

# Gaston Gator Handbook

**2024-2025**

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# Gaston Gators

Dear Parents and Swimmers:

Welcome to the 2024-2025 season of the Gaston Gators. The elected officers and appointed members of your board are already well into the planning of the new season, and they are always receptive to new ideas. Feel free to express your opinion and ask questions.

Swimmers get ready for a year of wet and wonderful swims. Head Coach Greg Armstrong, Head Senior Coach Trey Taylor, Head Age Group Coach Barbara Franklin, and Coach Caro Lamarque are ready to take on the challenge of improving your times. They have close to 100 years of experience between them and look forward to challenging you and celebrating with you.

Parents, remember that you are responsible for the success of this team. You are the force behind the changes and improvements. Also, each parent is needed to provide voluntary manpower at our two Gator sponsored meets, as well as assisting with putting the bubble up and taking it down.

Please contact head coach Greg Armstrong if you have any concerns you wish the board to address. The operation of the Gators can be complex involving salaries, contracts, bookkeeping, planning, and problem solving. We invite and request your expertise.

In this handbook you will find information for parents and swimmers that is not found in any other source. Please save it and use it as a reference.

Good luck to all swimmers!

Sincerely,  
Your Gaston Gators Board

# **Gaston Gators**

## **Group Descriptions**

### **Gator Tots**

Gator Tots average ages 5-8. These swimmers concentrate on learning competitive strokes. Practice is offered two days per week for a total of 1 hour 20 minutes.

### **Lil' Gators**

Lil' Gators average ages 5-8. Concentrated instruction is geared towards developing competitive swimming skills. These swimmers swim in certain meets for which they are qualified. Practice is offered three days per week for a total of 2.25 hours.

### **Gator Bits**

Gator Bits are generally made up of swimmers ages 9-12; however, coach's consideration extends the age of this group up or down. This group concentrates on turns, starts, strokes and endurance. Practice is offered four days per week for a total of 3.25 hours.

### **Gatorines**

Gatorines on average are ages 9-12. However, coach's consideration extends the age of this group up or down. Concentration is on strokes, turns, and start techniques plus racing skills and developing the swimmer as a competitor. This group practices up to four days per week for a total of 5.5 hours.

### **Juniors**

Junior's ages are typically 11 and up but the coach will consider other younger qualified swimmers. Concentration is on all aspects of swimming. These swimmers practice 5 days per week for a total of 7.5 hours.

### **Seniors**

Seniors range from 12-18 years old for this most advanced group of swimmers. Workouts are advanced and designed for the seasoned swimmer. Seniors practice 6 days per week for a total of 12 hours. Other swim times may be available for extra practices during the year according to pool availability.

# Gaston Gator FAQ's

## Swim Meet Entries & Fees

Meet registration is done through the Gator team website ([www.gastongators.com](http://www.gastongators.com)). The Team Unify platform that hosts our website also handles our Meet Entries/Fees. When a meet is posted it will be available on the Home Page under "Team Events", all families will also receive an email prompting sign up for Meets. Meet fees are assessed at the end of the Meet and will require a Card or ACH account on file with the Gators. Fee amounts can be seen when signing up for an event.

## Team Swim Suits, Caps and Apparel

Team Suits are available online through Finis and Joyln, the links can be found under the "Member Resources" Tab on the Gator website.

Gator Swim Caps can be purchased through the Coaches during any Practice or Swim Meet (\$15)

- Team Suits and Caps are REQUIRED for all Swim Meets, these help Coaches to identify swimmers in the water and build team spirit.

## Questions and Concerns

- (1) Check the **Gator Website** at [www.gastongators.com](http://www.gastongators.com) The Gator Website has practice and meet schedules, pictures, directions to out of town swim meets, meet registration forms, information and more.
- (2) Talk with one of the coaches before or after practice.
- (3) Call or Email a board member if you have questions they can help with.

## Volunteering; We need your help! Each parent is required to work at both of our Gator sponsored meets. We can't do it without you!

In addition, we encourage and request your help throughout the year. Please let us know your areas of expertise and interests. Each year we need board members, volunteers to help with decorations at banquets, swim wear order coordinator, volunteers for special projects such as Bubble Up and Down, Team Picture Day, Ad Sales Coordinator, etc. Call or Email one of the board members or coaches to volunteer. If you are asked to help, please do so! The board members and coaches can't do it all by themselves.

## Why Do We Have to Pay U. S. Swimming Fees?

The Gators are part of U. S. Swimming. They sanction our meets, provide time standards, officials to run the meets, rules and regulations. They also provide our insurance to cover coaches, swimmers, pools, liability, etc.

## Where Are Our Swim Meets?

All over the Piedmont. We are a member of the Blue Ridge Swim League, and we stretch from Asheville to Charlotte. Many meets are in Charlotte, Huntersville, Hickory, Asheville, Kings Mtn., etc. We may attend occasional meets in adjoining states. These "road trips" are always fun and build team spirit and unity!

