



STARTING A CLUB RESOURCE GUIDE



FACILITY REQUIREMENTS

Pool Space

In many areas, pool space is at a premium and artistic swimming programs must compete with swim teams, swim lessons, dive programs, water polo programs, water aerobics and fitness classes, lap and recreational swimmers and even scuba diving and kayaking. Others are fortunate to have ample pool space available to them.

Ideal space for beginners and older, competitive swimmers differs. For example, beginners benefit from access to a shallow end, where they can use the bottom until they build confidence, and where the teacher can easily provide hands-on instruction in the water. On the other hand, more experienced swimmers need deep water for lifts, spins and other skills.

The information below details minimum space requirements and ideal requirements for each level of swimmer:

	Minimum	Ideal
Recreational	3.5 to 5 feet deep one lane OR half of 2 lanes	3.5 to 6 feet (or deeper) Access to shallow and deep water. 2-3 lanes Warmer temperature (82-86°)
Novice	6 to 9 feet half of 2 lanes	3.5 to 9 feet Access to shallow and deep water 4 lanes
Intermediate	3.5 to 9 feet 2 lanes	6 to 9 feet 4 lanes
Age Group	6 to 9 feet 4 lanes	25 x 12 meters 12M x 12M area 2.5 meters deep; remaining area at least 1.8 meters deep Temperature 80-82°

Dry Land Space

Artistic swimming programs also need an area to do dry land training, including strength training, stretching, tumbling and other types of work outs.

- Minimum: Deck space with yoga mats or tumbling mats
- Ideal: Space in a studio with mirrors or a gym



EQUIPMENT

Equipment

Equipment can make artistic swimming instruction and training safer, more effective, and more fun.

Pool

Minimum equipment needed:

- Sound system with underwater speaker:
<http://www.lubell.com>
- Kick boards
- Pull buoys
- Dumb bells, empty bleach bottles, or water jugs

Ideal equipment needed for recreational & novice programs:

- Microphone
- Metronome
- Hula hoops
- Swim noodles
- Flotation belts
- Balls
- Sticky toes

Ideal equipment needed for intermediate & age group programs:

- Microphone
- Metronome or Tempo trainer
- Thera-bands
- Hand paddles
- Blind Cane or long pole
- Ankle weights

Dry Land

Minimum equipment needed:

- Yoga mat or tumbling mats

Ideal equipment needed:

- Thera bands
- Medicine balls
- Bosu balls
- Foam rollers
- Resistance loops
- Cheese wedge for tumbling training



Thera-Bands
Different colors identify the level of resistance.

Collapsible Water Jug
Good flotation tools for working on body positions



Ankle weights
Used on ankles or waist



TRAINING SPACE EFFICENCY

Here are a few ideas for setting up your pool space with multiple groups of swimmers and limited coaches and/or space.

Swimmers Train Together (works with one coach for 16-30 swimmers)

45 minutes of warm up and water conditioning in lanes

15 minutes of drills and figure instruction (led by coach)

60 minutes of figures with partners around edges of pool, while coach trains routines

Stations (4 teams – 20-32 swimmers and 4 coaches)

45-minute stations for each group. This can work in as few as three lanes (one lane for workouts, two for routines, and space near the wall for figures. Of course, more lanes are better!

Time	Conditioning/Laps	Figures/Skills	Routines	Dryland
5 - 5:45	16+	13 - 15	12 U	13 - 15 Int.
5:45 - 6:30	13 - 15 Int.	16+	13 - 15	12U
6:30 - 7:15	12U	13 - 15 Int.	16+	13 - 15
7:15 - 8:00	13 - 15	12U	13 - 15 Int.	16+

Training in Shallow Water

Shallow water space can be ideal for beginner swimmers. But there are a number of ways even older swimmers can use shallow space for training. These workouts and drills work in 3.5-4.5 feet of water.

