



Starting a Masters Swim Program

Steps for setting up your Masters swim program



Table of Contents

Introduction to U.S. Masters Swimming	4
Introduction.....	4
Masters Swim Clubs	4
National Office.....	4
The Purpose of U.S. Masters Swimming.....	5
Mission statement	5
Vision Statement.....	5
Goals and Objectives.....	5
Core Objectives.....	5
Benefits of an Adult Aquatic Fitness Program.....	6
Benefits of a USMS Registered Club.....	7
Fitness / participation programs	7
Club and Coach Resources.....	7
Recognition and Awards.....	7
USMS Gold Club Designation	7
Insurance.....	7
Grants.....	7
USMS Membership Benefits.....	8
Fitness / participation programs opportunities	8
Exclusive information and content.....	8
Competition programs.....	8
Recognition and awards	9
Education	9
Insurance.....	9
Volunteerism	9
Partner discounts	9
Starting an Aquatics Swim Program.....	10
Common traits of successful clubs.....	10
Determine interest and identify target audience	10
Facility usage	10
Determine practice times	11
Club membership expenses	11
Establish credibility	12

Starting a Masters Swim Program – A Guide for Success

Develop good relationships	12
Provide recognition	12
Program activities.....	13
Local swim, bike, or run shop support.....	13
Advertising.....	13
Masters Club and Member Registration	14
Club Operations and Administration.....	14
Getting started.....	15
The Club as a Business	17
Basic accounting.....	17
Tax-Exempt Status for Non-Profit Organizations.....	19
Safety and Risk Management.....	22
Insurance.....	22
Meeting the Needs of All Swimmers.....	24
Every type of swimmer is important	24
Fitness activities.....	25
Benefits and recognition	26
Publicity and Marketing Ideas.....	28
Newsletter and club website.....	28
Sharing club activities	28
Social media.....	29
Club Finder on the USMS website	29
USMS Gold Club Designation	29
Publicity materials	29
Stroke clinics	30
Meetings.....	30
As the club grows.....	30
Where Do I Belong?	32
LMSC Boundaries.....	32
Where to Find Help	36

Introduction to U.S. Masters Swimming

Introduction

Over 60,000 adults nationwide, ages 18 to over 100, plus many more in countries around the world, participate in Masters swimming. Masters swimming is an adult aquatic fitness program for individuals who have chosen aquatics as their means of exercise for a healthier lifestyle. U.S. Masters Swimming (USMS) programs do not discriminate between levels of ability or the individual goals of its members. There are many different types of swimmers. Some are highly competitive, others swim for fun or fitness. Many prefer open water events or triathlons.

USMS Clubs

Clubs are groups of Masters swimmers organized for the purpose of training for health, fitness, and competition or for the pure enjoyment of swimming with a group of like-minded individuals. Members may swim in one or more pool facilities, usually under the direction of a coach.

National Office

U.S. Masters Swimming (USMS) is the national governing body for all adult swimming programs in the United States. The purpose of this publication is to give prospective coaches and clubs an idea of how to get started, grow and be successful, and to aid established clubs in finding information and ideas that will result in a fresh and creative approach to running their organizations.

We hope this booklet will serve you well, and we look forward to your continued participation in U.S. Masters Swimming.

The Purpose of U.S. Masters Swimming

Mission statement

- Empower adults to improve their lives through swimming.

Vision Statement

- Foster a nationwide adult swimming community through lifelong fitness, competition, and education.

Values

- Fitness
- Camaraderie
- Inclusion
- Learning
- Excellence
- Competition
- Fairness

Benefits of an Adult Aquatic Fitness Program

The benefits of providing an adult aquatic program in regard to a facility are as varied as the swimmers that participate in the program itself. Pools are a big draw to membership. Studies have shown that even if a prospective member does not plan on using the pool for lap swimming, they would be more likely to join a gym that has a pool versus one without a pool. Very much like a hotel. Do guests ever go swimming or even use a hotel pool? Rarely. But almost every hotel has a pool, because for a guest, it sets a standard for the services that the hotel may provide.

It is prudent that facilities now find ways to pay for the cost of maintaining the very thing that brought the membership in. To simply leave the pool empty...costs money. Swim lessons, summer swim team, water aerobics, and open lap swimming tend to use the pool more heavily in the warmer months. An organized, coach led adult swim program provides year-round use of the pool.

Members of swim programs have numerous reasons for joining, including:

- On deck coaching
- Structured workout regimen
- Motivation
- Camaraderie and fun
- Stroke technique evaluation
- Learn the latest swimming skills
- Family social activities
- Access to pools

Questionnaire answers of personal benefits gained from swimming:

- It makes me happy
- I feel healthier
- It will allow me to live longer
- It improves my personal relationships
- Swimming gives me more energy
- I perform better at work
- I'm able to channel my competitiveness constructively
- It gives me confidence socially
- It has helped me overcome personal fears

Benefits of a USMS Registered Club

Becoming a USMS registered club and joining the group of 1500+ USMS clubs and workout groups around the country has its rewards and benefits.

Fitness / participation programs

- Opportunity to participate in [Try Masters Swimming](#), an initiative to introduce the many benefits of swimming and U.S. Masters Swimming membership to people who want to learn to swim, swim for fitness, or compete in swimming
- Opportunity to host [USMS fitness events](#) for your swimmers.
- Opportunity to be included in promotions, initiatives, and contests for clubs

Club and Coach Resources

- Access to USMS [club and coach](#) department for questions and guidance
- A [FREE USMS banner](#) or co-branded club banner to let everyone know that there's a quality swim program at your facility. You can also take them with you to swim meets and events to show your club pride.
- [Logo wear and USMS swag](#) for your program
- [USMS brochures](#) to promote your program
- Your club listing included in [Club Finder](#), the USMS searchable database for Masters club locations (Clubs also have an option to opt out of this feature)

Recognition and Awards

- [USMS Gold Club](#)
- [USMS Club of the Year](#)

USMS Gold Club Designation

USMS Gold Clubs set the standard for providing members with the best Masters swimming experience possible. [Gold Clubs](#) are identified in the USMS Club Finder with priority placement and insignia to let members and potential members know that your club is ready to help them meet their swimming goals. Other benefits include additional marketing support from the National Office, discounts on education courses, and full insurance coverage for USMS approved activities.

