

Boys & Girls Club of Western Broome
BGC Gaviatas Parent Handbook



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Boys and Girls Club of Western Broome, Mission Statement

The Boys & Girls Club of Western Broome's mission is to inspire and enable all young people, especially those from disadvantaged circumstances, to realize their full potential as productive, responsible, and caring citizens.

Club programs and services promote and enhance the development of boys and girls by instilling a sense of competence, usefulness, belonging and influence.

Through the BGC Gaviatas, the values of fair play are strongly emphasized, along with respect for oneself, for the opponent and for the official games rules. These fair play values contribute to an attitude toward sports that keeps winning in perspective: Winning is only one goal among other important goals. Common themes within the BGC Gaviatas are teaching fundamental skills, encouraging lifetime involvement in physical activity, strengthening the values of fitness, health, self respect and respect for others, and the thrill of challenge of competition.

Coaches, officials, administrators and parents must create an environment in which competitors achieve this ultimate objective: developing into true athletes, strong in their values for fitness, health, self-respect and respect for others. Competition is acknowledged to be important in the development of self-esteem, team effort and a sense of belonging. Competition is a tool for learning the lifelong values of goal-setting and hard work for reward. The participant should learn to accept winning with humility, and defeat with dignity and strive to try harder.



Synchronized Swimming Competitive Track Structure

United States Synchronized Swimming, Inc, Synchro's national governing board, has organized synchronized swimming competitions according to a series of several different tracks. From the beginner level to most advanced, these tracks include Novice, Intermediate, Age Group, and Junior/Senior levels. Separate from these tracks are the Collegiate and Masters programs. Competitions are held at the Association, Regional, Zone and National Levels.

Novice – This track is for athletes who have just started to learn synchro. Figures have the lowest degree of difficulty. Routines showcase certain required basic skills. Athletes only compete at the Association Level. This track offers opportunities for young athletes to learn synchro basics in a low-stress competition environment.

Intermediate – This track is for athletes who are new to synchro or only have a few years of experience. Figures are more difficult than novice figures. Routines are free routines with required elements. Athletes compete at the Association level and can qualify for Regional or Zone level competition. This track focuses on the development of basic skills, teamwork, and an introduction to competition.

Age Group – This track is mainly for athletes who have significant prior synchro experience. Figures are more difficult and complex than Intermediate Figures. Some new athletes can compete in the Age group track when they demonstrate the ability to perform at this level. Athletes compete at the Association, Regional, Zone and National level. This track is designed to build upon basic skills and teamwork, and offers swimmers a path through progressively more advanced skills and competitions.

Junior/Senior – This track is only for athletes aged 15 – 18 and over who have significant synchro experience. Figures are challenging and routines have no required elements. Athletes compete at the Association level and can qualify by score to compete at Zone levels. National Junior/Senior level competition is only for athletes aged 15-18. Athletes on the 15-18 track may also compete in the Junior track, by placement of the coaches and with appropriate required scores and age ranges for each competition.

Certain tracks of competition are mutually exclusive, while other tracks allow athletes to participate in more than one track during a season. There are very specific guidelines as to which tracks athletes may participate in; coaches will advise athletes as to which track they may enter. Coaches will take into account many factors when determining track placement for each athlete. These factors include, but are not limited to, athlete's age, synchro ability, number of years swimming, number of routines swimming, routine partners and their ages and abilities, swimmer compatibility, likelihood of success in a particular track, challenge of a particular track, particular rules limiting competitors to certain tracks, overall BGC Gaviatas team composition, etc. Some athletes may compete in more than one track over the course of a season. Coaches will place athletes in tracks according to the best interest of the athletes and of the entire team.



BGC Gaviata Team Guidelines

Please take time to familiarize yourself with these guidelines. We can all help ensure that the season runs smoothly for all athletes, families and coaches.

The Coaches would prefer if parents are not on the pool deck, unless helping with music, etc. Being on the pool deck causes distraction for the swimmers. If parents want to observe, please do so from the balcony.

1. Team Goals/Vision

- a. To provide instruction at all levels** of synchronized swimming (novice, intermediate, advanced) and to find a place in our program for all interested and committed participants.
- b. To develop the skill of teamwork** and to build team spirit, while instilling team values of commitment, discipline, pride, respect and self-esteem.
- c. To promote the sport of synchronized swimming** through competition, publicity, education and community awareness, and to encourage the development of local grassroots teams.
- d. To instill values of healthy living** by focusing on physical strength, endurance, proper nutrition and the emotional well-being of all athletes.
- e. To challenge each athlete** to perform to his/her own highest level of ability – physically, mentally and emotionally.