1. Swimming
2. Sculling/Ballet leg laps
3. Eggbeater (shallow water will ensure knees are high!)
4. Shallow figures or figure parts:
 - a. Ballet Leg
 - b. Back Tuck Somersault
 - c. Front Walkover
 - d. Straight Leg Swordfish
 - e. Beginning of Kip and Oceanita
 - f. Front pike down transition
 - g. First leg of Prawn, Surface Prawn, Tower
 - h. Barracuda drills on the surface
5. Routines – arms only; work on patterns and pattern changes
6. Drills on the wall or with bottles
 - a. Hold positions – Table top, Split, Fishtail, Bent Knee Vertical, Vertical, Knight, Bent Knee Surface Arch
 - b. Knight close to Surface Arch transition
 - c. Stationary Ballet Leg
7. Support Scull drills: on the wall, in Table Top, in Split or – for more proficient swimmers – in Fishtail, Bent Knee Vertical, Knight or Vertical



TYPES OF CLUBS

There are three main types of organizational structures for artistic swimming teams, which will affect the legal, governance and tax implications for the organization.

- Board-governed club
- Coach-owned club •
- Facility-owned clubs (such as YMCAs, YWCAs, Parks and Recreation Departments, etc)

Each type of organization has its advantages and disadvantages. Teams should consult a lawyer, accountant and/or business advisor to determine which organizational structure works best and to make sure they are in compliance with all applicable tax and legal considerations.

Board Governed Clubs

A common legal structure for artistic swimming teams is a non-profit association or non-profit corporation that is governed by a board of directors. The board must have at least 3 members – these are most typically made up of parents of swimmers on the team. The board-governed structure allows organizations to apply for tax-exempt status.

The most popular form of non-profit status is under IRC 501(c)3, which applies to organizations formed for religious, charitable, literary, scientific or educational purposes (artistic swimming teams fall under this category). Under this code, an organization is exempt from federal taxation. In addition, contributions to the organization are tax deductible for the donor. Non-profit organizations can also apply for tax-exempt status under other codes.

A board-governed organization can choose to incorporate, which allows the non-profit to protect its directors and staff from certain types of liability. To get the details on incorporation in your state, check with the office of your Secretary of State, Division of Corporations, or Attorney General.

Non-profits must keep records, prepare minutes of meetings, and have a separate bank account. The non-profit organization cannot distribute profits to its members. Typically, the Head Coach of the team acts as the CEO, making day-to-day operational decisions for the team, as well as leading all aspects of training. The Board of Directors typically establishes a mission, budget, and objectives, hires a CEO (or Head Coach) and holds the CEO/Head Coach accountable for achieving objectives and upholding the mission of the organization.

Coach Owned Clubs

A Coach can own the club as a Sole Proprietorship or as a Partnership (with one or more other coaches). Other legal structures include a limited liability company (LLC), which combines the limited liability of a corporation and the pass through taxation of a sole proprietorship or a partnership. Club owners enjoy the benefits and risks of a small business owner. Although the risk is higher, owners have the opportunity to realize higher compensation and build equity in the organization over time.



TYPES OF CLUBS CONT.

Facility Owned Clubs

Many facilities or institutions, such as YMCAs, YWCAs, Community Parks and Recreation Departments, and private schools, own and operate programs (including artistic swimming programs). The Coaches, including the Head Coach, are employees of the facility or the owner/operator of the pool. The facility or owner/operator will collect fees from the artistic swimming program participants to generate revenue and cover expenses. Many facility-run organizations also have separate parent booster clubs (which under certain circumstances can be eligible for a 501(c)3 or other tax-exempt status) or parent volunteer organizations which contribute volunteer hours and additional financial assistance to the team. This will depend on the facility; however, some may not allow a separate booster club.