Insurance

USMS provides [General Liability \(and Excess Liability\) coverage](#) and certificates of insurance for USMS practices, meets, and approved activities as long as everyone swimming in those activities are a registered member of USMS and there is a registered member of USMS with line of sight able to observe all participants. Detailed information regarding this insurance can be found on the [USMS website](#).

Grants

USMS in partnership with the [USA-Swimming Foundation provides grants](#) and resources for adult learn-to-swim programs. If swim lessons for adults are part of your club's programming, you might be eligible for support.

USMS Membership Benefits

Becoming a member of USMS and joining the group of 60,000+ members around the country has its rewards and benefits. Along with the comradery and social aspects of a Masters program come many wonderful things from USMS that only members receive.

Fitness / participation programs opportunities

- [The USMS Virtual Challenges](#)– annual events designed for swimmers who want to focus on achievement, improving fitness levels, participation, and fun
- [The USMS 1-Hour, USMS 5K/10K and USMS 3000/6000 Virtual Championships](#), can be swum in your local pool then results may be submitted for tracking and recognition
- Fitness programs such as [USMS Go the Distance](#)
- Attend [USMS stroke development clinics](#)
- Monthly promotions, initiatives, and contests

Exclusive information and content

- Subscription to the bi-monthly member publication [SWIMMER magazine](#)
- Subscription to the monthly member newsletter STREAMLINES
- Exclusive access to the [Workout Library](#) which features 1,000's of workouts written by USMS-certified coaches in seven different categories
- Opportunity to connect with others on the [USMS Community](#) platform
- Fitness tracking of multiple activities in your personalized [Fitness Log \(FLOG\)](#)

Competition programs

- Compete in any of the more than 400 USMS-sanctioned regional and local pool and open water [events](#)
- [USMS Spring Nationals and USMS Summer Nationals](#)
- USMS [Open Water Nationals](#)
- Access to coached workout programs in your area
- Access to more than 1,000 Masters clubs and workout groups that provide coached workouts across the country, for when you are traveling

Recognition and awards

- Tracking and archiving your event results on [USMS.org](https://www.usms.org)
- Recognition and awards if you achieve [Top 10](#) or [All American](#) status
- Record personal training achievements

Education

- Masters [Coach Certification](#) (Levels 1-2-3-4)
- [Adult Learn-to-Swim](#) instructor certification
- Stroke development clinics

Insurance

- Coverage while participating in USMS insured activities, including \$25,000 of excess [accident insurance](#) for medical and dental, \$5,000 of accidental death insurance, up to \$650 of temporary disability insurance, and [liability insurance](#) for USMS practices, meets, and approved activities

Volunteerism

- Opportunity to serve in a leadership position within your [Local Masters Swim Committee \(LMSC\)](#) and [U.S. Masters Swimming committees](#)
- [USMS Awards](#) recognize the extraordinary efforts of our volunteers. USMS is grateful to the hundreds of volunteers who give their time, talent and resources.

Partner discounts

- Exclusive [partner](#) discounts

Starting an Aquatics Swim Program

The following is a checklist for starting a quality Masters swim program. There are a number of important things to consider and decide upon prior to starting a program. Finding a location (pool), hiring a coach, building a budget and recruiting program members requires planning and organization.

Common traits of successful clubs

- Stable pool situation
- Coaching leadership
- Supportive volunteer group
- Maintain a standard of excellence
- Program available to everyone
- A well thought out financial base

Determine interest and identify target audience

- Adults 18 years and older
- Parents of age-group swimmers are often former swimmers
- Local triathletes
- Post-college, former high school and age group swimmers in the area
- Fitness and/or lap swimmers

Facility usage

Finding a pool location for your program is one of the first things you need to do. Researching your area for pools and then working with the facility to get a Masters program started requires planning. You want to be able to find a pool that has time available for your program practice times as well as be supportive and excited about having the program. A Masters program can bring a wealth of opportunities to a facility including revenue, volunteerism, facility awareness and community service.

- Private sports clubs
- Public facilities
- Colleges and universities
- YMCA and JCC
- Retirement communities
- Military bases
- School district pools

Determine practice times

Having a variety of practice times for your members can greatly influence the number of members who will participate and their overall happiness. Only having one practice time a day is limiting and if that time is not convenient for a majority of your swimmers, your program will quickly dwindle in size. Negotiating for lane space at your facility can be difficult, but in the end worth the effort. Here are some practice times that work well for Masters swimmers.

5:30 a.m. to 7:00 a.m.

- Ideal for most working adults
- Be flexible as many may need to jump out of practice early

7:00 a.m. to 8:30 a.m.

- Can be good for working adults depending on their work schedule
- An alternative for those who don't want to get up for the 5:30 a.m. practice

8:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.

