Welcome to Nitro Swimming’s Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs). I want to thank you for being a part of our program. I have listed some basic information below plus several questions and answers, so please take some time to go through all of this info.

If there is something special you need answered, just email me at mike@nitroswim.com and I generally get back to all questions within a day or so.

Section 1: Philosophy of Nitro Swimming.

1. **What is the overall philosophy at Nitro?** Long term. We are thinking long term. We base our daily decisions on what is in the best **long term** interest of the swimmer. We do what we can to make each and every swimmer better, somehow, in the time that we have them, every practice, every day. This doesn’t pertain to just in the pool, but out of the pool as well. We teach discipline, self sufficiency, delayed gratification, hard work, good sportsmanship, how to handle victories as well as defeats and temporary setbacks. We teach life skills that our Nitro kids will take away from the pool and have forever. As for “in the pool” skills, we firmly believe that stroke efficiency is key, and we work to develop the mechanics of proper technique by emphasizing the RIGHT WAY to do things every practice, every day. We do this by being engaged in “active” coaching. Moving around during practices – coaching with purpose. It is difficult to find a Nitro coach sitting down or with their hands in their pockets looking bored! Other guiding principles? At meets, we have one rule: No one sits alone. The biggest compliment I can get from anyone about our program is Nitro swimmers are NICE. Our coaches coach hard, we expect a lot, we have fun, and we love the kids. Nitro Swimming has been built upon this philosophy and our success (Scholastic All Americans, Olympic Trial Qualifiers, National Champions, TAGS Champions, etc,) is a direct result of our commitment to the long term athletic development of our kids. It is no accident or random act of chance that we reached the elite of United States Swimming in only 5 years, A lot of good things surround this program. Welcome to Nitro Swimming. We hope you will be with us for years to come.

Here are a couple of articles that are very informative. Please check these out:

**Long Term Athlete Development Strategy:**
https://www.swimming.ca/docs/LTAD/LTAD_EN.pdf

**Coach / Parent / Athlete Relationships:**
http://www.positivecoach.org/our-tools/tools-for-parents/
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Section 2: Group Placements/Changes/Admin

1. How are the practice groups determined/organized? Our practice groups are organized to best match kids with similar ability, age, physical and emotional maturity, level of commitment, practice habits, and experience. We offer several options for most of our groups, especially with our developmental/younger age groups. We have groups ranging from once a week to multiple times per week including AM/PM for our elite level swimmers. If new to our program, we ask that you bring your athlete to get evaluated by one of our USA Swimming coaches during an open evaluation time and we will determine the best swim group that properly matches what you are looking for.

2. Changing Swim Groups: If you would like to request a schedule change into a different time/day option, simply see the front desk, complete a “group change form,” and turn it back in to the front desk. Of course, moving into another time/day slot will depend on availability/space.

3. Group Advancement: There are no hard and fast rules or requirements that are standardized in our program relating to group advancement. Instead, we as a staff recognize when a swimmer has exceeded their stay in a certain group and is ready to move on to a higher level group. This can happen during any part of the season and once we see that a swimmer is ready, we’ll initiate the next steps with the parent. We at Nitro prefer to allow a swimmer some added time in their respective group to master the skills of that group, until we see that the swimmer has in effect “outgrown” that group. If you believe that there is a group misplacement issue, or your athlete is looking for something other than what the current group is offering, please bring that to the attention of our coaches so we can all be on the same page working together.

Bottom line: We will initiate the discussion when it is time. Also keep in mind that our groups continue to get better and improve throughout the course of each season. A competitive program that is doing the right things cannot help but continue to get better throughout the year. A swimmer’s success ultimately has very little to do with the actual “group” placement. We do get it wrong from time to time, and we are happy to have the conversation and discuss.

4. How do I withdraw from the Nitro Swim program? ON or BEFORE the 15th of the month, complete a Withdrawal Form that is located at www.nitrosim.com.

5. How do I re-enroll back into the Nitro program if I already withdrew during the current year (“year” defined as any time between Sept 1st through Aug 31st of the following year)? See the front desk and they will need your current credit card information and ask you to complete a new credit card authorization form. There is a re-enrollment fee of $15 to cover the administrative costs to re-activate you into our autobill system.

6. How many times per year do I have to register? Once per year, prior to your swimmer beginning practicing with us. Our calendar year is September through the
end of August, with each September being the beginning of a new season and year with us. To clarify, if you are new to Nitro, and you register sometime other than the start of the school year, your registration will be valid with us until Aug 31st. At that time, we re-register ALL Nitro athletes for the upcoming school year at the start of September each season, which will carry them to the following Aug 31st.