Summary of Organization Models for Clubs

Time	Board Governed	Coach Owned	Facility Owned
Tax Status	Eligible for tax exemption (including 501(c)3)	Coach-Owned Not eligible for tax exempt status	Depends. Some facilities will allow separate booster club for fundraising
Limited Legal and Financial Liability	Yes, if incorporated	No, unless organized as LLC	Yes
Government Regulation	Highly regulated	Less regulated	Coach not usually involved
Leadership Continuity	With turnover in Board, leadership continuity is a challenge	Yes – Coach owners have the most continuity and leadership control	Yes – usually
Management Challenges	Parent board can tend to micromanage	Involved in every aspect of club – which has pluses and minuse	Vision and leadership are dictated by facility – which can be advantageous or challenging
Financial Risk	Low	High	Low
Volunteer Support	Usually high	Can be challenging	Varies
Financial Resources	Can be overly reliant on fundraising	Limited	Less risk in start-up, usually less reward although coaches may receive health and retirement benefits



ESTABLISHING PROGRAM PARAMETERS

Developing a Budget

There are many decisions to consider when starting a program. Whether it is the responsibility of the Head Coach, the Board of Directors or the facility that runs the program, developing a budget is key to running a successful program.

Sample Budget

Expenses			
Coaching:	Head Coach	\$	
	Assistant Coach	\$	
	Assistant Coach - Part time	\$	
	Payroll Taxes	\$	
	Professional Development	\$	
Equipment	Amplifier and speaker purchase & repairs	\$	
	Microphone purchase & repairs	\$	
	Training Equipment purchase & repairs	\$	
	Gymnastic Mats	\$	
	Thera-bands	\$	
	Camping water cubes	\$	
	Kickboards	\$	
General & Administrative	USAAS Club Fee	\$	
	USAAS Membership Fees	\$	
	Publicity & Marketing	\$	
	Office supplies & printing	\$	
	Accounting & legal	\$	
	Team communication & website	\$	
Facility	Pool Rental	\$	
	Dry land room rental	\$	
Total Expenses		\$	



Revenue		
Team Fees	Registration Fees	\$
	Monthly Fees	\$
Recreational Fees	Registration Fees	\$
	Monthly Fees	\$
	Camp Fees	\$
Events	Meet Revenue	\$
Fundraising	Showcase	\$
	Fundraiser	\$
Sponsorship & Donations	Donations	\$
Total Revenue		\$
Net Revenue		\$

Facility Contracts

Most teams, with the possible exception of those that are sponsored or run by a facility, will need to enter into a contract to use pool space for training and/or events. Pool rental expenses vary based on geography, the availability of pools, and whether or not the team is sponsored or run by a facility.

Ideally, an attorney should review any contract that you sign. Here are a few tips to entering into a successful contract with a facility:

- Carefully read and understand each section of the contract
- Make sure the following elements are specified:
 - Start date and duration of contract.
 - Renewal date and process
 - Description of each party’s responsibilities and who is in charge
 - Process for resolving conflicts or grievances
 - Possible use of administrative equipment such as computers, printers, copiers and phones
 - Use of additional space such as conference rooms, exercise space and deck space
- Additional considerations:
 - Renewal terms – consider a 6-month warning to significant changes in contract terms
 - Non-compete clause – carefully consider this type of clause because it might limit your ability to expand the program
 - Responsibility for air and water quality and resolution of any problems
 - Use of locker rooms and parking
 - Insurance requirements and responsibilities
- Types of rental agreements
 - Lane rental (per lane per hour. National average according to USA Swimming.com is \$14 per lane per hour for 25y 6-lane
 - Flat fee. (Or a daily fee for a portion of the pool)
 - Per class or session. Pay a set amount for each session per day
 - Per person fee. Pay an amount per person in the program or class
 - Percentage of revenues. Pay a percentage of the program gross revenues



COACH COMPENSATION

One of the biggest program expenses outside of facility rental is coach compensation. Artistic swimming coaches in the USA vary widely from full-time salaried coaches to part-time coaches (who typically have outside full-time jobs) to volunteers.

If coaches are paid a salary, it is considered a fixed expense, which is easier to budget than hourly pay. Part-time coaches can also be paid a salary.

