



Wicklow Swimming Club

New Members' Handbook



1. Welcome! 😊

First of all, on behalf of the committee of Wicklow Swimming Club, we would like to welcome each new member to the club. The club has continually grown in size year on year, with membership numbers now in excess of 360. As the club grows from strength to strength, it prides itself on having a 'community' feel where everyone is made to feel welcome. The club caters for all age groups with weekly junior, youth, intermediate and adult races.

The club currently has a Facebook page and website which are located at:

- www.wicklowsc.com
- <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Wicklowsc-Swimming-Club>

2. Equipment needed to start

You don't have to spend a fortune on gear when joining the club, but there are some basics which you will need. These include:

- **Swimming togs** - please refer to club rule book and regular emails which note those togs which are permitted and not permitted.
- **Swimming goggles**
- **Swimming hat** - the Wicklow Swimming Club hat must be purchased from the Treasurer at a cost of €8 before you race your first race. This is mandatory for all swimmers.
- **Ear plugs** – Most open sea swimmers wear some form of ear plugs, from cotton wool covered in Vaseline to plastic or mouldable ear plugs.
- **Towel** – Robies are very popular and cost about €35 - €45. Normal towels are also fine.
- **Flip-flops or crocs** - to assist in walking to race starts.
- **Hat/Beanie** – these are good for after races as will assist in increasing body temperature

Please note that the **use of wetsuits or any other type of swimwear which provides extra buoyancy is forbidden** for all open sea swims. If a swimmer decides to wear a wetsuit they will not qualify for any league points and will not be eligible to win any prizes.



3. Weekly Swimming Races

a. Club Fixture List

The swimming club fixture list detailing all races and race times is available on the club website. A copy will also be sent to you via email/post upon joining the club and before the race season begins. The club holds races on Wednesday evenings and Sunday mornings, weather permitting. There may also be races on other days during the week or changes to races so all members are advised to familiarise themselves with the fixtures list, review the website and Facebook for regular updates. Text messages are also sent to all club members so it is advised you provide a mobile phone number to the Secretary upon joining.

b. Race Registration

Race registration closes 15 minutes before the advertised start time of each race. This is strictly enforced and anyone arriving after the registration closes will not be eligible to swim. Arrive early to avoid disappointment. There will be a Race Registrar on the beach wearing a high-vis jacket who you must register with.

c. Race Fees

Race entry fee is €2 Euro for adults and €1 for juniors, intermediates and youths. The family fee per race is €5.

d. Handicap

The races are handicapped, except for a minority of "sealed handicaps" where all swimmers start at the same time. Handicapped races mean that the slowest ranked swimmers will start first and the other swimmers will follow in order of speed with the fastest ranked swimmer (scratch swimmer) starting last. The scratch swimmer will wear a special club red hat for spectator purposes.



The handicap for each race is decided by the Handicapper. Each swimmer will be given their handicap when they register for the race. Swimmers' handicaps will be modified over the course of a season based on the length of the race and their performance over a number of races. This is based on their swim time, as well as their finishing position.

"Sealed handicap" races are where the handicaps are not revealed to swimmers before the start of the race. All swimmers start at the same time, but it is advisable for slower swimmers to allow the faster swimmers to go ahead of them at the very beginning. Race times are recorded at the finish of the race, and the swimmer with the fastest time, less their handicap, is declared the winner. This is often not the first swimmer to cross the finish line, so much of the excitement is in guessing who the prize winners are!

e. Race course

Races will vary in length from 500m in length up to 2000m. The race course will be marked by a number of buoys and will be described by race officials at the race briefing at the start of each race (approx. 15 minutes before the start). Swimmers must obey the race course passing around the outside of each buoy marking the course. Failure to follow the course will lead to disqualification.

f. Pre-race check

All swimmers must ensure that they are wearing their Wicklow Swimming Club hat with their number clearly visible. It is recommended you ask another swimmer to check that your hat is on correctly with the number clearly visible and not obstructed by goggle straps as this may cause difficulties in recording at race finish.

g. Race start

Each race will be started by the Handicapper or race starter. The handicap times will be called out by the Handicapper and each swimmer should start swimming from the start line when their time is called. Starting before your allocated time will lead to disqualification.



h. During the race

Safety during the race

If you find yourself in difficulty during a swim, do not panic. Tread water and raise your hand (as you did in your trial) and one of the rescue boats will assist you. Remember, your life is a lot more important than a sea swim! Educate yourself and do not push beyond your limits in this regard.

Sighting

When covering large distances, swimmers may veer off course due to current, waves, wind, and poor visibility. Typically, buoys are stationed periodically across a large expanse to provide guidance. However, buoys are often invisible due to interference from choppy water and reduced visibility through goggles. Swimmers are encouraged to 'triangulate' by looking for two aligned, easily visible objects on land that are directly behind the destination (such as the end of a pier as it lines up with a hilltop), and to make sure they continue to appear aligned during the race.

Swimming around buoys

When approaching or swimming around buoys, it is advisable not to stop swimming. Swimmers are also advised not to breast-stroke as this may cause injury to other swimmers.

If you feel that you are a weaker swimmer, it is recommended that you swim wide of the buoys to allow the faster swimmers swim through.

i. Race finish

The race finish will be at a fixed point and is typically marked with a large orange buoy. The finish will either involve the handing out of place cards or more typically there will be race officials who will note the number of your hat as you pass the finish line. The finishing positions are decided on the first swimmers to finish irrespective of handicap (except in 'sealed handicap' races.)