- Preferred by mothers and fathers after getting kids to school
- Preferred by swimmers who are retired
- Good option for those who work from home or have flex work hours

11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

- Used when pool located near workplace
- A favorite of triathletes

6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

- Works for adults who may have no young children
- After work so swimmers have time to get to practice
- Another popular workout time for triathletes

7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

- Allows dinner with family
- Few commute issues
- Preserves daylight hours for run and/or bike workouts prior to swim practice

Club membership expenses

- Base fees on pool rentals, lifeguard fees, salaries for coaches, other expenses
- [USMS club registration](#) fees are currently \$70.00 for the calendar year
- When possible, barter services for pool rentals and lifeguards

- Club services (administrative costs, billing, office costs, etc.)
- Website fees
- Activities (social functions and their costs)
- Club marketing and promotions

Establish credibility

- Create a name for the club
- Hire great coaches and encourage them to continue their education
- Have USMS certified coaches on staff
- Tailor workouts for all Masters swimmers, including competitive, fitness, triathletes, and open water enthusiasts
- Be on time for practice and look professional
- Take an interest in each swimmer, determining their goals and motivations
- Develop a website, and use social media
- Establish a brand (image, logo, and mission statement)
- Teach adults to swim with a lesson program
- Adopt the USMS ALTS curriculum and have USMS certified ALTS instructors on staff

Develop good relationships

- Give members ownership of the program by delegating responsibilities
- Have team parties and social events
- Include significant others in group activities
- Fundraising and sponsorship opportunities

Provide recognition

- Create a newsletter (see Constantcontact.com)
- Create a team website (see [Club Assistant](#) or [Team Unify](#))
- Create a team [Facebook](#) page
- Use [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#)
- Have a bulletin board in pool areas
- Seek out local newspaper support and recognition
- Be on deck in front of peers
- Have and attend team events

Program activities

- Select meets, open water events and triathlons in your area
- Support local events with participants and/or volunteers
- Host stroke clinics
- Participate in community service projects
- Support other swimming activities (age group, high school or local college swim meets)

Local swim, bike, or run shop support

- Partnership provides a win-win for both parties and increases member benefits
- Ask for local merchant discounts for your team members (exchange for supporting their store)
- Include them in all your activities and brochures, newsletters, etc.

Advertising

- Word of mouth
- Flyers, brochures, posters posted at workout facility (see Vistaprint.com)
- Club Finder and USMS website
- Attend local triathlons and distribute brochures
- Attend local triathlon, bike, and run club meetings in your area and distribute brochures
- Provide T-shirts and caps with your logo
- Provide a polo shirt with your logo for your coaches
- Seek out local newspaper support and recognition
- Social media – Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Nextdoor

Masters Club and Member Registration

There are over 1,000 Masters swim clubs and workout groups registered with U.S. Masters Swimming through [Local Masters Swimming Committees](#) (see page 31- Where do I belong?). You can register for membership online at [usms.org](#) by clicking on the “[Register-Renew-Update a Club](#)” button in the large footer of [usms.org](#) and following the simple instructions.

As part of the [club application process](#), new clubs must choose a name and a two to five-letter abbreviation. Clubs re-register each year beginning October 1st. You can register a club [online](#).

During the club registration process, it is very important to complete all information including the detailed boxes with your club name, club detail, club contact, coach/instructor, location and gold club questions. [Complete club registration procedures can be found in this link](#) and in the appendix of this guide.

A club must be registered before individual swimmers may register with that club. Individuals may renew membership beginning November 1st, so it is important to have every club membership registered or renewed before this time.

The cost of membership, in effect through the calendar year, includes a national fee plus an LMSC fee. Only registered U.S. Masters Swimming members may participate in USMS sanctioned events and only members of the same club may officially swim together on relays at USMS sanctioned events.

Swimmers register or renew with a Masters club by registering online at [usms.org](#) and clicking on the “[Join USMS](#)” button.

U.S. Masters Swimming membership is annual. New members may sign up as early as July 1 for an 18-month membership with membership active through the following December 31. You may renew your membership as early as November 1 with membership active through the December 31 of the following year.

Club Operations and Administration

Having a club does require leadership roles as well as other positions to make it successful. Determining a plan of how you want your club to operate and what’s needed to make it run successfully is important.

Club contact

The U.S. Masters Swimming [Club Membership Application](#) requests the name and address of the club contact serving as the contact person. Each club is entitled to representation at the LMSC meetings, including the annual meeting where LMSC officers are elected and budgets are approved.

Other positions important to club management

Other positions can be important within your club. Depending on your structure and club size, you may want to adopt the following positions:

- President

- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Newsletter Editor / Webmaster

Remaining duties

Here are some other important responsibilities depending on club size, ambitions, and goals:

- Activities/Social Director
- Publicity Chair
- Records Keeper
- Relay Coordinator
- Coaching Coordinator
- Travel Captain
- Promotions/Marketing Chair
- Awards Chair
- Representative to attend the LMSC meetings

Getting started

Tasks of a new club can include:

- Creating by-laws – Each state has unique laws. Please consult a professional or use a legal service such as [legalzoom](#)
- Outlining offices and committee responsibilities
- Electing officers and appointing committee chairs
- Naming the club or team
- [Creating a budget](#)
- Agreeing on program fees
- [Hiring a coach](#)
- Securing a pool
- Determining practice times
- Opening a checking account
- Registering with USMS
- Developing a program registration format (individual program registration can be arranged on your own or with a third-party vendor such as [Club Assistant](#) or [Team Unify](#))

Starting a Masters Swim Program – A Guide for Success

- Deciding on methods and frequency of communication with members: E-newsletter, bulletin board, telephone tree, announcements at practice.
- [Apply for tax-exempt status](#)
- Develop a [Code of Conduct](#)

The Club as a Business

Operating your club as a business is important for a successful club. Following good business practices can keep order and accountability within the club structure and its operations.