Section 3: Communication

1. **How do I communicate with my child’s coach?** The coaches have a compacted schedule while on the pool deck coaching group after group, and it serves the athletes well if our attention is focused on them during their practice times. For that reason, we prefer that you contact your coach by email and they will reply to you within 24 hours in most cases during the week. If you have not heard back from your coach within 24 hours, send an email to me at mike@nitroswim.com and I will get an answer to you. From time to time your child’s coach will make himself/herself available for a few quick minutes if in between practices, after a practice if no other scheduled practice right away, etc. If the coach looks free, please feel free to approach the coach and ask if they have a moment to answer your question. If it is an issue that you believe warrants a personal meeting with a coach, we’ll do our part to arrange a time convenient for you.

2. **How do I find out about team items like meets, social events, entry deadlines, schedule changes?** We send out Coach’s Notes quite frequently via your email address we have on file. Please take the time to review these notes. We also have our upcoming meets/social events posted on our website under “Events.” Rarely do we make schedule changes. We realize that you have come to depend on a certain schedule, and we don’t take making changes to the schedule lightly. Soon you will have a monthly group calendar posted on the website with important dates and deadlines specific to your swimmer’s group.

3. **Addressing a conflict.** If you have a conflict/issue please take it up with your child’s group coach and give them a chance to discuss the issue with you. If after doing that, you feel that it needs to come to my attention, please contact me. However, don’t sit in the bleachers or in the parking lot airing out dirty laundry.

4. **General comment about “relationships”:** Whether it is family, school, church, your job, whatever, there is no such thing as a perfect relationship. If you were to rate the top 10 items you are looking for in a swim program, and grade each one of those items, I’d guess we’d rate fairly high in most areas. However, I’d also bet that we would have a few areas in your eyes where we could use some improvement. It is your decision/choice how much you want those “less than perfect” items to affect you. We offer a lot to our athletes. We have the most qualified coaching staff assembled anywhere – coaches who love to coach. We have our own indoor facilities with total control of the water, not dependent on any HOA, a city, a lease agreement, or any parent entity like a country club or the Y. We have multiple group
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options for most ability levels. We are committed to helping every Nitro athlete achieve their highest personal potential, and we’ll match energy for energy. You show us the commitment, we’ll take you as far and high as possible.

Section 4: Practices

1. Is there a plan/objective for each practice? Yes. We coaches communicate the areas/strokes/drills we want addressed each week and the individual group coaches construct their weekly workouts based around that. For example, for our younger/developmental groups, kicking is a cornerstone of any quality swim program, so you will see some aspect of kicking in every practice. As the group levels progress, the skills/drills/intervals also progress in complexity and intensity. However, we coaches deviate from the “plan” from time to time if circumstances dictate. For example: When the group is not quite executing a particular drill/skill/stroke/or set like we had expected, and more time may be needed to work through some additional steps. We refer to that as “calling an audible” and we end up “changing the play.” For our more advanced groups, more time is spent taking the “season approach” in the planning of workouts.

2. What is my role during my swimmer’s practice? You are welcomed to view the practice from the bleachers. You can run errands. You are not required to stay in the swim center during your athlete’s practice. However, we ask that you pick up your child on time from practice. Please refrain from coaching from the bleachers, giving hand signals, getting their attention, or otherwise disrupting the group. We try hard to keep their attention, and we don’t need the added competition from the bleachers or at the end of the pool.

3. What is the WRONG way to view a practice? The wrong way is to sit in the bleachers and critique what the group, the coach, and/or the swimmers are doing wrong and how you believe you could do it better. The right way: Resist the temptation to get pulled into “discussions” like that. Better yet, take a stand for youth sports and speak up if you hear another parent going down the negative path. Let them know that it is not appropriate and you don’t appreciate it. Thanks in advance. Positive is how we roll. It’s better that way.

4. Is it OK to arrive late to practice? Yes. We teach the kids that we understand that they are not in control of the time they get to the front door. However, when they do walk through our doors, they then become in charge of their time. We expect them to hustle to the locker area, get their shower, and walk quickly to their group. The coach will let the athlete know what the group is doing.

5. What if I have to get my child out early? Just have your athlete inform the coach ahead of time, and when you need to get your child out, it is OK for you to get the coach’s attention and remind them that your child needs to leave.
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6. **Where does my child go before their practice?** About three minutes prior to the scheduled start time of their practice, after showering, the kids will begin to gather on the pool deck. If Bee Cave, the kids will sit on the bleachers at the end of the pool. If Cedar Park, they meet at the far corner (northeast corner) of the pool deck, behind lane #23.