2. Practices

a. Required Attendance

- i. Coaches expect athletes to attend all regular practices. In the event of an illness, please notify the coaches as soon as possible.
- ii. Athletes must inform the coaches of planned absences so that coaches can plan for that day's practice. Please indicate on the calendar in the pool ASAP.
- iii. Coaches expect athletes to be serious about their synchro commitment. If the athlete is unable to swim (sinus infection, etc...) but can participate in land drills, athletes are expected to attend practice.
- iv. All practices in the week prior to a meet are mandatory.

b. Being on Time

Availability of rooms, pool, as well as coaching time is limited. Athletes should be ready to work at the time that is listed, not arriving at that time.

c. Nutrition

Following a good diet (the food eaten every day) can have a dramatic effect on how well an athlete performs. An athlete can't expect to go on a special diet before a meet and expect miracles! However, what an athlete eats several days ahead of a meet can particularly impact performance in competition. Coaches will provide guidelines during the season. Please support the team by following an athlete's diet:



- i. Meals before practices - please ensure that athletes complete their meals before coming to practice, with enough time to digest food before working out.
- ii. During meets - coaches will allow for light snack breaks. Please bring food from home or plan to buy food from the concession area; the snacks available in the vending machines are generally not appropriate for an athlete's diet. Better choices include:
 - Fruit or vegetables (baby carrots, etc.)
 - Power Bars, energy bars, meal-replacement bars, etc.
 - Pretzels, healthy crackers (read labels for info)
- iii. Drinks - please bring water bottles to every practice! Even while in the water, athletes perspire and need to replenish liquids. Proper hydration can also help decrease cramping and fatigue. Please be aware that carbonated drinks (soda, seltzer water, etc.) can severely degrade your ability to sustain your underwater activity. Coaches recommend that athletes avoid carbonated drinks during the entire season. Carbonated beverages will NOT be allowed at practice.

c. Pool Time

Coaches will decide which routine needs additional work to be ready for competition. Team routines always require additional time due to the number of individuals involved. Solos will always be given the last priority as they focus on the individual and not team goals.

d. Independent work expectations

Coaches expect athletes to be serious about synchro. Athletes should take the opportunity to do workouts beyond the required swimming practices (weight machines if age 14 and over, aerobics, yoga, Pilates, etc). Because coaching time is limited, athletes should use this opportunity to work on additional skills as assigned by the coaching staff.

e. Alternates for routines

- i. Attendance: Missed practices because of illness, family, school, and religious reasons will be taken into consideration when coaches determine the makeup of routines for a particular meet.
- ii. If an athlete is selected to be an alternate for a routine, they should consider this to be a serious responsibility and an opportunity to learn additional skills. Coaches expect alternates to work as hard as team members and be ready to become full and experienced participants in the event that a regular member cannot swim. As an alternate, you might be asked for input on the design of a routine.

3. Clinics and Private Coaching

a. Clinics

Athletes may have the opportunity to participate in synchronized swim clinics. Coaches will advise athletes and families of which clinics are appropriate for the athlete's skill level. Attendance at limited-enrollment clinics is at the coaches' discretion. Clinic fees are not included in the team fees.

**b. Private Coaching**

If an athlete is receiving private synchronized swim coaching (any coaching outside of the regularly scheduled practices), this coaching must not interfere with the athlete's ability to attend and participate in regular practices. Coaches should be informed of any private coaching an athlete is receiving. Coaches can also advise on availability of private coaching opportunities.

Please remember that clinics and private coaching are opportunities to reinforce and add to skills learned in regular practices, not a replacement for team practices. Please also remember that not all athletes will be able to take advantage of these opportunities, and that the most important part of team training takes place at regularly scheduled practices.