Basic accounting

The checking account

Avoid fees, online access limit to data inquiry, minimum two authorized signors; Treasurer, Finance Chair, recommend President

Paying bills

- Manual checks: Carbonless 2-part checks; Computer checks: 1 check per page, bottom half tear off check copy. Pay only on documentation, use spending authority limit
- On-line payments from your bank
- Reimbursing members, use expense form AND paid receipts, verify authorization to spend

Filing, record keeping, retention

- Staple check copy to documents or write check number on top of stapled documents.
- File check number order.
- Audit trail, ability to trace summary data on your financial statement to each and every single transaction and for disbursements must clearly indicate who approved.
- Required to keep 3 years after due date of tax return or 2 years after filing tax return, whichever is longer; prefer 7 years.
- Bank reconciliation – do monthly

Deposits

- Restrictively endorse checks “For Deposit Only” upon receipt from members or mail.
- Have checks made payable to your club, not an individual
- Carbonless 2-part deposit slips list every deposit item and copy every check.
- Retain bank deposit verification.
- Staple deposit slip copy, bank verification and check copies together. File by date.
- Consider accepting credit cards for payment and monthly dues

- Consider accepting payments via [PayPal](#) or [Venmo](#)
- Itemize accounting break out for every deposit. Use manual or electronic spreadsheet.
- Determine who is responsible for deposits

Bad checks

Decide: who is collection enforcer; do you charge for returned checks (does your bank charge fees for returned checks), NSF (Not Sufficient Funds) checks can be re-deposited once. Some banks do this automatically. Returned checks with holes punched in the account number cannot be re-deposited.

Call 1st: call check maker.

Collection secret, you can call the bank upon which the check is drawn against, ask for accounting, give them the account number, check number and amount of check and inquire whether there are sufficient funds to cover the check. Just because there are funds when you call does not mean they will be there when you re-deposit the check.

Segregation of duties

Checks and balances. One person should not be in control of multiple transactions, reporting and review functions. If one person has to be in control of multiple transactions, then there must be oversight and control functions that mitigate the procedures.

Individual receiving checks in mail should not be check signor.

Bank reconciliation

MUST be performed by someone who does not sign checks or prepare deposits. Note: if secondary check signor does not typically have access to checks and does not typically sign checks, that person can perform the bank reconciliation

Financial statement

Should be performed by someone other than primary check signor.

Periodic review

An independent person should perform disbursements and deposits and related documents.

Chart of accounts (COA)

What is it? A listing of all accounts.

How to use it? For management purposes as distinguished from tax accounting classifications.

Major categories:

- Assets
- Revenues

- Liabilities
- Expenses
- Equity

Accounting tips

Purchase QuickBooks software or a similar accounting program.

Do not go crazy and set up a line item for every transaction type. Consider whether there is a management need to track expense.

Reporting

Annual financial report to club membership, complete Income Statement and Balance Sheet.

Preparing an annual budget is highly recommended.

Interim communication to members is simply good business practice. Web site and/or newsletters. Same for annual financial report and budget.

Budgeting

Historical results a good basis for developing budget items and estimating budget needs. However, do not exclusively rely upon history.

Spreadsheets, such as Microsoft Excel, highly recommended. Useful to evaluate historical data compared to current budget and [proposed budget](#).

Tax-Exempt Status for Non-Profit Organizations

Federal recognition

[Application for recognition of exemption](#) from federal tax can be made under section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue code. Taxes will not have to be paid on membership dues, but this will not exempt any income that is not related to your tax-exempt purpose. It is recommended that a CPA, tax consultant, or lawyer who has specific knowledge of tax-exempt nonprofit organizations, be consulted to determine under which subsection your group should file:

- 501(c)(3) Educational, religious, etc. - includes Amateur Sports.
- 501(c)(4) Civic Leagues, Social Welfare Organizations - Promotion of community welfare; charitable, educational or recreational.
- 501(c)(7) Social and Recreation Clubs.

There are some distinct advantages to each category. The following are pros and cons, found through experience, by some Masters organizations. For specifics, contact a tax specialist as described above.

- The 501(c)(3) classification is the only one in which a gift is tax deductible to the donor. Children's organizations, and those devoted entirely to competitive sports, have the best chance of attaining this classification.

- The 501(c)(4) classification requires the organization to show that their program will benefit the community in some way, such as health benefits through swimming. Income generated by your tax-exempt purpose, i.e., to promote swimming for physical fitness and competition, is not taxed.
- The 501(c)(7) status allows a group to function as a club for the benefit of its own members. Non-member income is taxable. There may be a limit to the amount of money that can be received from sources other than members. For example, income from non-members, interest on money in an account, or income from participants at an event your club is hosting may not be tax-exempt. It is possible that hosting a large meet or open water event could jeopardize the tax-exempt status.

The following forms can be obtained from area IRS Distribution Centers, or by calling 1-800-829-3676 or going to the IRS website irs.gov. The choice of the correct exemption application is important to ensure timely processing.

SS-4 Application for Employer Identification Number - The EIN is required for every tax-exempt organization.

1023 or 1024 Application for Recognition of Exemption needs:

- Copy of club constitution, or other organizing document, and bylaws
- Full description of club purposes and activities
- Financial data that includes statement of receipts and expenditures if the club is already established, or proposed budget if newly organized
- Description of any fund-raising activities

8718 User Fee for Exempt Organization Determination Letter Request.

Once approved as exempt, a club is obligated to report its financial situation annually to the IRS by submitting Form 990 Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax or Form 990EZ Short Form Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax. A 990T Form may also be required if there is unrelated income on which tax must be paid.

IRS Publication 557 details the above procedures. While the above process may seem cumbersome, it is very simple once you have downloaded all the forms. It is not necessary to have an attorney complete the application, the IRS makes it very simple and is available through the 800-number listed above.

State recognition

Achieving a Federal Tax-Exempt status does not automatically qualify your club for a State Tax-Exempt status. A club must pursue this separately, completing the proper state forms, and filing them with the required fee.