## Coach's Corner

### Topics of Importance from Coach Greg Armstrong

It is the desire of the Gaston Gators to set high goals and standards for its team members. Remember as you travel to different swim meets that you are, first and foremost, a representative of the Gators. Your behavior should always reflect a respect for your membership in this team. We have established, over the years, a reputation of fair play and exemplary conduct. You are now a part of that reputation. Remember to uphold it.

Goals for team members:

1. Be a leader. Do not be influenced by anyone to do anything that will jeopardize your chances of becoming the best possible swimmer. Followers rarely become champions of anything.
2. Do your best in everything — your studies, your practice, your conduct. If you fail in any way, you will at least know that you put forth your best effort.
3. Morale is an important part of our team. Be loyal to the team. Treat your teammates with respect. Take pride, not jealousy, in the achievements of your teammates. Be enthusiastic about workouts. Listen to the criticism of your coach. The mature athlete welcomes constructive criticism from his or her coach.
4. Decide that nothing short of injury or illness will keep you from being an outstanding swimmer. Attend practice regularly. Remember that every time you miss a practice, one of your competitors is almost surely in a pool somewhere working very hard.
5. Be mentally alert at every practice. Think about every stroke, every start, and every turn. Every improvement you can make in practice will make your meet performance better only *if* it is a part of your mind and your routine.
6. Be enthusiastic about life. Each minute that passes is gone forever. Live right, get plenty of rest, and eat healthy foods. Choose friends who respect your dedication to swimming. Most of all, appreciate your parents as your greatest cheerleaders and boosters.

# Notes to Parents

From the Gator Coaching Staff

*"Success is much more than a matter of achieving the right things; it is also a matter of being the right person. We must have something to hold up for our young, as our parents did for us, and say, this is success, Child. Go after it."*

As a member of the Gaston Gators your child will learn to accept victory and defeat. He or she will receive recognition for accomplishments, travel to out-of-town competitions, and meet many new friends from other places. Your swimmer will learn to make choices and sacrifices, to organize and plan, and to be honest with themselves. He or she will develop higher self-esteem and greater independence.

Much of the success of your swimmer, however, will depend upon you, the parent. Practices can interfere with dinner schedules and many other things. Your willingness to rearrange and sacrifice will be rewarded in the improved performance of your swimmer. Your child needs your support. Sometimes that little push to encourage them to go to practice when they are reluctant is just what they needed.

We want your swimmer to lead a normal life. Swimming should be many things to your child but not everything. Gaston Gators have always led normal lives. They have friends on the team and friends from other parts of their lives. They swim hard, study hard, play hard.

As your child's coaches, we will provide the incentives and count on you as parents to provide the support.

Greg Armstrong - Head Coach

Barbara Franklin

Trey Taylor

Caro Lamarque

## The Ten Commandments For Parents of Athletic Children

Reprinted from The Young Athlete by Bill Burgess

1. Make sure your child knows that — win or lose, scared or heroic — you love them, appreciate their efforts, and are not disappointed in them. This will allow them to do their best without a fear of failure. Be the person in their life they can look to for positive enforcement.
2. Try your best to be completely honest about your child's athletic ability, their competitive attitude, their sportsmanship and their actual skill level.
3. Be helpful but **don't coach them** on the way to the pool or on the way back or at breakfast, and so on. It's tough not to do, but it's a lot tougher for the child to be inundated with advice, pep talks and often critical instruction.
4. Teach them to enjoy the thrill of competition, to be "out there trying," to be working to improve their swimming skills and attitudes. Help them to develop the feel for competing, for trying hard, for having fun.
5. Try not to re-live your athletic life through your child in a way that creates pressure; you lost as well as won. You were frightened, you backed off at times, and you were not always heroic. Don't pressure your child because of your pride. Athletic children need their parents so you must not withdraw. Just remember there is a thinking, feeling, and sensitive free spirit out there in that uniform who needs a lot of understanding, especially when their world turns bad. If they are comfortable with you — win or lose ~ they're on their way to maximum achievement and enjoyment.
6. Don't compete with the coach. If the coach becomes an authority figure, it will run from enchantment to disenchantment, etc., with your athlete.
7. Don't compare the skill, courage, or attitudes of your child with other members of the team, at least within their hearing.
8. Get to know the coach so that you can be assured that their philosophy, attitudes, ethics, and knowledge are such that you are happy to have your child under their leadership.
9. Always remember that children tend to exaggerate, both when praised and when criticized. Temper your reaction and investigate before over-reacting.
10. Make a point of understanding courage, and the fact that it is relative. Some of us can climb mountains but are afraid to fight; some of us will fight but turn to jelly if a bee approaches. Everyone is frightened in certain situations. Explain that courage is not the absence of fear but a means of doing something despite fear of discomfort.

