

USA Athlete Membership Explained

As we head back to the pool for the fall and start to ramp up for competition, we thought it very important to explain below the different types of meets at which our team will participate. We also felt it important to share some information on USA Swimming and a video explaining how meet sign up will work using Team Unify if you have not used it before.

Swim Meet Overview

NKAT swimmers compete in West Michigan Swim League (WMSL) meets and in USA Swimming (USAS) meets.

The WMSL is a developmental league and is intended for novice and young age groupers (4-13 years). Seasons are short (about 8-10 weeks) and are conducted in Winter (Dec-early Feb and June – July). Swimmers compete in invitational meets, dual meets, and a season ending championship meets. Swimmers in our Cubs 1 & 2, Level I, II and III are well-suited to swim in the WMSL. Events are offered by age-groups during the regular and championship season. This league does not require a USA membership to compete.

NKAT is also a United States Swimming (USAS) club, and our swimmer can compete in competitions governed by USA Swimming, our National Sport Governing Body (NGO). Meets are held from Oct-March and May – July. Events are offered by age-groups during the regular and championship season. Swimmers compete in sanctioned meets and invitationals throughout the season. USAS Membership is required to attend sanctioned USA Swim meets. Swimmer belonging to Level III – Senior Group are enrolled USAS after registering with NKATs, swimmers in Cubs – Level II are offered the option to enroll.

You can read more about swim meets in our Swim Meet FAQ

What is USA Swimming

USA Swimming is the National Governing Body for the sport of swimming in the United States. United States Swimming (USAS) promotes the culture of swimming by creating safe and healthy opportunities for athletes and coaches of all backgrounds to participate and advance in the sport through clubs, events, and education.

Membership is comprised of swimmers of every age and ability, all the way up to the Olympic Team, as well as coaches, officials, club directors, and meet volunteers. USA Swimming requires and provides training for coaches, officials, and meet directors. It establishes best practices for club development and operations, swim meets, and competitions. This higher training requirement and standards for operation translates to more advantages for athletes and greater experience.

Why membership?

USA Swimming is responsible providing resources to support athletes, coaches, and clubs, and to administer competitive swimming in accordance with the Ted Stevens Olympic & Amateur Sports Act.

Most of our regular season meets are USA Swimming events. These meets are the next step in the progression from the WMSL or developmental level. Membership with USA Swimming is required to participate in these meets.

USA Swimming certifies the officials, coaches, and meet directors as well as the actual swimming competitions. USA Swimming provides training standards for practices and rules and regulations for competitions according to FINA, the world or international swimming federation.

USA Swimming Risk Management and the US Center for Safe Sport help to proactively guide the NGO, local swim committees (Michigan Swimming) and member clubs on matters of member safety, injury prevention, and conduct. USA Members are insured during events, practices, and competitions by USA Swimming.

Full or Premium Membership

This 12-month membership allows kids (and families) to unlock all the premium benefits including unlimited swim meets, Splash magazine four times per year, team recognition programs, scholastic recognition programs, access to camps and so much more!

Whether kids want to just get fit or go fast, this membership opens the opportunity into meets ranging from local, state, regional, national, and international competition.

What is a Flex Membership?

The 12-month Flex Swim membership is designed for our youngest kids who want to experience swimming on the team. The Flex Swim membership will make entering the sport easier and encourage swimmers to stay involved in life's other activities. USA Swimming recognizes the notion and health benefits of multi-sport play and participation, both physical and mental, and encourages "sport sampling"

The Flex Swim membership offers membership a rate of \$20 to create an entry-level experience in the sport and sample some of the great benefits of USA Swimming Membership.

Two USA Options Available for NKAT swimmers:

Full - Available for all groups - this is automatic for Level III – Senior groups.

Cost: \$87 for a calendar year

USAS membership is for a calendar year. **A club applying for swimmer membership on or after September 1 will receive membership valid through December 31 of the following year.*

Who: Available to any swimmer who wants to compete in USA Swimming events

Meets: Unlimited USA swim meets / Sanctioned Meets (meets at which only USA members may participate) and all WMSL meets and invitationals

Flex – Available for Cubs – Level II

Cost: \$20 for a calendar year

USAS Flex membership is for a calendar year. A club applying for swimmer membership on or after September 1 will receive membership valid through December 31 of the following year.

Who: Available to those 18 and under

Meets: May participate in two USA sanctioned non-championship meets per membership year

Benefit: Good for athletes to try out USA meets.

Swimmers receive the benefits of membership in USA Swimming such as the ability to compete in meets (two meets per year), access to USA Swimming's digital personalized member account Deck Pass, insurance coverage, education materials and more.

May bump up to a full membership for difference in price.

How to Register for USAS (Annual or Flex)

Please respond click here using [google form](#) or nkatbilling@gmail.com and confirm your request for membership or you may enter the GTBY Fall Invitational or Boo Bash to enroll.

Swim Meet FAQs

Meet Entry and Event Selection

When an event is ready for release, the sign up will be found on our Event & Calendar Page <https://www.teamunify.com/team/minkat/page/calendar#/team-events/upcoming>. Parents can use the drop-down to click on Team Events & Meets and scroll down to Current & Upcoming Events to read about the meet and event information.