Approval in some states of tax-exempt status allows tax-exempt purchases. If an organization is reselling anything, and the state has a sales tax, a resale permit should be acquired so that sales tax is paid on all money collected, not just the cost of the item at the time of purchase. Applications, forms, and helpful publications specific to each state are available through sales tax agencies listed in the telephone book government

pages. Certain documentation is necessary and, depending on the individual state, may include:

- Federal Employer Identification Number (EIN)
- Statement of activities
- Statement of receipts and expenditures, or proposed budget
- Statement of assets and liabilities

Safety and Risk Management

Insurance

As a benefit of membership, the [U.S. Masters Swimming insurance program](#), funded by a portion of the national registration fee, provides secondary accident insurance for its registered members. In addition, liability coverage is provided for U.S. Masters Swimming members, member clubs, facilities where practices are held, LMSC officials, and volunteers acting on behalf of, and with the approval of, U.S. Masters Swimming.

If the club is using the U.S. Masters Swimming Liability Insurance for its liability coverage, everyone participating in the scheduled practice must be registered with U.S. Masters Swimming and the scheduled practice taking place must be supervised by a registered U.S. Masters Swimming member who remains on deck. For scheduled open water practices, a registered USMS member must maintain line of sight of the athletes in the water either from the shoreline or on top of the water or in a non-motorized boat such as a kayak or paddle board.

Insured activities include the following:

- Sanctioned meets where all participants are U.S. Masters Swimming members.
- Swimming practices, where all participants are members of U.S. Masters Swimming and are under the supervision of a U.S. Masters Swimming member.
- Learn-to-swim programs where all participants are members of U.S. Masters Swimming and under the direct supervision of a U.S. Masters Swimming member.
- Swimming tryouts under active supervision of a U.S. Masters Swimming member. The tryout period may not last for more than 30 consecutive calendar days for any one individual and a [trial membership form](#) must be completed.
- Pre-approved social events where alcoholic beverages are not sold.
- Pre-approved fund-raising activities.

If a U.S. Masters Swimming member club is conducting an activity that is not listed above as an insured activity, it is imperative that the club obtain additional insurance coverage protection.

Ensuring a safe training environment

- Safety is the responsibility of everyone.

Check the area your swimmers will be using BEFORE they arrive

- Use common sense. Check the water chemistry

Keep your swimmers safe WHILE they are in the water

- Enter the water feet first
- Sharing lanes, explain circle swimming

- Use of training equipment

Keep your swimmers safe AFTER they leave the pool deck

- Non-slip floors
- Lighting
- Benches
- Parking lot

Accidents happen

- Emergency Action Plan (EAP)
- Know the physical address of the facility Emergency Equipment (Backboards, AED)
- Report of occurrence: Fill out and submit the [Incident Report Form](#)

Thunder and lightning

The YMCA of the USA, the American Red Cross, National Athletic Trainers Association, and other organizations that offer certification agree that the best policy for thunder and lightning is to vacate the pool. This policy is based on the recommendations of the National Lightning Safety Institute and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Both organizations recommend staying indoors, refraining from phone use, and bathing during thunder and lightning.

Safety considerations

Swimming safety requires commitment and perseverance on the part of each member. To assure effectiveness and compliance, the swim coach, the swimmer, and the local public entity or pool owner must address safety considerations where practices and events are held.

Complete information can be found in the [Guide to Operations](#).

Meeting the Needs of All Swimmers

Every type of swimmer is important

Within the swimming ranks, there are those who are non-competitive, those who are training for a triathlon, and those who are training for swim meets or open water races. Because of different workout times and locations (some larger teams have multiple coaches, facilities, and workout times), some swimmers may never see each other. The conundrum for the coach is how to make every swimmer feel included.

Adult learn-to-swim “ALTS”

More than a third of adults in the United States can't swim the length of a pool, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), which puts them at risk of being one of the 10 people who drown every day in this country. [U.S. Masters Swimming's Adult Learn-to-Swim initiative](#) is on the front lines to change this statistic. With education, outreach, and financial support, USMS is making more adults safer around water.

Social swimmers

The social swimmers' needs are as diverse as the members themselves. From meet attendance to potluck socials to zany awards, a coach should encourage swimmers to become involved. Although the workout is the baseline for Masters swimming, there are a host of activities in which a swimmer can be involved.

Fitness swimmers

U.S. Masters Swimming offers fitness programs (i.e. [USMS fitness events](#), [USMS Go the Distance](#)), Try Masters Swimming; competitive events (i.e. [swim meets](#)); learning experiences (i.e. clinics); and multisport opportunities (i.e. [open water swims](#)). The coach must be aware of other opportunities for the swimmers and aid in goal setting. As a Masters coach, you will want to give each swimmer a reason to keep coming back.

Competitive swimmers

USMS and its local affiliates offers local, regional and national swim meets. All ability levels are welcome at most meets including [USMS national championship pool events](#). Open water enthusiasts may take advantage of the over 50 USMS sanctioned [open water events](#) held throughout the U.S.A. Other events such as [The USMS 1-Hour, USMS 5K/10K and USMS 3000/6000 Virtual Championships](#), may be swum at your local pool.

Something for everyone

Adult swimmers bring all their experiences, goals, opinions, emotions, and external influences to the pool. Adults will not always jump when you tell them, nor will they attend every practice. As a coach, your job will be to not get disgruntled or discouraged. As a Masters coach you will need to be flexible, knowledgeable, organized, and empathetic.

Strive to be the best

Coaching, like every profession, is enhanced by continuing to learn from others, being aware of current trends or advancements in the sport and becoming more educated in your field. Take advantage of the numerous local, regional, and national certification and coach education courses offered each year.

