCS team, ALL swimmers in that household would also be members of the DOCS team.

It is further expected that during the September through March Age Group season, members of DOCS will practice exclusively at DOCS-organized practice times, with the exception of High School swim teams, and that all individuals who practice with the DOCS team will be registered with ISI as DOCS members.

If circumstances within the family are such that you are unable to comply with this policy, you must obtain special permission from the Head Coach to continue swimming for DOCS. The team reserves the right to accept or dismiss members who do not comply with this policy.

If you feel that DOCS is not the right program for you, we encourage you to discuss your concerns with the Head Coach. If you decide that you would need to discontinue your membership with DOCS, the Head Coach will help to initiate the process of obtaining a refund based on the amount of time remaining in the season.

### Organization of Practice

To ensure quality instruction during practice, we will be utilizing the following basic structure by age groups as listed below. Exceptions to this, based on ability and performance, are as follows: if your swimmer is in the 9 & 10 age group and has one "A" time they can swim with the 11 & up practice. If your swimmer is in the 11 & 12 age group and does not have two "A" times they can swim with the 10 & under practice. **\*\* See the DOCS website for practice times.**

### Team Communication

The best source of information about team events is the DOCS website: [www.ydocs.org](http://www.ydocs.org)

We have a file box that will have a file folder for each family on the swim team. Any handouts, meet results and awards, and other pertinent information will be placed in these "mailboxes." Please be sure to check the box periodically.

The coaches will also have folders in the box. An excellent way to get information to coaches is to leave a note in their mailbox. You may also send them email at: [coaches@ydocs.org](mailto:coaches@ydocs.org)

Weekly newsletters will be distributed via email. Paper copies will also be available to pick up at each site on the first practice of the week.

"YES/NO" Sheets are very important to the coaches. These sheets indicate which meets you are planning to attend. Any changes must be communicated to the coach by the deadlines required. Watch the newsletter for due dates.

The coaches are available by appointment to talk to anyone who may have a concern. **It is unfair to the team to discuss an individual swimmer's "opportunity" or concern with a coach during practice.** You may leave a note in the Head Coach's mail box and he will contact you to set-up a timely appointment with the appropriate coaches.

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### Team Equipment

All DOCS team members will receive one team t-shirt and one latex team cap with their program fee. Team suits must be purchased individually.

The recommended equipment for each swimmer, regardless of age, is: practice suits, team suit, team cap, and 2 pair of goggles.

**ALL TEAM MEMBERS CHOOSING TO SWIM AT MEETS MUST WEAR THE TEAM SUIT AND CAP.**

During practice, pull buoys and kickboards may be utilized in some instances, but they will be provided by the team.

Additional team apparel will be for sale throughout the year. See our apparel order forms on the website. Print the forms, fill them out, and turn in with payment to the Treasurer.

### Team Participation Guidelines

For participants to be eligible to swim on the DOCS swim team they must be able to swim a minimum of one length of the pool (25 yards) unassisted, using any competitive stroke. For swimmers who cannot complete this requirement, we offer pre-team practice. Please see a coach for more information.

*All payments must be submitted by deadlines on registration sheet.*

*Escrow accounts must be kept current to be allowed participation in meets.*

*Escrow accounts will be updated for each family after meets.*

*Swimmers not current on payments will not be allowed to practice or swim in meets.*

We believe that swimming is a direct reward system...the harder you work, the greater the reward. We realize that many swimmers are also involved in other activities or sports. Each swimmer must evaluate the level of dedication they wish to put into the sport, knowing what to expect as a result. The following may be helpful in discussing this with your swimmer:

- For swimmers in the younger age groups (10 & under), or for new swimmers, up to 2 days of practice each week will be sufficient to see improvement in stroke development.
- For the older swimmers (11 & up), if your goal is to swim for “exercise” or for “safety,” then you may find that 1-2 days of practice per week will be enough to help you learn excellent swim techniques and enjoy the activity of recreational swimming.
- If your goal is to compete at swim meets and improve individual swim times over the course of the season, you will likely see improvement if you practice 3 – 4 days per week.
- If your goal is to be a highly competitive swimmer in your age group, then we recommend attending practice up to 5 days per week. It may also benefit you to include individual conditioning, outside of the regularly scheduled practice. The coaches can work with you to develop a routine to fit your individual needs.