4. Meets**a. Participation**

Synchronized swimming is primarily a team sport. If an athlete misses a meet, team members lose the chance to compete. As team members, athletes are expected to participate in all the required meets. Coaches will provide athletes and families with the schedule of meets at the beginning of the season. Coaches will expect athletes to notify the coaches if they or their family can foresee any conflicts ASAP. Should a routine qualify for the next level meet, athletes are expected to attend this meet as well. The schedule will include the dates of sectionals, zones, and nationals. Athletes and parents are requested to keep those dates open.

b. Conduct

When at meets and when gathered in public – we are representing the Boys & Girls Club of Western Broome. Our team's public image and behavior are important to us all.

c. Schedule at meets

A coach will provide a schedule for each meet telling athletes when they are expected to arrive and when they will be free to leave. At the meet, coaches will let athletes know what they are expected to do and when (i.e. eating, land drilling, hair gelling, pep talks, etc). Family help is appreciated, but please respect the schedules that have been set by the coach, as those schedules have been developed with the best interests of the *entire* team in mind.

d. Alternates

Swimmers who are entered in a meet as an alternate for a particular routine are expected to participate in all the activities of that routine, including land drilling, swimming warmups etc. Alternates are to wear their routine suit and hairpiece (with hair knoxed), alongside the primary swimmers. Coaches may make exceptions to this procedure when it is in the best interest of the swimmers.

e. Travel Arrangements

Arrangements will be made as a team for "away meets". We will plan to stay in the same hotel and will attempt to travel as a team to the extent it is convenient. There will be Volunteer Coordinators – "chaperones" and "food parents". All competitive age group athletes will stay in team rooms. Each room will have a designated chaperone that is responsible for many of the logistics of the meet.



Input from parents for preferences and needs of athletes is always welcome. If a family member is not accompanying the athlete to a meet, that athlete's parent(s) are responsible to find another parent to accept responsibility for their athlete. It is the parent's responsibility to provide all necessary medical information, contact info to the substitute parent, not the coordinators. We will make every effort to minimize the burden of travel expenses.

f. Away meets

A cooler with healthy snacks for the whole team will be arranged for meets whenever logistically possible.

g. Uniform

It is important that athletes appear in a neat, easy-to-recognize uniform. This is typically the team windsuit, team swimsuit and team cap. Spirit apparel is available in October through the Spirit Sale and throughout the year. Coaches will let athletes know which uniform is expected to worn at particular occasions. Parents are encouraged to support their athletes by wearing team shirts at meets (available through the Spirit Sale).

h. Supervision

During actual competition, please consider the coaches to be in charge of the athlete's time. They will manage athletes' schedules, keeping in mind the best interests of all athletes and families. Team Liaisons will work with the coaches to ensure optimal coordination for the entire group. Some responsibilities may include: ensuring athletes get to warm-ups, figures and routines on time. Seeing that the athlete eat well and get enough sleep. Manage finances and tracking expenses.

5. Meetings and Communication to and from Coaches and Parents

a. Parent meetings:

Meetings with athletes, parents and/or coaches will be held outside of practice time. Meetings will cover such topics as away meets, fund raising, financial planning and team guidelines, etc.

b. Open Communication:

Coaches intend to have open channel of communication with both athletes and their families. Please feel free to raise questions directly with the coaches outside of practice time.

c. Written/electronic communication:

Coaches will provide parents with electronic information regarding:

- Upcoming meets and clinics
- Schedules and announcements
- Merchandise orders
- Fundraising information
- Minutes from meetings
- Meet announcements and schedules
- Results from meets.

Please check with the athletes to see if any notices were sent home or posted on the board in the pool area.



Email/website – meet/clinic announcements will be on the Gaviata website (<http://www.bgcgaviatas.com>).

Coaches welcome discussion of personal issues (excluding other members of the team). Please speak with a coach to arrange a time to discuss any concerns. Coaches invite feedback from parents and athletes – both positive and areas of concern.

6. Procedures regarding abuse of Facebook and/or any other Social Media Network with regard to the BGC Gaviatas Synchronized Swim Team; BGC Gaviatas Swimmers; BGC Gaviatas coaches; BGC Gaviatas Parents; and/or any BGC Gaviatas information.

If, during a Synchronized Swim season, it is brought to the attention of the Administrative Head and/or Head Coach that comments, pictures, videos and/or items of question, have been posted under a BGC Gaviatas Swimmer, Parent, and/or Coaches Facebook and/or any other Social Media Network account, the Administrative Head and/or Head Coach will conduct an investigation into the allegations. If it is deemed that the so called items are not appropriate to the team atmosphere and/or overall integrity of the BGC Gaviatas Synchronized Swim Team, the Head Coach will discuss it with that particular person(s) involved and request that these particular items be deleted from Facebook and/or any other Social Media Network.