- [Coach certification courses](#)
- USMS “how-to” [Clinic course for coaches](#)
- [Adult Learn-to-Swim instructor certification course](#)
- [USMS Coach Mentorship program](#)
- [USMS National Coaches Clinic \(NCC\)](#)
- [USMS Annual Meeting](#)
- ASCA Convention
- Red Cross
- Local swim clinics

Fitness activities

Fitness swimmers are an integral part of U. S. Masters Swimming. A variety of activities can provide them and other club members with a reason for participation and interaction. These activities build cohesion and provide for continued interest in the program. Some suggestions for activities follow:

Practices and workouts

- Fun relays - inner tube, T-shirt, etc.
- Potluck relays - draw names of relay members
- Super Set Day - include swims of various lengths and difficulty
- Stroke of the Month
- Birthday sets
- Special holiday theme workouts
- **Social activities**
- Post-meet and after-practice dinners, pizza parties, red-eye breakfasts
- Midnight swim

Swim Meets

- Relay
- Sprints
- 1650 or other long-distance events

- Dual, triple, or quad meet with other clubs
- Novice or developmental meet, with 25 yard and fun events
- Less serious - nothing official, costume, theme, couples, special prizes

Clinics

- Stroke instruction
- Video recording
- Well-planned, carefully structured sessions
- Lectures, water instruction, video critique
- Handouts as summary of what was taught

Aerobic challenges

- Form distance clubs for 100/200/300 miles, etc.
- Create a pool log sheet and graph distances
- Take a mock journey to cross-country destinations
- Convert yardage into miles and plot progress on poolside map
- Recognize continuous swimming
- Participate in USMS [The USMS 1-Hour, USMS 5K/10K and USMS 3000/6000 Virtual Championships](#), [USMS Go the Distance](#) program and [Fitness Series Events](#)
- Complete specified distances in closest predicted time

Benefits and recognition

Benefits

- Availability of services and other complements to membership can increase the appeal of club affiliation
- Club directory containing names, addresses, and phone numbers of members
- Lists of meet schedules, merchandise, and complimentary items
- Listing of club records
- First meet T-shirts as a welcome gift for new members swimming in their first Masters competition.
- Awards for various competitive and fitness accomplishments
- Club logo or USMS branded caps and merchandise

Recognition

Recognition of individual achievement reinforces positive feelings. Awards, focusing on

specific or general performances or contributions, can be presented at meetings, social gatherings, or special awards banquets. Nominations, received by a pre-selected date and including a statement supporting the choice, might be solicited from the general membership through the newsletter with final selections made by an awards committee. Award categories might include:

- Fitness swimmer of the year or month, rookie of the year or month, Triathlete of the year or month, Inspirational teammate
- Non-stop swimming for beginners (20 min., 40 min., etc.), record breakers swimming a certain distance (100 miles, 200 miles) achievement
- Outstanding out-of-the-water contributor
- Spouse of the year
- Masters swimmer of the year award presented to the male and female swimmers who best exemplify the spirit of Masters swimming
- Competitor of the year to the swimmer who earns the most points at LMSC meets, zone meets, and/or nationals
- Outstanding competitor determined by a swimmer's [Top 10 placing](#)
- Humorous or spirit award
- Most improved

Ideas for awards

- Plaque or certificate
- Towel with club emblem
- Pin or mug
- T-shirt
- Patch or badge
- Monogrammed swim bag

Publicity and Marketing Ideas

Effective marketing helps attract swimmers to your club. Word-of-mouth is great, but you'll also want to use other marketing strategies to build membership and promote your club.

Newsletter and club website

The e-newsletter and website disseminate club information. They can also be tools for public relations and reaching potential new members. Content can include all aspects of club functioning from pure news to interest articles, written by club officers or submitted by swimmers. The variety of ideas is endless:

- Meet, clinic, and party announcements
- Calendar (meeting and meet dates, newsletter deadlines)
- Reports (meeting minutes, financial, meet results)
- Sample workouts, stroke drills and tips, favorite workouts, training techniques, tips for beginning Masters
- Photos and videos
- Notes from the chair, treasurer, coach, etc.
- Personal interest stories
- Medical/nutritional columns
- Recognitions (new members, birthdays, accomplishments)
- Cartoons, humorous essays, jokes, and poems
- Letters to the Editor
- Links to articles
- Lists of swimming books and videos
- Names and addresses of club and LMSC officers
- [Club finder](#) locations
- Recipes
- Link to [USMS.org](#) website
- Link to sponsor websites

Sharing club activities

- Paid advertisements can be sold to help defray website costs.
- Exchange newsletters with other clubs

- Send issues to the LMSC newsletter editor and to the editors of local newspapers. Leave printed copies at pool facilities.
- Maintain an email list of all club members, past and present
- Build and email list of prospective members

Social media

Use varied communications to reach different ages and backgrounds of possible future members.

- [Facebook](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [Yelp](#)
- [Nextdoor](#)
- [TikTok](#)

Club Finder on the USMS website

When you register your club with USMS it will populate on our Club Finder searchable database. You may choose to opt out of this feature. This is a resource for potential members to know more about your program including where and when you practice.

USMS Gold Club Designation

USMS Gold Clubs set the standard for providing members with the best Masters swimming experience possible. [Gold Clubs](#) are identified in the USMS Club Finder with priority placement and insignia to let members and potential members know that your club is ready to help them meet their swimming goals. Other benefits include additional marketing support from the National Office, discounts on education courses, and full insurance coverage for USMS approved activities.

Publicity materials

Distribute publicity materials to:

- Health clubs, gyms, YMCAs, and other pool facilities
- Park and recreation departments
- Doctor and physical therapy offices
- Triathlon clubs
- Booths, clinics, health fairs, corporate games
- USA Swimming parents
- Sporting goods stores

- Nutrition stores
- Corporate wellness programs
- Graduating high school and college swimmers
- Retirement communities
- Senior Game events

Stroke clinics

Available to members for free or a small fee. Swimmers are exposed to the value that a coach on the deck can provide. Be creative with new techniques and drills; underwater videotaping – enjoyed by all swimmers. Send a digital copy for their review later.