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### **Meet Escrow Accounts**

Meet Escrow Accounts are established by families wishing to participate in swim meets. Currently we collect \$75 to start the season. In order for DOCS to enter our team/ swimmers into meets we have to meet entry deadlines. These deadlines are typically 2 weeks prior to the event. These funds are used strictly for entering swimmers in events and relays, paying ISI surcharges, and coaches' fees.

***Escrow accounts must be kept current to be allowed participation in meets.***

Escrow accounts will be updated after each swim meet. Your account will show charges for each swimmer for each swim meet. Any swimmer showing a \$0 balance or owing money will not be entered in the next swim meet event. Anyone wanting to be added to a meet must pay into their escrow account before they can be added to the meet.

For each coach that attends a meet, he/she is paid from escrow accounts of swimmers that participate in the meet. The amount paid to each coach is:

**ISI** meets – flat rate of \$5 per meet session

**YMCA** meets – flat rate of \$6 per day

### **Meet Rosters and Relays**

Meet rosters and relays are generated and submitted to the host swim team by the coaches. Relays will be posted at practice and added to our website the day after meet entries have been submitted. The relays are not negotiable by the swimmers or parents. The relays are subject to change at the last minute due to illness or other extenuating circumstances.

Meet expectations will be discussed with the swimmers and also be available in print format.

**YMCA Illini District Meet-** This meet is for all Y Team members that have swum in 3 Y meets throughout the duration of the season. We want to take as many swimmers as possible. Typically 1 gender swims in the morning on Sat and the other in the afternoon session in a preliminary format. The second day of Districts is finals; only the top 8 swimmers will compete in each event. You can qualify for the IL/MO YMCA Area Champs meet by time at the district meet in prelims.

**YMCA Nationals-** YMCA Team Members that are age 12 and up have the opportunity to qualify for the YMCA National swim meet. DOCS will provide a National team t-shirt and team cap. YMCA National qualifier may also qualify for a Team Dealer swim suit discount. \*\*This discount is 1 per swimmer each calendar year and is subject to change due to the rate offered from the team dealer and TYR.

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### Swim Meets

Swim meets are a great family experience. They're a place where the whole family can spend time together.

Listed below are some very in-depth guidelines geared to help you through your first couple of swim meets. It may seem a little overwhelming, but we tried to be as specific and as detailed as we possibly could. If you have any questions, please ask your coach.

*Swimmers on a YMCA program scholarship:* Due to the cost that comes with attending meets, it is highly recommended that swimmers on scholarship attend a number of meets equal to the percentage of scholarship they have received.

#### WHAT TO TAKE TO A SWIM MEET

- Team suit, team cap, and 2 pair of goggles
- Drinks – Water is the best, but Hi-C, fruit juice, and sports drinks, i.e. Gatorade, will also work
- Three or four towels
- Something to sit on such as a sleeping bag or blanket for swimmers
- Parents are allowed by most of the host teams to set up folding chairs
- Sweat suit, T-shirt, parka, extra change of dry clothes to go home in
- Games – travel games, books, cards, anything to pass the time between events
- Food is usually available at the meets, but it is recommended to bring your own nutritious snacks. Good ideas include cereal, hard-boiled eggs, bagels, pasta salad, veggies, and crackers.

#### BEFORE THE MEET STARTS

1. Arrive at the pool at least 15 minutes before the scheduled warm-up time begins. This time will be listed in the meet information handed out to all swimmers and also in the team newsletter.
2. Upon arrival, find a place to put your swimmer's blankets, swim bags and/or sleeping bags. The team usually sits in one place together, so look for some familiar faces.
3. At an ISI meet you'll need to find the check-in place. Usually, parents are not allowed on deck so this may be a responsibility of your swimmer or your swimmer's coach. Make sure your swimmer checks in with his or her coach! Check for special posted instructions in the check-in area.
  - Usually one will need to circle the swimmer's name or "#" before each swimmer's name, in each event he or she is swimming, that day. If this is not done, the swimmer will not be allowed to swim that event. Check-in is required so that the people running the meet know who is actually at the meet. After check-in, the meet administrators "seed" the swimmers into heats. Heat and lane assignments will be posted, so be sure your swimmer knows where to look!
  - Sometimes the meet is "pre-seeded" and no check-in is required. You and your swimmer can find heat and lane assignments by purchasing a program.
4. Once "checked in", write or have the swimmers write each event-number on his or her hand in ink. This helps him/her remember what events he/she is swimming and what event number to listen or watch for.