1. First Offense

A Verbal warning will be given to all the persons involved and documented by the Head Coach and maintained in the BGC Gaviatas Synchronized Swim Team files.

2. Second Offense

A Letter warning will be given to all the persons involved. It will be signed by the swimmer, parent, and/or coach involved. If it is a swimmer, the parents will also sign the letter acknowledging this action; and that they fully understand that a 3rd offense will be a condition of removal from the BGC Gaviatas Synchronized Swim Team.

3. Third Offense

Permanent removal from the BGC Gaviatas Synchronized Swim Team in every manner. All property belonging to the BGC Gaviatas Synchronized Swim Team (windsuits, team suits, routine suits, music cds, etc) will be collected immediately and access to BGC Gaviatas information immediately terminated.

7. Family Participation

a. Home Meets

The team is in the meet rotation of the Adirondack Association and is expected to host 1-3 meets per year. Athletes and one or more parents from each family is expected to help run the meet, in addition to any other Gaviata responsibility. This included athletes and parents of said athletes who are not participating in this particular meet.

**b. Away Meets**

Volunteer time at away meets helps support our association and make a good impression for our team. Adult help at scoring tables and computer room is frequently needed at away meets.

c. Fundraising

All team members and their families are expected to help in the team fundraising effort. Some fundraising may be a specific, i.e.) gel bag supplies; others will benefit certain groups, i.e.) 16-19 Big Pool time. Home meets are a major source of fundraising through concessions.

d. Additional involvement

Other family involvement may include:

- Becoming a judge
- Assisting coaches during practice
- Assisting with music or choreography
- Assisting with costume design and decorating
- Videotaping during practices and meets
- Providing seminars on diet, exercise, CPR
- Supervising weight training
- Participation as Parent Coordinators

8. Financial Responsibility**a. Team Fees**

Team fees are based on athletes' level of participation in the team program. The assessment fee may be paid in full or in installments. All fees are due to the Team Treasurer.

b. Membership

All team members are required to be General member of the Boys & Girls Club. The B&G Policy is that athletes are excluded from swimming if their financial responsibilities have not been met. This includes both team fees and Boys & Girls Club membership.

c. Financial Assistance

Families who need financial assistance or who would like to arrange a different payment schedule should contact Dirk Olds, Team Treasurer at 607-725-4786. All conversations will be held in confidence.

d. Additional Expenses

Additional expenses will occur throughout the season. Such expenses include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Black suit, white cap for figures
- Individual routine costumes and hairpieces – Generally, the team will cover ½ the cost of the team routine suit and it remains in the suit closet at the end of the season. Small routine suits (responsibility & costs) are the agreed on by the parents of those swimmers.
- Clinic fees
- Meet Entry Fees
- Travel expenses for away meets



Coordinators (TEAM MOM/DAD)

Coordinators:

- The Coordinator's responsibility is to be in constant communication with the coaches as to meet schedules, suits, clinics, etc. The Coordinator will also be in communication with the athlete parents to establish chaperones for the rooms. The coordinator and chaperones will coordinate with each other for food or shall deem another parent responsible for coordinating with the rest of the athlete families for food.
- Responsible for assessing and collecting a pre-determined amount of money from each athlete's family before the meet to cover hotel, food, as well as any other fees (if applicable). The Coordinator will make reservations at the host team's hotel or other suitable housing. When choosing other suitable housing, the coordinator will take into consideration the cost and the distance from the pool and level of quality.

Hotel Finances – the total hotel charges for the group shall be divided by the number of athletes in the groups and each athlete shall pay an equal share (the Chaperones will not be included in the total number of persons).

While at away meets, each team will have several team rooms with a designated chaperone. It is expected that all athletes will stay as a team at the designated hotel. In certain circumstances, and only **after** discussion with the team coach, an athlete may be allowed to stay in a separate room with her own family. However, in these instances the following must be adhered to for the benefit of the whole team and adherence to the established schedule at the meet:

1. Discussion with the team coach
2. The separate room **must** be at the same hotel as the team rooms.
3. The total cost of that room is wholly the athlete's cost.