USMS Certified coaches and ALTS instructors can attend the USMS [Clinic Course for Coaches](#) to learn how to put on a stroke development clinic for your swimmers and to recruit new swimmers.

Meetings

Regular gatherings of members to review current operation and propose improvements, ensure consistency, and build a better club. Meetings can be small, involving initially a core assembly of organizers, and later the general membership, depending on goals and club size. They can be held informally after workouts or meets, in conjunction with socials, or they can be more structured, such as an annual meeting. Below are some suggestions for successful meetings:

- Obtain an abridged copy of Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised and follow this most widely accepted guide for fair and orderly meetings.
- Have an agenda, a clear plan of what is to be accomplished, and circulate it prior to the meeting. Publish a calendar of meeting dates, time, and location.

As the club grows

Once the club becomes established, the following considerations enhance the organization's depth and stability and build club identity and pride:

- Determine equipment and marketing resources needs beyond what is available at the practice facility
 1. Kickboards, pull buoys, hand paddles, snorkels and fins can be personal or pool property and are practical workout tools.
 2. Dry board and markers are useful for writing workouts and announcements.
 3. Stop watches, clipboards, pens, 3x5 cards, rubber bands, masking tape, etc., stored in a club bag are important meet items.
 4. A computer or a handheld device can be used to maintain registration lists, update records, write newsletters, and run meets.
- [Post a bulletin board](#) at the practice facility that includes

Starting a Masters Swim Program – A Guide for Success

- Information about your program
- Fun pictures of your members at practice events and social activities
- Types of workouts you offer
- Glossary of terms for workouts
- Lane etiquette
- Design a club logo
- [Order a FREE club banner](#) from USMS
- Inventory merchandise items such as team suits, sweats, caps, T-shirts, decals, bumper stickers, etc., for sale to members
- [Order USMS logo items](#)

Starting a Masters Swim Program – A Guide for Success

ADIRONDACK – The state of New York east and north of Oswego, Onondaga, Cortland, Broome, Sullivan, Orange, and Dutchess Counties.

ALASKA - The state of Alaska.

ALLEGHENY MOUNTAIN - The commonwealth of Pennsylvania west of Potter, Clinton, Center, Huntingdon, and Bedford Counties. In the state of West Virginia: the counties of Marshall, Brooke, Ohio, and Hancock. In the state of Ohio: the counties of Columbiana, Belmont, and Jefferson.

ARIZONA – The state of Arizona.

ARKANSAS – The state of Arkansas. In the state of Texas: The County of Bowie.

COLORADO - The state of Colorado and the state of Wyoming.

CONNECTICUT – The state of Connecticut.

DELAWARE VALLEY - The state of New Jersey south of Mercer and Monmouth Counties. The state of Delaware. In the state of Maryland: the county of Cecil. The commonwealth of Pennsylvania east of and including Potter, Clinton, Center, Huntingdon, and Bedford Counties.

FLORIDA – The state of Florida except the counties of Palm Beach, Broward, Dade, Monroe, and that part of Hendry County east of Route 833; and also excluding the counties of Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, Walton, Holmes, Washington, Bay, and that part of Calhoun and Jackson Counties west of the Apalachicola River.

FLORIDA GOLD COAST - In the state of Florida: the counties of Palm Beach, Broward, Dade, Monroe, and that part of Hendry County east of Route 833.

GEORGIA - The state of Georgia.

GULF - That part of the state of Texas bounded on the north by and including the counties of Shelby, Nacogdoches, Angelina, Houston, Leon, and Robertson; and on the west by and including the counties of Brazos, Grimes, Waller, Fort Bend, Wharton, Colorado, and Matagorda.

HAWAII - The state of Hawaii.

ILLINOIS - The state of Illinois except for the counties of St. Clair, Calhoun, Greene, Jackson, Jersey, Monroe, and Madison.

INDIANA – The state of Indiana except the counties of Floyd and Clark.

INLAND NORTHWEST – In the state of Washington the counties of Okanogan, Chelan, Douglas, Ferry, Stevens, Spokane, Lincoln, Grant, Kittitas, Asotin, Columbia, Yakima, Franklin, Adams, Whitman, Walla Walla, Garfield, Benton, Pend Oreille, and that portion of Klickitat County east of Highway 97 and including the City of Goldendale. In the state of Idaho: the counties of Bonner, Kootenai, Shoshone, Benewah, Latah, Lewis, Nez Perce, Idaho, Clearwater, and Boundary.

IOWA - The state of Iowa except the counties of Lyon, Osceola, Sioux, O'Brien, Plymouth, Cherokee, Woodbury, Ida, Monona, Crawford, Harrison, Shelby, Pottawattamie, Mills, Montgomery, Freemont, and Page.

KENTUCKY - The commonwealth of Kentucky except the counties of Campbell,

Starting a Masters Swim Program – A Guide for Success

Kenton, and Boone. In the state of Indiana: the counties of Floyd and Clark.

LAKE ERIE – In the state of Ohio the counties of Tuscarawas, Seneca, Crawford, Erie, Huron, Richland, Lorain, Ashland, Cuyahoga, Medina, Lake, Geauga, Portage, Stark, Ashtabula, Trumbull, Mahoning, Summit, and Wayne.

MARYLAND - The state of Maryland except the counties of Cecil, Montgomery, and Prince Georges.

METROPOLITAN – The state of New York south of and including Sullivan, Orange, and Dutchess Counties.

MICHIGAN – The state of Michigan.

MINNESOTA - The state of Minnesota. In the state of Wisconsin: the counties of St. Croix, Dunn, and Pierce.