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5. Your swimmer now gets his/her cap and goggles and reports to the pool and/or coach for warm-up instructions. It is very important for all swimmers to warm-up with the team. A swimmer's body is just like a car on a cold day-he/she needs to get the engine going and warmed-up before he/she can go all out.
6. After warm-up, your swimmer will go back to the area where his/her team is sitting and wait there until his first event is called. This is a good time to make sure he/she goes to the bathroom if necessary, gets a drink, or just gets settled in.
7. The meet will usually start about 10-15 minutes after warm-ups are over.
8. According to USA Swimming rules (because of insurance purposes), parents are not allowed on deck unless they are serving in an official capacity. Similarly, all questions concerning meet results, an officiating call, or the conduct of a meet, should be referred to a coach. He or she in turn, will pursue the matter through the proper channels.
9. Psyche Sheet or Heat Sheets. A psyche sheet is usually available for sale in the lobby or concession area of the pool. It lists all swimmers in each event in order of "seed time". When the team entry is sent in, each swimmer and his/her previous best time (up to the date that the entry was submitted) in that event is listed. If the swimmer is swimming an event for the first time, he/she will be entered as a "no-time" or "NT". A "no-time" swimmer will most likely swim in one of the first heats of the event. A Heat sheet may be available close to the start of the meet that lists the actual heat and lane a swimmer will be competing in.

### **WHEN THE MEET STARTS**

1. It is important for any swimmer to know what event numbers he/she is swimming (again, why they should have the numbers on their hand). He/she may swim right away after warm-up or they may have to wait awhile.
2. Most meets are computerized. There are generally two ways a swimmer gets to his/her lane:
  - A swimmer usually reports directly to his/her assigned lane for competition a number of heats before he/she actually swims. Check with your swimmer's coach for specific instructions.
  - In some novice meets, a swimmer's event number will be called, usually over the loudspeaker, and he/she will be asked to report to the "clerk of course" or "bullpen". Swimmers should report with his/her cap and goggle.
    - Generally, girls' events are odd-numbered and boys events are even-numbered. Example: "Event #26, 10-Under Boys, 50 freestyle, report to Clerk of Course." The "Clerk of Course" or "bullpen" area is usually where all swimmers checked in before the warm-up.
    - The clerk will usually line up all the swimmers and take them down to the pool in correct order. You can expect at least 4-8 heats of each event.
3. The swimmer swims his or her race.
4. After each swim:
  - The swimmer should ask for his/her unofficial time recorded on the stopwatches by the timers (people behind the blocks at each lane).

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- The swimmer should then go immediately to his or her coach. The coach will discuss the swim with each swimmer. Some coaches may wish to talk with the swimmer before her recovery swim.
5. Generally, the coach follows these guidelines when discussing swims:
    - Positive comments or praise
    - Suggestions for improvement
    - Positive comments
  6. Things you, as a parent, can do after each swim:
    - Tell him how great he did! The coaching staff will be sure to discuss stroke technique with him. You need to tell him how proud you are and what a great job he did.
    - Take him back to the team area and relax.
    - This is another good time to check out the bathrooms, get a drink or something light to eat.
  7. The swimmer now waits until his next event is called and starts the procedure again. When a swimmer has completed all of her events she and her parents get to go home. Make sure, however, you, as a parent, check with the coach before leaving to make sure your swimmer is not included on a relay. It is not fair to other swimmers who may have stayed to swim on a relay where your swimmer is expected to be a member and she is not there.
  8. Results are usually posted somewhere in the facility. Awards are often gathered for a team and given to the coach at the end of the meet. The coach will give the awards to the swimmers at a later time.