Also consider: Insurance

- Benefits (such as health insurance and retirement)
- Professional membership Continuing education (CCP certification, First Aid, CPR, Clinics & Coaches' College)
 - The USA Artistic swimming Foundation often times will award grants to teams for Education based programs for coaches.
- Coaches' travel expenses

Although volunteers or part-time hourly employees will make a program less expensive to administer, typically these programs will be less stable over the long-term. Volunteers and part-time employees (who typically have other jobs) will be less likely to commit to a program over the long-term. It is also unlikely to be able to recruit a part-time coach from another part of the country and more difficult to have a succession plan. The loss of a Head Coach, without the ability to recruit other coaches, can mean the collapse of a program. Consider building a program that is financially able to support or pay at least one full-time coach.

Determining Coach Compensation:

What you pay your coaches will depend on several factors including:

- Salaries and cost of living in your area
- Availability of coaches
- Experience and competency of coach

Step 1: Write a job description. This will help define characteristics and skills you need, and compare these to what other organizations are paying for similar jobs.

Step 2: Find comparative salary data. Review salary information for other artistic swimming coaches (preferably in your geographic area). If necessary, also review salary data for other coaches, such as swim, dance and gymnastic coaches. Ways to gather this data include online searches and interviewing other organizations.

Step 3: Develop a salary range. Develop a range based on the median pay for similar jobs. (Typical range spreads are 30% to 60%). For example:

	Min	Mid	Max
40% Range Spread	\$8.50	\$10.25	\$12.00



COACH COMPENSATION CONT.

Step 4. Develop multiple ranges for different coaching jobs. The following is an example based on hourly rates.

Job Title	Minimum	Midpoint	Maximum
Novice Coach	\$8.90	\$10.50	\$12.00
Intermediate Coach	\$9.75	\$11.50	\$13.25
Age Group Assistant Coach	\$11.50	\$13.50	\$15.50
Age Group Head Coach	\$16.00	\$19.00	\$21.80
Head Coach	\$21.25	\$25.00	\$28.75

One way to determine an individual coach's salary is to base the starting point on the individual's experience. Therefore, a coach with 0-1 years of experience would start at the Minimum, a coach with 1-3 years of experience would start at the midpoint, and a coach with 3+ years would start at the max of the range.

Step 5. Determine criteria for increases.

- Merit increases – based on performance. Higher performing employees will be at the top of the range, average at the midpoint, and those working on improving skills will be at the lower end of range
- Cost of living or time in grade increases. Employees receive an increase each year. This method rewards employees for longevity.
- A combination approach establishes an average pay raise for average performers (e.g., 2%). High performers receive a higher increase (e.g., 2.5-4%) and low performers might receive no increase.

Determining Fees

The largest source of revenue for most programs is based on the fees charged to participants. Fees should cover fixed expenses such as facility rental and coach compensation, which are the two biggest program expenses for most clubs.

In addition, programs should look at fees for other artistic swimming programs and competitive programs (such as swimming, diving, gymnastics and dance) in the area to help determine fees. Collect data for as many relevant programs as you can, and calculate the average and median fees per hour or per month (for comparable amount of hours practiced per week).

Keep in mind that with the increase in costs of recreational and sports activities, many children, and girls in particular, are left without appropriate after school activities. (Source: (Wall Street Journal, Jan. 31, 2014 and Women's Sports Foundation, 2012). As such, consider providing a scholarship program for children who meet predetermined financial criteria. Your program may be able to get grants and funding from charitable organizations or communities to help cover costs of these scholarship programs.



TEAM POLICIES

Establishing and communicating team policies will go a long way in ensuring the smooth functioning of your team. A common way to document and communicate team policies is through a Team Handbook.

While establishing your team policies, consider:

- Your coaching philosophy
- USA Artistic swimming rules
- Any applicable facility rules
- Risk management protocol (e.g., safety and security, injury and concussion protocol, etc)

Sample Team Handbook Outline

Section 1: About the Team

- Team history and accomplishments
 - Accomplishments do not need to be competitive results!
- Coaching philosophy
- Goals for the year
- Description of programs and fees
- What to expect at practice
- Required equipment and apparel