7. **If my athlete is going to miss a practice, who do I notify?** No need to notify anyone. We’ll see you next practice. If a medical reason will keep your athlete out of the water for an extended period of time, let team administration know.

8. **What does my swimmer need to bring to practice?** Each group has specific gear items required. These items are listed under group descriptions on our site. All girls must wear a swim cap during practices. Any boy with hair over their eyes or hair that comes over mouth during side breathing must also wear a swim cap. We have these available for purchase at our front counters. We ask that all swimmers rinse off in our showers prior to getting in each day. This helps keep our water clean more than you know! Also – no bandaids or gum allowed in the pool, and no outside food or drink allowed in the swim center.

Section 5: Meets and Time Standards

1. **What are Time Standards?** Time Standards are event performance times set by either USA Swimming or the Texas Swim Association (TSA) that establish benchmarks for tracking progress in meets, qualifying for Championship type meets, and basically allowing an athlete to see how they “stack up” in the field of competitive swimming. The USA Swimming standards begin with “B” times, and as you climb up the ladder, next are “BB” times, then “A” times. From there it goes “AA,” “AAA,” and finally “AAAA.” You can access these time standards at www.usaswimming.org and search “Motivational Time Standards.”

2. **What is “Short Course?”** Short Course is defined as the season where the meets are held in 25 yard pools. It typically correlates with the school year, from September through the spring.

3. **What is “Long Course?”** Long Course is defined as the season where meets are held in pools with the 50 meter configuration. It typically correlates with the summer season, May-August.

4. **When are Nitro’s “Championship” meets?** We participate in B, BB, and A Championship meets each “season.” We also compete in the Texas Age Group Swimming Championships (TAGS), Sectionals, Junior Nationals, Nationals, USA Swimming Gran Prix meets, and other top end high level meets that all require pre-qualifying times to enter. This means there are short course championship meets for all of these standards as well as Long Course Championship meets as well. Currently, the B and BB Championship meet is combined for Long Course, and it is a “BB and Under” type championship meet.
5. **What is TAGS?** TAGS stands for Texas Age Group Swimming Championships. It is the premiere 14 and under state championship meet in the country. It is one of our team goals each season to compete for this team title. The TAGS time standards are updated each year, calculated on a formula that takes the 20th place time from the current meet and averages it in with the prior two years. If the 20th place time isn’t faster than the current time standard, then the time for that event remains unchanged when the next year’s standards are published. The Short Course TAGS meet takes place in early March each year, while the Long Course TAGS meet is in mid July typically. The TAGS time standards can be found on our website as well as our LSC’s (Local Swim Committee for USA Swimming) site at www.stswim.org.

6. **How often are meets offered / Are they required?** Meets are not required, but encouraged. They are part of the “reward” for the practices! Approximately half of our kids choose to enter and attend meets. We like to offer meets (competitions) about once every 5 to 6 weeks targeted to our respective groups. For example, we host our own “Nitro at the Races” meets for our developing swimmers in Intro to Nitro, Bronze, some Silver, Technique and Fitness (TF), even some athletes in our High School Training group. These are very low key meets, little pressure, simply designed to allow the kids to experience competition in an unthreatening environment. These meets allow the kids to “show off” in front of their parents/grandparents and showcase what they have been working on. We enjoy having the luxury to host these at our own pools and can typically conduct them in under a two hour time frame, which the parents LOVE! We also will have more advanced meets offered, some held locally at UT, or surrounding areas, other times there may be a great meet for a couple of our groups in San Antonio, Dallas, or Houston. Again, these are optional.

7. **Will my athlete swim a “best time” every time they race?** No. Impossible. Well, maybe possible ----if they swim only two meets total in their whole lifetime I suppose it can happen. Important point: A **best time doesn’t** necessarily mean it was a **good** swim. Contrarily, **not** getting a best time doesn’t necessarily mean it was a “bad” swim either. Let me explain: We work on a lot of skills week in and week out. We work on developing good habits, and chasing away the bad ones. Your swimmer may have not received a “best time,” but it may have been the best swim of their lives! We don’t enjoy seeing the kids equate their swimming self-worth to whether or not they got a best time or not in a meet. This is a long journey. It is all part of the process. Everything we do is geared for the long haul – the life lessons, the ups, the downs, the peaks, the valleys. And let me tell you right here, the valleys can be long and lonesome in this sport if not mentally prepared to handle! Any former competitive swimmer who “made it” past 15 yrs old, and stayed in the sport will surely attest to that. Support your kiddo, they are the first ones to know whether or not they got a “best time” or not, in the big picture, not that critical, and not a deal breaker. We want them to learn to enjoy the whole process. We also want YOU to learn to enjoy it – the ups and the downs.