Chaperones:

- Responsible for getting directions to the pool and other venues
- Responsible for driving athletes to and from the pool, meals and other social activities while at the meet. They will communicate with the athletes the day's schedule and make sure they have packed everything they need for the entire day.
- Responsible for enforcing light's out time set by the coaches
- Responsible for making sure athletes have enough time for wholesome and nutritional breakfast.
- Responsible for making sure athletes have enough to eat at the pool facility during a meet. A team cooler with appropriate snacks like water, cheese/crackers/fruit.
- Responsible for ensuring the athletes are knocked at the appropriate time, along with any other parent that is at the meet.
- Responsible for ensuring all headpieces and makeup are on before competition. Please recruit help from other parents.



- Responsible for athletes receiving any medications according to the schedule provided by the athlete and their family.
- Responsible for arranging any medical care necessary, if the athlete's parent is not present at the meet.

What to Pack for a Meet Away and Locally

Traveling Locally

When traveling to a local meet (i.e. one that you are driving to), please remember to bring all of the following items. **Please label ALL of your swimsuits with your name and "BGC Gaviatas", so that any lost items can be returned as quickly as they are found.** You should plan to wear at least your team jacket when arriving at a competition; coaches will inform you if other parts of the team uniform should be worn.

Things to bring:

- Routine suits (solo, duet, trio, and/or team)
- Headpieces
- Black suit and white cap
- Blue team suit and cap
- Clear goggles and nose clips (at least 3 pairs of nose clips)
- Team uniform – pants, shorts, t-shirt, white sneakers, white socks, flip-flops, etc.
- Competition make-up
- CD for land drilling
- Player for land drilling
- Swimsuit repair kits – scissors, thread, safety pins, extra sequins, extra gems, etc.
- Extra warm-up swimsuit, just in case
- Towels
- Bags for wet stuff
- Toiletries
- Any medications you need (including ibuprofen, asthma inhalers, etc.)
- A POSITIVE ATTITUDE!

Traveling to an Away Meet

When traveling to an away meet (one requiring a flight), please pack your luggage as described below. We want to make sure that if any luggage ever gets lost, we have everything in our carry-ons that we will need to compete. When traveling as a team, all athletes **MUST** wear their team jacket so that we can be identified as a group – please wear it



to the airport. Do not over pack your carry-on, as some airlines strictly enforce the sizes of carry-on bags.

To pack in your carry-on bags:

- Routine suits (solo, duet, trio, and/or team)
- Headpieces
- Black suit and white cap
- Blue team suit and cap
- Goggles and nose clips
- Competition makeup (do not pack the entire Caboodle – bring the minimum items needed. If you own a team blush, shadow, lipstick, etc. make sure to pack those in the carry-on!)
- Cassette or CD for land drilling
- Sequins/ gems from swimsuit repair kits – NO SCISSORS OR SHARP OBJECTS!!
- Any medications you need (including ibuprofen, asthma inhalers, etc.)
- Book, magazine, personal CD player, etc. for plane trip
- A POSITIVE ATTITUDE!

To pack in your checked luggage:

- A slip of paper with your NAME and PHONE # of your home and the hotel you'll be at
- Team uniform – pants, shorts, t-shirt, white sneakers, white socks, flip-flops, etc.
- Caboodle with extra makeup
- Towels
- Bags for wet stuff
- Player for land drilling
- Extra swimsuit, extra goggles, extra nose clips
- Outfit for social (if flying to Nationals)
- Toiletries – shampoo/conditioner, make-up remover, etc.
- All the other clothes/ shoes/ personal stuff you want for the length of the trip



Getting Parents on the Team

A successful synchronized swimming experience depends on parents being proactively trained to play the right role on the parent-athlete-coach team.

Parents' Role:

- 1) **DON'T COACH.** Leave coaching to coaches. This includes pre-competition psyching, motivation, after-competition critiquing, setting goals, enforcing additional cross-training, etc.
- 2) **SUPPORT THE COACH.** Your coach is the expert. They need your support for everyone to “win.”
- 3) **SUPPORT THE PROGRAM.** Get involved. Volunteer. Help out at meets, fund-raisers, etc.
- 4) **BE YOUR CHILD'S BEST FAN.** Support your athlete unconditionally. Do not withdraw love when your athlete performs poorly. Your athlete should **never** have to perform to win your love.
- 5) **SUPPORT AND ROOT FOR ALL ATHLETES ON THE TEAM.** Foster teamwork. Your athlete's teammates are **not** the enemy. When they score or place higher than your athlete, your athlete now has a wonderful opportunity to improve.
- 6) **DO NOT BRIBE OR OFFER INCENTIVES.** Your job is **not** to motivate. Leave this to the coaching staff. Bribes will distract your athlete from proper competition concentration.
- 7) **TAKE YOUR CONCERNS AND PROBLEMS DIRECTLY TO THE COACH.** If you have a problem with the coach, do not go to other parents to discuss it. Go straight to the coach involved. Talking behind the coach's back will not get you what you want.
- 8) **UNDERSTAND AND DISPLAY APPROPRIATE MEET BEHAVIOR.** Remember your athlete's self-esteem and performance is at stake. Be supportive, cheer, and be appropriate.
- 9) **MONITOR YOUR CHILD'S STRESS LEVEL AT HOME.** Keep an eye on your athlete to make sure he or she is handling stress effectively from the various activities in their lives.
- 10) **MONITOR EATING AND SLEEPING HABITS.** Be sure your athlete is eating the proper foods and getting adequate rest.