The job of the parent of an athletic child is a tough one, and it takes a lot of effort to do it well. It is worth all the effort when you hear your child say, "My parents really helped, and I was lucky in this respect."

# Meet Day from A-Z

## Meet Entry

Approximately three to four weeks before a swim meet, an entries will be available on the Gator web site, and you will receive an email notifying you of its availability. This form is self-explanatory and will be completed by you and your child, then verified by the child's coach for the day or days your child will be attending the meet. Any assistance needed with entries should be directed to your child's coach. These entries have a deadline that must be met, so please comply. Meet fees can be seen during entry and will be assessed upon completion of the meet.

## Away Meet Lodging

At some point before each meet you will receive information about area hotels that may be offering special rates if the meet is in a distant location. Since the team has been going to the same areas for many years, you would be advised to ask Coaches or Veteran Swim Parents about your choice of hotels.

## Packing

You should plan to take your child's favorite healthy snacks and beverages if possible. The coaches recommend fruit, cereals, water and sports drinks — no chips, candy bars, or sodas. Diet is very important. Clothing should generally be light for spectators and heavy for swimmers except in summer outdoor meets. The team parkas will be especially useful for all year purposes, both at meets and at practice. There is usually a place to purchase goggles or suits if your swimmer has a total memory breakdown, but do not count on being able to buy anything.

## Dates of Meets

The coaches will provide information dates and locations of swim meets as soon as possible. You should count on one swim meet per month. Most meets are within driving distances for day trips if you prefer not to stay overnight. The Blue Ridge Swim League meets will generally be one-day meets that are close to-home. If you are trying to plan a trip, party, occasion and need future dates from the coach, just ask.



## Awards and Patches

Everyone likes to receive recognition for a job well done. Gators are no different from everyone else in this respect. Watching his or her time fall is one reward for a swimmer. Awards and patches are another form of recognition.

### Awards

At the end of each season, the Gaston Gators traditionally have a banquet at which awards are presented to ALL SWIMMERS. On these plaques are several indicators of the swimmers season activity. The number of meets in which the swimmer swam is listed. (In order to receive an award at the banquets a swimmer must swim in 3 short course meets and 1 long course meet.) The number of best times and the number of races are listed, giving the swimmer a chance to see what his or her percentage of best times is. And finally, the highest achievement in each stroke in terms of A times (from the U.S. Swimming Times Standards) is listed. At a glance each swimmer can determine his or her performance over a particular season by looking at that season's plaque.

### Patches

Patches are awarded to swimmers during the season for reaching the "B," "BB," "A," "AA," "AAA," and "AAAA" times in each stroke as those times are attained. These are given only the first time the time is reached and are usually sewn or fastened on the swimmers bag.

Any errors in awards should be reported to the coaches soon after the banquets.

## **Gaston Gators Warm-up, Warm-Down Policy (Effective 8/1/2024)**

Outside of regular training at the maximum amount offered to your group one of the most important factors to success in a Swim Meet are Warm-Ups. There are mountains of data and years of evidence to support the importance of this process that we use to prepare a swimmer to be at their best during a meet. That being said; we need more “buy in” from our families and our swimmers to be ON TIME and PREPARED for Warm-Ups. We publish warm-up times in multiple locations as well as emailing them out before every meet. There is no excuse for a swimmer to be late for warm-ups outside of a mitigating factor (unexpected traffic etc..) A swimmer should be On Deck, and In Their Suit 10 minutes before any published warm-up time. Failure to be on time for warm up is the first step towards swimmers not being successful. We have had a significant problem with swimmers not being on time, and not being prepared for warmups this season. Even more troublesome is that when a swimmer is late they have not even bothered to apologize to their Coach, or their teammates for throwing the warm-up cycle off. This cannot continue if we want to grow and succeed as a team. In addition we need to make steps as a team to Warm-Down after every swim. Again, every study and every available piece of data show the importance of doing this to help recover for the next race or next day. If there is available space there is no excuse for not warming down. Sneaking away from coaches or trying to hide after a race will not be tolerated.

Going forward here are the Coaching Staff's expectations for swimmers at all meets, and what steps we will take to enforce this.

- Arrive **10 minutes before** scheduled warm-up time
- **Be in your suit before you arrive** or arrive more than 10 minutes early if getting suited up at the pool
- **Be behind the blocks 5 minutes before warm-ups start** with your **Cap** and **Goggles Ready**
- **Listen to the Warm-Up** and swim till completion or until a Coach stops you
- **Warm-Down at least the amount that you just completed** (if a warm-down pool is available). I.E. if you swam a 100Fr do a minimum of a 100 Warm-Down. It is recommended that you warm down double.

**1st Offense** - Verbal Warning to Swimmer

**2nd Offense** - Email to Parents

**3rd Offense** - Removal from Relay Eligibility

**4th Offense** - Meeting with Parent, Swimmer, and Coaches

\*Please note, a more serious offense will result in an escalation of the steps above\*