For USA Swim meets and WMSL Invitationals, swimmers can choose which races they will swim using the event sign up on Team Unify. If you do not know what events to select for your swimmer, your coach will help select. If you want the coach to select events, please note this in the comment section found on the event sign up page, along with any other pertinent information even if it's as short as "we're new to USA swimming meets, please select events".

Watch this short [tutorial](#) to help walk you through meet registration.

USA Meets & Invitationals have Fees

With USA Swimming meets and Approved WMSL Invitationals, fees are assigned to the events you select to swim and there will be a minimal surcharge assessed by Michigan Swimming per athlete. This

surcharge is an administrative fee where swimmer times are verified and submitted to a national data base. Events are usually \$5.00 each and the one-time surcharge is usually \$1.00 per swimmer. PLEASE READ ALL INFORMATION FOR EACH EVENT. Each event may have a different surcharge.

Here is how it works!

To use the example above: Sally Swimmer enters the meet and selects 4 events.

- Those 4 events cost \$5.00 each for a total of \$20.00.
- Add the \$1.00 surcharge and the total is \$21.00.
- This is the total cost of this meet for Sally Swimmer.
- Please note there may be additional surcharges. Always read the meet event information for details as all meets are different.

Once a meet is submitted to Michigan Swimming, the fees are non-refundable, and the meet fees are the responsibility of the swimmer/family. Meet fees will be invoiced to your member account within 7 days of the meet and will appear in your next statement.

Other Surcharges:

- Due to the present pandemic, deep cleaning and special custodial services may be required to keep facilities safe. Meet hosts will include notification of facility fees or covid fees in the published meet announcements.
- There may also be a session fee to cover the cost of meet expenses which were not included in registration fees.
- **There are no event fees assigned to individual events at our Intrasquad (Mini) meets and WMSL Dual Meets.**

Types of Swim Meets

- **USA Swimming Sanctioned Meet:** These meets are only for Registered USA swimmers. Results will count towards USA Swimming (USAS) qualifying times and be forwarded to the national swimming data base (SWIMS) where times will be stored, and points are earned for teams based on data submitted.

Fees are assessed to enter to these meets (per event) and a Michigan Swimming surcharge will apply. Parents will declare their intent for their swimmer to participate in these meets by signing up using Team Unify. Swimmers may be permitted to select individual events with coach approval, at other times the coach selects. Relays are always selected by coaches. Generally, these meets are multi-team events.

Swimmers may elect to swim in multiple events in the same day. Some larger meets are more than one day. But swimmers do not have to swim both days. Swimmers generally place by age groups (10 & under; 11-12; 13-14; and Open for 15+) when reporting results. Some NCST swimmers may have not participated in these types of meets in the past (EGRA Winter Washout, Big Red Challenge), but are welcome to begin.

During the pandemic, a limited number of these type of meets are being offered in Michigan. These meets require strong modifications to the format due to the present MDHHS Gathering and Facemask order which limits facility occupancy.

- **USA Swimming Approved Meet (including WMSL Invitationals);** Open to all swimmers, Results will count towards USA and WMSL qualifying times, per event fee and Michigan Swimming surcharge will apply. Our team has participated in these types of meets in the past (GR Rock the Blocks, Zeeland Classic, WMSL A Championship Meets). Generally multi-team events. Parents will declare their intent for their swimmer to participate in these meets by signing up using Team Unify. Swimmers may be permitted to select individual events with coach approval, relays are selected by coaches.

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- **WMSL Dual Meets:** WMSL stands for West Michigan Swim League. This is a developmental swim league conducted by 14 teams from the West Michigan Area. Dual meets are open to all swimmers. Swims count towards WMSL qualifying times only. There is no additional event fee to participate. Dual meets are where one team hosts another team at their pool and swims a specific number of events in designated age groups. Our team has participated in these types of meets previously. Coaches write the entire line up, however parents will need to declare their swimmer's intent to participate in the meet using Team Unify.

During the regular dual meet season, we will swim 2-4 teams. There is no official WMSL season this winter and no Championship meets will be held due to the pandemic.

- **Intra-squad or Mini- Meets:** This type of meet is typically open to all swimmers. In this format the team may compete against itself (intrasquad) or swim events with the intention to compete virtually. Results will not count towards WMSL or USA qualifying times. No additional fee to participate. Coaches write the entire line up, however parents will still declare their intent to participate in the meet using Team Unify. These are intended to be practice meets to get new swimmers accustomed to the blocks, relay exchanges, a started, the timing system and what it is like to race at a controlled competition in a home venue.

Meet sign up during COVID-19 Pandemic

While we are excited to give our swimmers back another piece of normalcy, it has been quite a while since some have done a meet entry and for some it is your first time! We also know that meet announcements and turnaround is quick right now. Michigan Swimming has moved quickly to approve meets but guidelines still require COVID-19 modifications for competitions. Because we are still in a pandemic, entries have a short window should things change again (what else is new, right?). However, should you have any trouble navigating meet sign up, please don't hesitate to reach out. We are here to help!