- 11) **HELP YOUR CHILDREN KEEP THEIR PRIORITIES STRAIGHT.** Help your athlete maintain a focus on school work, relationships and other important things in life besides swimming. Also, if your athlete has made a commitment to swimming, help him or her keep the priorities around this in mind.
- 12) **'REALITY TEST' FOR YOUR CHILD.** If your athlete comes out of the pool with a personal best score and a last-place finish, help them understand that this is a “win.” Help them keep things in their proper perspective, including losses, disappointments and failures.
- 13) **KEEP SWIMMING IN ITS PROPER PERSPECTIVE.** Swimming should not be larger than life for you. If your athlete’s performance elicits strong emotions, keep these away from them. Remember, your relationship with your children will continue **long after** their competitive synchronized swimming days are over. Keep **your** goals and needs out of the pool.
- 14) **BE AN APPROPRIATE LIAISON TO THE COACH.** Keep the coach informed as to how your athlete is responding to the experience (when appropriate). If your athlete is having trouble with something that happened in the pool, or with something the coach said, help them deal with it, and if necessary, speak directly with the coach.

Adapted from “Getting Parents on the Team” by Dr. Alan Goldberg



Do You Know How to Feed Your Child Athlete?

All kids need to eat balanced meals to ensure a healthy diet, so does it really make a difference if your child is on a sports team or working out? Sure it does! You may think that those long hours at the gym or the daily practices after school can only make your child healthier, and they certainly are a part of a healthy lifestyle - but only if your child is eating the right foods to support increased activity.

What Are the Nutritional Needs of Young Athletes?

The food guide pyramid actually is designed to meet the needs of active kids, according to Jessica Donze, a pediatric nutrition therapist. This means that if your child's diet is in line with the pyramid, he's probably getting the nutrition he needs.

But kids who are involved in strenuous athletic activities (such as cross-country running or competitive swimming) may need to consume more food. "Eating healthy for sports is an extension of eating healthy for life," Donze says. She recommends that young athletes eat regularly, not miss meals, and especially never miss breakfast. She also suggests lots of fruits and vegetables to provide vitamins and minerals.

Complex carbohydrates such as pasta, rice, bread, and cereal form the foundation of a solid sports diet. You can explain to your child that these carbohydrates are like fuel for the body. Without sufficient complex carbohydrates, he's running on empty.

Your child's involvement in sports is a great opportunity to communicate with him about the importance of healthy eating. An athlete's desire to perform well in sports can help your child focus on eating well for good performance throughout his life.

Stress the importance of variety in your child's diet. "There are 40 different nutrients that your child needs," says Jackie Berning of the American Dietetic Association and a sports nutrition specialist. "They're not going to get them all from just a few kinds of foods."

To keep your child interested in eating healthy food for an active lifestyle, introduce new foods or new food combinations often.

Another way to provide kids with the complete nutrition they need for sports is by keeping their diet colorful. Most foods containing vitamins and minerals (such as spinach, carrots, squash, and peppers) are colored, Donze explains. A variety of colors of food typically is a sign of a variety of nutrients.

In addition, natural or lightly processed foods, such as whole wheat breads and baked potatoes, are more wholesome choices than heavily processed foods, like white breads and potato chips. Usually the less processed the food, the greater the nutritional value.



Drink Up!

Your child should drink water or other fluids throughout the day but especially during and after periods of physical activity. Berning suggests 1 cup for every half-hour to an hour of activity, depending on the individual. So, if your child's volleyball tournament will last about 2 hours, he should drink between 2 and 4 cups of water throughout the event and have another 2 cups after the game, too.