Section 2: Expectations and General Policies

- Team and small routine selection
- Other coaching decisions
- Attendance and missed training time policies
- Safety (pick up and drop off, etc)
- Parent role at practices
 - Consider identifying a space where parents can watch without interfering, e.g., bleachers, waiting area)
 - Consider developing a Parent Code of Conduct
- Communication
 - How and when to contact coaches
 - Not interrupting practices
 - Positive communication and open door policy
- Athlete commitment expectations for practices and meets
- Athlete behavior and discipline
 - Outline basic expectations
 - Describe consequences for infractions (e.g., warning, sitting out practice)
- Coach role and expectations
 - Positive communication with athletes and parents
 - Follows safety rules
 - Appropriate conduct
 - Consider Coach Code of Conduct



TEAM POLICIES CONT.

- Handling of injuries and concussions
- Media and social media policies
 - Posting of swimmer photos
 - Guidelines for team use of social media
 - Privacy and honesty
- Waivers:
 - General liability
 - Medical release forms (especially for travel)
 - Photo and media release forms

Section 3: Attending Competitions

- Meet policies
 - Attendance expectations
 - Punctuality
 - Leaving the pool
- Travel policies
 - Chaperone role and expectations
 - Travel rules
 - Travel expenses
- Meet etiquette
- Competition description/basics

Section 4: Volunteers

- Volunteer job descriptions
 - Team expectations for volunteering



MARKETING & PROMOTING YOUR CLUB

Club Marketing Guide

- Marketing Basics
- Promoting your Program
- Public and Media Relations
- Sponsors
- Fundraising and Grants

Marketing your club

Highlight Your Unique Value

- Emphasize what makes your club different and why people should join.
- Share clear benefits: skills, experiences, social connections, or fun activities.

Use Visuals

- Include photos, graphics, and short videos to capture attention.
- Consistent branding (colors, logo, tagline) makes your club recognizable.

Leverage Social Media

- Post updates, events, and member highlights on Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, or other platforms your audience uses.
- Engage with followers by responding to comments and messages.

Create Print Materials

- Use posters, flyers, or handouts in high-traffic areas.
- Include QR codes or links for easy sign-ups.

Engage Through Events

- Host open houses, info sessions, or mini-events to showcase your club.
- Attend club fairs or community events to reach new members.

Encourage Word-of-Mouth

- Ask current members to invite friends and share experiences.
- Personal recommendations are often the most effective recruitment tool.



CREATING A COMMUNITY

Team Social Activities

Team social activities are important for building the bond between athletes, as well as providing a way for parents to get to know each other outside of the pool.

An ideal social calendar could include:

- Events or activities for team routine and/or age groups
- Events for the athletes and their families
- Activities that include all athletes on the team, regardless of age group
- Events in the community (see below)

Examples include:

- Team dinners at meets
- Social activities such as bowling, pizza parties, or movie night
- Holiday brunch or potluck
- Video watching party (artistic swimming videos, of course)
- End-of-the-year party or team banquet
- Game day, with team relays and pool games
- Holiday gift exchanges
- Big/Little sisters (pair an older swimmer with a younger swimmer and exchange notes, encouragement and perhaps small gifts)
- Fun days at practice such as “ugly suit day”, “wear funny socks day”, etc

You don't want to plan so many activities that it becomes onerous to families, but enough so that athletes and their parents can connect. Keep in mind that on most teams, the athletes will create their own social activities outside of the formal planned events.



CREATING A COMMUNITY

Reaching out to the Broader Community

Some activities can create exposure for the team in the community, help the team to connect with the broader community, and reinforce the culture of a community within a community. This can also help create marketing and publicity for the team.