### **Competition 101**

The technical rules of swimming are designed to provide fair and equitable conditions of competition and to promote uniformity in the sport. Each swimming stroke has specific rules designed to ensure that no swimmer gets an unfair competitive advantage over another swimmer.

Competition pools may be short course (25 yards or 25 meters), or long course (50 meters). The international standard (as used in the Olympics) is 50 meters. World records are accomplished in 25 and 50 meter pools. USA Swimming maintains records for 25 yard, 25 meter and 50 meter pools.

Participants compete in different age groups and meets depending on their achievement level and how old they are on the first day of the meet. Traditionally recognized age groups are 10 and under, 11-12, 13-14, 15-16, 17-18. Many local meets feature 8 and under, single age groups, or senior events. Team practice groups are usually determined by age and/or ability.

Officials are present at all competitions to enforce the technical rules of swimming so the competition is fair and equitable. Officials attend clinics, pass a written test and work meets before being certified. All parents are encouraged to get involved with some form of officiating.

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### **The Four Strokes**

The four competitive swimming strokes are freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke and butterfly. The combination of all four strokes is called individual medley.

**FREESTYLE** - In freestyle events, the competitor may swim any stroke. The stroke most commonly used is sometimes called the crawl, which is characterized by the alternate stroking of the arms over the surface of the water surface and an alternating (up-and-down) flutter kick.

**BACKSTROKE** – The backstroke consists of an alternating motion of the arms with a flutter kick while on the back. On turns, swimmers may rotate to the stomach and perform a flip turn and some part of the swimmer must touch the wall. The swimmer must finish on the back.

**BREASTSTROKE** - The breaststroke requires simultaneous movements of the arms on the same horizontal plane. The hands are pressed out from in front of the breast in a heart shaped pattern and recovered under or on the surface of the water. The kick is a simultaneous somewhat circular motion similar to the action of a frog. On turns and at the finish, the swimmer must touch the wall with both hands simultaneously at, above or below the water surface.

**BUTTERFLY** - Some consider the butterfly to be the most beautiful of the strokes. It features a simultaneous recovery of the arms over the water combined with an undulating dolphin kick. In the kick, the swimmer must keep both legs together and may not flutter, scissors or use the breaststroke kick. Both hands must touch the wall simultaneously on the turns and the finish.

The individual medley, commonly referred to as the IM, features all four strokes. In the IM, the swimmer begins with the butterfly, then changes after one-fourth of the race to backstroke, then breaststroke and finally freestyle.

### **General Tips for Swimmers**

#### **Be on Time**

Whether arriving in a car pool or individually, be sure to arrive early. Remember to allow time to fix your cap and goggles before practice begins.

#### **Use of the Facilities**

We are guests of the facilities we use. Conduct yourselves as such before and after practice, in the hallways and locker rooms. We will be a respected group only as long as we respect others.

#### **Dress**

Your success is dependent upon your staying healthy. Take care to dry off well, especially your hair, and to dress appropriately for the weather. Wear a stocking cap in cold weather.

#### **Teammates**

This is your team; make it enjoyable for everyone on the team at practice and at swim meets. Offer encouragement to at least one other swimmer each day. A “good job” or “nice set” helps make the practice time shorter. Also, it is important to respect each other during practice, allowing faster swimmers to lead the lane. In between sets, it is important to rest appropriately and listen for the coaches’ instruction. Please do not interfere with your teammates’ practice!

#### **"Opportunities"**

If you have any questions or "opportunities", talk to one of the coaches. The coaches will do their best to work out a solution with you.

### Successful Practice Guidelines

- When a coach asks for the team's attention, *give it to him or her*.
- No degrading, abusive, or profane language will be tolerated.
- Support your teammates, do not belittle or abuse them.
- Be proud of the level you are swimming at, or work to change it. Your ability level is yours. Others should not be expected to meet your standards or hold back for you.
- Let other swimmers swim their practice without distracting them.
- Tell the coach if you are having a problem with another swimmer.
- Bring a note from your parents for lateness, early dismissal, injury or any other reason for doing less than normal for you.
- Save dunking, splashing, and other roughhousing for game time.
- Be ready to swim when you come on deck. Have your suit, cap, goggles, and water bottle in a place ready to go. Jewelry should not be worn. **NO CHEWING GUM.**
- Leave on the interval sendoff.
- Swim continuously for the distance specified.
- Keep your feet off the bottom of the pool, unless it's part of the instructions.
- Treat every start, turn, and finish as an opportunity to improve your skill.
- Allow someone who catches you to go ahead of you without incident.
- Do not leave belongings in the locker rooms. Bring all of them onto the pool deck.
- Washroom breaks, except for emergency, should be before or after practice.