Children often fail to recognize or respond to feelings of thirst. This means your child should be encouraged to drink before he feels thirsty. Urine color is a good measure of hydration. If urine is clear or the color of pale lemonade, the hydration level is good. If a child's urine is dark, like the color of apple juice, however, he may be on the way to dehydration or heatstroke.

Although many sports drinks are available, plain water is usually what kids need. Sports drinks advertise that they replace electrolytes - such as the sodium and potassium lost in sweat. But in most cases, lost electrolytes can be replenished by a good meal after the activity.

Endurance-sport participants are the exception. If your child is involved in intense exertion for more than 2 hours, some type of sports drink may be beneficial for replenishing carbohydrates. This is because the sugar (a simple carbohydrate) found in such drinks can serve as a temporary replacement for complex carbohydrates, assuming your child eats well before and after the activity. Soda and sports drinks with caffeine should be avoided because caffeine can increase urine output and therefore increase the risk of dehydration.

Pressures Facing Athletes

Some school-age athletes face unique pressures involving nutrition and body weight. In sports such as football, kids may feel they need to radically increase body weight. In other sports such as wrestling, kids often try to achieve maximum strength at the lowest possible weight, which can lead to crash dieting and other harmful eating habits.

In either case, your best bet is to emphasize performance. Healthy eating supports healthy performance. Unhealthy eating leads to lower strength and endurance and poor mental concentration. Consider the example of wrestling. To qualify for the lowest possible weight class, wrestlers sometimes try to spit, vomit, or sweat enough water from their bodies to make the weight.

"They think they can do without the water," Donze says, "but muscles are 75% water. Without water, muscles lose much of their effectiveness."

Similar performance issues arise when kids try to increase their weight too fast. When a person overeats, the food the body cannot immediately use gets stored as fat. As a result, kids who overeat may gain weight, but their physical fitness will be diminished.



Game Day

Your child should eat well on game days, but make sure she eats early enough so that there's time to digest before game time. For a full meal, that usually means 2 to 3 hours before the event. The meal itself should not be very different from what your child has been eating throughout his training.

"It's a cumulative process," Donze says. "Don't eat well only on game days and expect to be at your best. The game-day meal shouldn't be that different than the rest of the week. You should be right in line and feeling good already."

Game-day meals should be based on complex carbohydrates and exclude excessive fat and protein that take longer to digest. The nearer in time to the competition the less food your child should take in. Remember that a well-balanced meal afterward, including some protein and fat, as well as carbohydrates, is equally important for your young athlete.

And remember, when packing his bag for the big day, your child should also pack a water bottle or sports drink.

Meal and Snack Suggestions

Lower-fat, high-carbohydrate (especially complex-carbohydrate) snacks and meals are best.

Yogurt with some granola and a banana would make a good breakfast. For a lunchtime meal, serve bean burritos with some low-fat cheese, lettuce, and tomatoes. Dinner could be grilled chicken breasts with steamed rice and vegetables.

For snacks on the go, try pretzels, raisins, or fruit.

Healthy meals and snacks provide a solid foundation to help your young athlete enjoy his physical fitness.

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From KidsHeath website

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A Spectator's Guide

What to watch for: During the routines, watch for these key elements:

- **Synchronization** - is the art of becoming one with the music and your teammates. The difficulty of staying synchronized increases with the number of athletes performing at once. Approximately 40-60% of their routines are performed upside down in the pool. Under water speakers help them stay synchronized, and NO, they are not standing on the bottom.
- **Creative Action** - is judged on how well the athletes choreograph their original routines to selected music. The basic routine may be "jazzed up" by adding original movements made by combining different parts of existing figures and positions.
- **Transitions** - are the change from one movement to another, whether individual figures or group patterns, and they should be smooth and graceful. To prove how physically demanding this sport is, try to hold your breath for as long as the athletes are under water. Now, imagine holding your breath and running at the same time. You should have an idea of the endurance needed to perform a 3 ½ to 5 minute routine.
- **Use of the Pool** - during a routine reveals the athlete's endurance. Synchronized Swimming athletes should aim at hitting all corners of the pool throughout their routine.
- **Execution** - of moves relates to how well an athlete controls her body. In other words, her body movements should be precise and clearly defined. For example, as she "jets" out of the water, her body should be elevated well above the surface of the water.