Examples include:

- Participation in community holiday parades
- Have a booth at school or community festivals. Ideas include:
 - Pass out candy
 - Exhibit your prettiest competition suits
 - Play artistic swimming videos
 - Provide paper and art supplies and have kids design their own artistic swimming suit
 - Have a contest of Best Artistic swimming Suit Design
 - Raffle off a free day of artistic swimming class
- Participate in a team-wide charitable drive:
 - Collect canned goods, coats, school supplies, etc for a good cause
 - Help serve meals at a shelter, pack boxes at a food bank, pick up litter at a park
 - Contribute all or a percentage of fundraising to a charity:
 - Artistic swimming-athon (Note: anything with “athon” attached to it must go through USA Swimming – see their site for instructions)
 - Raffles
 - Water show ticket sales
 - Car washes
 - Volunteer as reading buddy or tutor for kids in need
 - Visit a retirement facility and connect with elders

Getting Parents Involved in Positive Ways

Artistic swimming clubs depend on the involvement of parents and other volunteers to run smoothly. Like other sports, artistic swimming also depends on parents to be involved with the sport in a positive manner.



CREATING A COMMUNITY

Getting Parents Involved in Positive Ways

Artistic swimming clubs depend on the involvement of parents and other volunteers to run smoothly. Like other sports, artistic swimming also depends on parents to be involved with the sport in a positive manner.

Most parents are happy to volunteer, but some lack an understanding of what is required or fear that they don't have the right skill set. Some parents will have more availability than others; some will only be available at certain times of the year due to job or other obligations. Here are some ways to increase the likelihood that your parents will volunteer:

- Develop descriptions of the volunteer positions available, including the estimated amount of time required and skills needed.
- Communicate volunteer needs and expectations at the beginning of the year. Follow up (or have a volunteer coordinator follow up) directly with people to see how their interests and skills can help the team. Many people won't sign their name on a list, but if asked directly, will be happy to help.
- Develop a list of "one hour" jobs that volunteers could take care of in about an hour. This relieves some of the fear that they don't have enough time to commit to volunteer.
- When hosting a meet, divide jobs into shorter shifts (see point above). Ensure parents they will still get to see their swimmer compete, and will have front row seats to boot. Finally, make sure everyone knows what the job entails and that they will get any needed training.
- Make volunteer jobs fun and social. If you are doing suits or headpieces, invite everyone over and serve drinks and snacks. Invite volunteers out to lunch after a big competition.
- Create a system for getting new volunteers up to speed. This could be one or all of the following:
 - Create a binder or google doc with job descriptions, resources, tools, and major steps for the most important jobs
 - Have a new volunteer shadow an experienced volunteer, or, depending on the complexity, consider having a new volunteer partner up with an experience done and share the job for a year
 - Find experienced volunteers (in your club or even from another club) who are willing to answer questions and pass down their knowledge
- Recognize volunteers. This can be as simple as a public "thank you" in the team newsletter or in an email or as elaborate as a small gift at the end of the year.
 - Make sure volunteers know how their role contributes to the overall success of the team.
 -

Even artistic swimming parents who aren't involved in running meets or decorating suits are integral to creating a successful and positive experience for the athlete. Here are some guidelines for parents:

- Attend as many competitions as you can
- Be a good sport and cheer for all competitors
- Don't talk bad about the coach in front of your swimmer
- Encourage your swimmer to work through disagreements or dissatisfaction directly with the coach
- Encourage parents to have these rules for their children:
 - Once you start you finish
 - The coach's decision is final
 - The success of the team is more important than the success of the individual



COMMUNICATION & RESOURCES

Communication Between Coaches and Parents

It is important to develop a good relationship between coaches and athletes' parents and/or guardians. Setting boundaries and guidelines early in the season will be beneficial to both coaches and parents.

Following these steps:

1. Communicate Coaching & Program Philosophy in a Pre-Season Meeting
 - a. Clarify club core values and introduce program
 - b. Coaches should address their philosophy and coaching practice so parents understand how the season will run
2. Ensure Updates on Program Basics are Communicated
3. Updates about practices and competitions in a timely manner
4. Equipment requirements
5. <https://onlinemasters.ohio.edu/blog/6-tips-for-coaches-when-communicating-with-athletes-parents/>



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Additional Resources

1. Employee vs. Contractor?
 - a. <https://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs13.pdf>
2. General information about pay
 - a. <https://www.dol.gov/general/topic/wages>
3. Sample parent/coach communication guide:
 - a. <http://phhs.smcs.com/common/pages/DisplayFile.aspx?itemId=521378>