### For the Parents

Parents are the backbone of the organization. They drive the swimmers to workouts and meets; they work at home meets and away meets and are ideally encouraging their swimmers and **constantly** giving positive support.

#### *Parents and Coaches*

We want your swimmer to establish a constructive relationship with his/her coach concerning swimming matters as soon as possible. A good relationship between coach and swimmer produces the best results for both the swimmer and the team. When parents interfere with a coach's opinion as to how the swimmer should swim or train, it can cause considerable confusion for the swimmer. **If you have an "opportunity" or concern involving your swimmer, please contact the Head Coach.** The coaches are available before and after meets and practices and will gladly make time to speak with you. The coaches are the absolute authority in matters of swimming schedules, swimmer development, and participation in meets. Please use: [coaches@ydocs.org](mailto:coaches@ydocs.org)

A coach and a program can be supported or ruined in the eyes of a swimmer by his parent. Never complain about the number of hours your child puts in each day at practice. Rather, make him feel that it is worthwhile, and if this is something that he wants to do, you will help. Anything worthwhile requires sacrifice and hard work.

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### ***Parents and Swimmers***

Always offer encouragement; never lecture your child about a poor race. You will make them feel worse than they already do. Let your swimmer discuss the race with their coach and then do your job, that of giving support and encouragement to do a better job next time.

New and younger swimmers are the most likely to experience inconsistent performances. This inconsistency can be frustrating for parents, coaches, and the swimmer alike. Parents and coaches must be patient and permit these youngsters to learn to love the sport. When a younger or newer swimmer first joins DOCS/PEOY, there may be a brief period in which he appears to slow down. This is a result of the added concentration on stroke technique, but this will soon lead to much faster swims for the individual.

Even the best swimmer will have meets where they do not swim their best times. These plateaus are a normal part of swim training. Over the course of a season, times should improve. Please be supportive when your swimmer has a “poor” meet. Older swimmers may have only two or three meets a year for which they will be rested, tapered, and at their peak performance level.

### **"Opportunities" or Concerns**

A traditional swim team communication gap can occur if a parent feels uncomfortable in discussing a disagreement over coaching philosophy directly with the coach. Not approaching the coach often creates new problems. Listed below are some suggestions for how a parent should raise difficult issues with a coach:

- Try to keep in mind that you and the coach both have the best interests of your child at heart. If you trust that the coach's goals match yours, even though his approach may be different, you are more likely to enjoy good rapport and a constructive dialogue.
- Keep in mind that the coach must balance your perspective of what is best for your child with the needs of the team. On occasion, an individual child's interest may need to be subordinate to the interests of the group, but in the long term the benefits of membership in the group compensate for the occasional short-term inconvenience.
- If another parent uses you as a sounding board for complaints about a coach's performance or policies, listen empathetically, but encourage the other parent to speak directly to the coach. Any problem or concern can best be solved at the source.

### **Communication with the Coach**

Any issue or concern can best be solved at the source. Coaches are available by appointment to talk to anyone who may have a concern. It is unfair to the team to discuss an individual swimmer's issue or concern with a coach during practice. You may leave a note in the head coach's mailbox and he/she will contact you to set-up a timely appointment with the appropriate coaches.

We have a file box that will have a file folder for every family on the swim team. Coaches will place all handouts, meet information, and other pertinent information in these file folders. Please be sure to check the file box periodically. The coaches will also have folders in the box. An excellent way to get information to the coaches is to put it in their folders.

Meet entry forms will be distributed to the swimmers via the mail box. If your child is planning on attending a meet, they must fill out the form and return it to the Head Coaches file folder.

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Entry forms are usually due weeks in advance. Please pay attention to due dates in the latest newsletter.

We publish periodic handouts. These hand outs contain a variety of items including all upcoming events.