Hair Gel-ling (aka Knoxing)

For Synchro meets and the Annual Synchro Show, the athlete's hair must be put up. In order to help it stay in place during the routines, unflavored Knox gelatin is used to coat the hair. It is a relatively simple process.

You should have the following items on hand:

- Knox **un-flavored** gelatin (found in most grocery stores)
- A cup for mixing
- Plastic fork for mixing
- Comb (one with two thicknesses of teeth work well)
- Old towel
- Bobby pins
- Hair elastics (size should be based on swimmer's hair thickness)
- Hair Net (sold at Wal-Mart – the Goody brand come 3 in a package in different hair colors)
- Paint or Pastry Brush (1 ½ inches wide is a good size)

Step 1

Put the hair in a high ponytail and braid the ponytail. If the hair is very thick, sometimes it is easier to make 2 or 3 braids of equal size. Wrap the braid around the base of the ponytail to form a bun, secure with lots of bobby pins.

Step 2

Take the hair net, cover the bun, twisting and re-covering until it is tight, pin with lots of bobby pins. The bun should be tight but not too uncomfortable!

Step 3

Put old towel around athlete's shoulders (to catch the drips). Mix 2 packages of the Knox with hot water, the hotter the water, the better. Approximately a 1/3 of a cup of water is just about right. Start with less than that, stir, and then continue to add a little bit of water until the consistency is right ... about the consistency of paint.

Step 4

With the paint or pastry brush, brush on the Knox mixture onto hair, a section at a time. Use the comb to incorporate it underneath the top layer of the hair. Above the nape of the neck, insert two X's using bobby pins to help keep the hair in place. Once entire head is done, do a quick final coat with the brush. Brush to saturate the bun with Knox mixture. Time is of the essence during this step, as the gel hardens and becomes lumpy as it cools and becomes more difficult to work with. Then pin small hairs and "ends" around the hairline with bobby pins as needed.



Taking Care of Suits

Bathing suits are specially designed for swimming; they are completely different from your everyday clothing and need to be treated with extra care. Most swimsuits are made from very unique materials and will wear down and become damaged if placed in the washing machine or dryer. Following these simple tips will help to keep your bathing suit looking good and lasting a long time.

What you will need:

- Sink or small tub
- Detergent made for swimwear*, or gentle soap such as Woolite
- Towels
- Flat surface

**You can generally find detergent for swimwear at stores that specialize in swimwear or online.*

Cleaning Swimwear: The Process:

1. Rinse your bathing suit thoroughly in the sink or tub with cool water.
2. Fill sink or tub with cold water and add amount of swimwear detergent indicated on the product package. If using hand soap, add about a teaspoon per gallon of water.
3. Place bathing suit in the sudsy water and gently massage with your hands (DO NOT wring or twist bathing suit as doing so may damage the material).
4. Remove bathing suit, drain sudsy water from sink or tub and refill with fresh cool water.
5. Place bathing suit in the fresh water and gently massage to rinse out soap residue. Again, DO NOT twist or wring the suit as this may cause damage.
6. Repeat steps 4 and 5 until no soap remains in the bathing suit and the water stays clear.
7. Remove bathing suit from the water, gently squeeze excess water (again, never twist or wring the bathing suit)
8. Lay a towel out on a flat surface and lay the bathing suit flat on top of the towel to air dry. DO NOT place the bathing suit in the sun as this may cause fading.

Additional Tips:

- NEVER wash your bathing suit in a washing machine as the agitation and detergent will break down the materials quickly and significantly reduce the life of your bathing suit.
- NEVER dry your bathing suit in a dryer as the heat and mechanics of the dryer will break down the elastic and other material on the bathing suit.
- ALWAYS rinse your bathing suit thoroughly with cool water after swimming. Pool water residue (i.e. chlorine), salt water, sand, suntan lotion and other contaminants will cause the fabric to become brittle or faded, and will significantly shorten the useful life of your suit. Even if you don't have time to wash it thoroughly a good rinsing will help reduce the effects.
- NEVER use bleach on your bathing suit as this may cause damage and discoloration.
- Avoid using the bathing suit "wringers" available in many swimming pool locker rooms. While these devices may remove excess water, they are very rough on the material, can snag the fabric and may damage the elastic of the bathing suit.
- Always air dry your bathing suit by laying it flat. If you hang the suit, it may cause it to lose its shape.
- Never dry your bathing suit in the sun as it may cause fading or discoloration.