8. **How do I enter a meet?**
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Go to www.nitroswim.com, and click on Swim Team. On the right hand side of the website, click on Meet Schedule and Sign up. This will bring you to the Events page. Scroll down until you see the name of the meet you wish to attend. Click on the Attend/Decline button. This will bring you to the log in page. Log in to your account using your email address and password.

On the Athlete Signup page, click on the name of the swimmer that you wish to sign up. On the next page, chose the option "YES, Please sign (swimmer) up for this event".

A list of events will appear. Click on the box that appears before the swimmer's time (on the left hand side of the screen) to select which events you want to enter. Once you have completed this, click the Save Changes button at the bottom right hand side of the screen.

**If you do not click the Save Changes button, your entries will NOT be saved!!**

Once you have done this, your swimmer will show as Committed for the meet. The coaching staff will approve each swimmer’s entries to complete the process.

*Be advised that once meet entries are submitted and processed, no refunds - even if you don’t attend the meet.*

9. **Can I enter meets not on the meet schedule?**

We have a meet schedule that we post online and we adhere to. We add meets from time to time, and some meets get canceled for various reasons. Nitro swimmers are allowed to enter the meets that are on our schedule that are appropriate for that swimmer’s level. Nitro swimmers are not allowed to enter meets that are not on our schedule unless individual permission is granted by that swimmer’s group coach. Every so often a family will be traveling out of state and will ask to participate in an out of state meet. We usually have no problem with that.

10. **How early do I arrive at a meet?** We expect the swimmers on deck ready to go 15 minutes BEFORE the scheduled warm up time. We sit together as a Team and we warm up together as a Team. If your swimmer shows up late for the team warm up, they will miss critical elements of the entire experience. The bonding, the jokes by the coaches, allowing to get into the right mindset for the meet are all part of the pre-warm up and warm up times. When you run late, the stress levels go up exponentially. Your swimmer doesn’t need that, nor do you, right? Leave the house early, be packed the night before, and arrive stress free on time!

11. **What does my swimmer need to bring to a meet?** It depends on the venue. If a short Nitro at the Races meet, just a towel, cap, goggles, and a sweatshirt. These meets run quickly, and no need to bring food/drink. If a UT meet, or another venue, best to bring two towels, sweats (Nitro sweats preferred – D&J link on our website if you want to order your very own Nitro sweats), Nitro cap (if swimmer wears a cap), and two pair of goggles – just in case! You may also want to pack a few healthy snacks, bottled water, maybe a sports drink or two.
Section 6: Special Parent Only Reading

Here are some closing sports parenting thoughts, in no particular order:

1. Be more like the grandparent than the parent when watching your child perform. Grandparents are usually happy just to see their grandkids actively involved in about anything! They aren’t usually concerned with any outcome, they just enjoy being in the moment of the here and now, loving life.

2. Always speak positively about the sport. And always conduct yourself in the best possible manner while at any Nitro Swimming function – including practices.

3. The behavior of a Team’s swim parents tells a lot about the Team. If a parent’s behavior is determined to be detrimental to the Team’s core goals and objectives, the Team reserves the right to refuse service and will ask the family to leave the Team. That may sound harsh, but we have made it clear that we are going to be one of those teams that other parents and swimmers wish they could become part of, and we are not going to lose sight of that.

4. How can I be a supportive swim parent for my swimmer(s)? Learn to ask the right questions of your swimmer: What did you learn today? What was the hardest part of the workout? What was the easiest? What was the most fun? Also, be sure to keep in mind that the number one reason kids swim is because they enjoy it and they have fun. The number one reason kids quit is because – you guessed it – it is no longer enjoyable and fun. Truth is I’ve seen many cases of parents who mean well, but who chase their kids right out of this sport and sports altogether by placing too many demands and too much pressure to perform on their kids – spreadsheets, tracking reports that would make NASA envious, etc. Every swimmer has their own individual time line when they “receive” the ability to “flip the switch” and begin to really compete – even if it is on a limited basis. In some swimmers it takes a little longer than others to develop.

5. Lastly, your swimmer wants one thing from you more than anything else...They want to know that you are proud of them – on both the good days and especially on the days where life is delivering a lesson or two! Thanks for being a part of Nitro Swimming. See you at the pool! Coach Mike.