MISSOURI VALLEY - The state of Kansas. The state of Missouri including and bounded by the counties of Schuyler, Adair, Macon, Randolph, Audrain, Callaway, Cole, Moniteau, Morgan, Benton, Hickory, Polk, Greene, Christian, and Taney.

MONTANA – The state of Montana except the counties of Dawson and Wibaux.

NEBRASKA - The state of Nebraska. In the state of Iowa, the counties of Lyon,

Osceola, Sioux, O'Brien, Plymouth, Cherokee, Woodbury, Ida, Monona, Crawford, Harrison, Shelby, Pottawattamie, Mills, Montgomery, Fremont, and Page.

NEW ENGLAND - The states of New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island, and Maine, and the commonwealth of Massachusetts.

NEW JERSEY - The state of New Jersey north of and including the counties of Mercer, Monmouth, and Ocean.

NEW MEXICO – The state of New Mexico and that part of the state of Texas west of but not including the counties of Val Verde, Sutton, Schleicher, Tom Green, and Coke, and south of but not including the counties of Mitchell, Howard, Martin, and Andrews.

NIAGARA - The state of New York west of and including the counties of Oswego, Onondaga, Cortland, and Broome.

NORTH CAROLINA - The state of North Carolina.

NORTH DAKOTA - The state of North Dakota. In the state of Montana: the counties of Dawson and Wibaux.

NORTH TEXAS - The state of Texas bounded on the south by but not including the counties of Winkler, Ector, Midland, Glasscock, Sterling, Coke, Runnels, Coleman, Brown, Mills, Lampasas, Bell, Milam, Robertson, Leon, Houston, Angelina, Nacogdoches and Shelby; on the west by the state of New Mexico; on the east by the state of Louisiana and the state of Arkansas; and on the north by the state of Oklahoma and the county of Bowie, Texas.

OHIO - The state of Ohio except the counties of Seneca, Crawford, Columbiana, Erie, Huron, Richland, Lorain, Ashland, Cuyahoga, Medina, Lake, Geauga, Portage, Stark, Ashtabula, Trumbull, Mahoning, Summit, Wayne, Belmont, Jefferson, and Tuscarawas. In the commonwealth of Kentucky: the counties of Campbell, Kenton, and Boone.

OKLAHOMA – The state of Oklahoma.

OREGON - The state of Oregon except Malheur County. In the state of Washington: the counties of Cowlitz,

Clark, Skamania, and that portion of Klickitat County west of Highway 97.

OZARK - The state of Missouri east of and including the counties of Scotland, Knox, Shelby, Monroe, Pike, Montgomery, Osage, Miller, Camden, Dallas, Webster, Douglas, and Ozark. In the state of Illinois: the counties of Calhoun, Greene, Jackson, Jersey, Madison, St. Clair, and Monroe.

PACIFIC - The state of California north of but not including the counties of San Luis Obispo, Ventura, Kern, Los Angeles, and San Bernardino. In the state of Nevada: the counties of Humboldt, Washoe, Lyon, Storey, Mineral, Douglas, Churchill, Pershing, Lander, and Carson City.

PACIFIC NORTHWEST – The state of Washington west of but not including the counties of Okanogan, Chelan, Kittitas, and Yakima, and north of but not including the counties of Cowlitz, Skamania, and Klickitat.

POTOMAC VALLEY - The District of Columbia. In the state of Maryland: the counties of Montgomery and Prince Georges. In the commonwealth of Virginia: the counties of Arlington and Fairfax and the Cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, and Falls Church.

SAN DIEGO-IMPERIAL - In the state of California: the counties of San Diego and Imperial.

SNAKE RIVER – The state of Idaho except the counties of Boundary, Bonner, Kootenai, Shoshone, Benewah, Latah, Clearwater, Nez Perce, Lewis, and Idaho. In the state of Nevada: the counties of Elko, White Pine, and Eureka. In the state of Oregon: The County of Malheur.

SOUTH CAROLINA - The state of South Carolina. SOUTH DAKOTA - The state of South Dakota.

SOUTH TEXAS - The southern part of the state of Texas bounded on the east by and not including the counties of Matagorda, Wharton, Colorado, Fort Bend, Waller, Grimes, Brazos and Robertson; on the north by and including the counties of Milam, Bell, Lampasas, Mills, Brown, Coleman and Runnels; and on the west by and including the counties of Concho, Schleicher, Sutton and Val Verde.

SOUTHEASTERN – The state of Alabama. The state of Tennessee. In the state of Florida: the counties of Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, Walton, Holmes, Washington, and Bay, and that part of Jackson and Calhoun Counties west of the Apalachicola River.

SOUTHERN – The states of Louisiana and Mississippi.

SOUTHERN PACIFIC – In the state of California the counties of San Luis Obispo, Ventura, Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Orange, Riverside, and Santa Barbara. In the state of Nevada: the counties of Clark, Esmeralda, Lincoln, and Nye.

UTAH – The state of Utah.

VIRGINIA – The Commonwealth of Virginia except for the counties of Arlington and Fairfax and the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, and Falls Church. The state of West Virginia, except the counties of Hancock, Brooke, Ohio, and Marshall.

WISCONSIN – The state of Wisconsin, except the counties of St. Croix, Dunn, and Pierce.

Where to Find Help

USMS National Office

8388 South Tamiami Trail, Suite 221

Sarasota, FL 34238

Main: 941-256-USMS (8767)

Senior Director, Club and Coach Development

Bill Brenner

bbrenner@usmastersswimming.org

941-256-8767

Manager, Club and Member Services

Bethany Burchill

BBurchill@usmastersswimming.org

941-256-8767

Coordinator, Membership & Club Services

Melanie Jaudon

mjaudon@usmastersswimming.org

941-256-8767