Swimmers are advised to continue to swim well past the finish line to allow swimmers behind them to cross the line and also to ensure that all swim times are recorded correctly.

j. Checking out after each race

For safety reasons, all members must check-out after each race. The Race Registrar, wearing a high-vis jacket, will be as close to the finish line as possible and each swimmer must approach this person and provide them with their name. Failure to do so may result in disqualification from the race.

k. Prize Giving

For Junior Challenge, Youth, Intermediate and Senior races, prizes will be awarded for the top 3 swimmers in each race. Normally the prize-giving ceremony for all races (including Youth and Intermediate) takes place on the beach immediately after the senior race. In bad weather conditions, the location of the prize giving will be announced by a member of the committee. Note that in some races, more prizes and spot prizes may be presented. After some races, e.g. Club Vartry, the prize-giving takes place in the pub of the sponsor, i.e. Fitzpatrick's pub in Rathnew later in the afternoon of the race.

For Junior Sprint races, league points are awarded depending on finishing position. Prizes for leagues are presented at the Junior Awards night which usually takes place in early September. All Junior swimmers are awarded with a medal for participating in the Junior Sprints on this Junior Awards night, and there are also prizes for Junior league winners for each month of the season, i.e. 1st, 2nd, 3rd in June, 1st, 2nd, 3rd in July and 1st, 2nd, 3rd in August. Youth and Intermediate league prizes are also awarded on this night.



I. Swimmer of the Year

For senior swimmers, points will be awarded to swimmers for each race based on their finishing positions and will be totalled to form an on-going league during the season. Please refer to the rule book/constitution which details the points obtained for each position. All swimmers receive 5 points for competing in a race. The Top 10 swimmers for both male and female will receive additional points. Fastest swimmer points are also awarded (separate league).

There is a club league available on the website and the prize-giving for this league is presented at the Annual Dinner Dance.

m. Post-race drinks & race results

After the race and prize-giving, the majority of the club attend Philip Healy's pub on the Fitzwilliam Square for some post-race cold and hot beverages!!!

The race times will also usually be available at this time. Results will also be posted to the club website approximately 3-4 days after each race. Many swimmers note their race times versus other swimmers of similar speeds, and much of the fun is in noting the differences in these 'races within the race'!

Note that it is customary for all cup winners, senior, youth and intermediate to attend Phil Healy's after the race and celebrate their win by filling the cup with a drink of their choice, either alcoholic (seniors only) or non-alcoholic or even sweets... the choice is yours!

4. Social Events

Each year there are a number of social events organised: watch the website and Facebook page for details. Key events include:

- **Swimming Pool Gala - May**
- **New members induction meeting – June**
- **New members night – June / July**
- **Kids' fun day – August**



- **Fancy dress social night – August / September**
- **Club awards dinner dance – October / November**
- **AGM – October**
- **Plus many more...**

5. WSC Committee / Captains and Officers

The list of all current committee members, captains and children’s liaison officers are listed below:

POSITION	NAME	MOBILE NUMBER	E-MAIL ADDRESS
Chairperson	John McCall	087-9890181	johnwsc@mccall.ie
Vice Chairperson	Mary Aldridge	086-8282356	maldridge8@eircom.net
Handicapper	Tom O'Neill	086-8042341	tpjoneile@hotmail.com
Treasurer	Niall Jameson	086-3950088	nialljameson2@gmail.com
Secretary	Jane O'Neill	086-8537619	wickswimclub@gmail.com
Safety Advisor	Carmel O'Toole	086-8164235	carmella62@eircom.net
Safety Officer	Sack Doyle	087-2707803	sacdoyle1@gmail.com
Ladies' Captain	Aimee Armstrong	087-7442469	sissykate_80@hotmail.com
Gents' Captain	Sean Dunne	087- 7774977	thedunneswicklow@eircom.net
Membership Secretary	Ruth O'Neill	086-2266315	ruthoneil@eircom.net
Committee Member	Sahoko Blake	087-6836335	sahoko@iolfree.ie
Committee Member	Peter O'Reilly (BIP)	087-6173799	bip2000@hotmail.com
Committee Member	Clare Moelders	087-8147720	cmmoelders@iolfree.ie
Committee Member	Angela Leonard	087-6608152	healya@hotmail.com

6. Club Children’s Officers & Designated Person

The Children’s Officers for Wicklow Swimming Club are:

Joanna Hamilton	087-7584479	j.hamilton@mail.com
Dermot Hickey	087-2852445	m.sillery@haughtonmccarroll.ie

The Club Designated Person is:

- John McCall – contact details as noted above.

Junior, Intermediate and Youth swimmers, as well as their parents, should be familiar with these people and their responsibilities. More information on this topic



can be found in our new health and safety statement and the associated appendices. These documents will be available on our website shortly and can be emailed/posted directly to you if would like.

7. Club Training & Pool Sessions

a. Pool Swimming

Swimming lane training sessions are in blocks of 10 weeks from late September through to early May each year - watch the Facebook page and website for details on the next session. All levels are catered for with coaches at each session. Swimmers are divided into lanes with other swimmers of similar ability. Swimming sessions are heavily subsidised by the club but there is a cost of €50 for 10 sessions.

- Coral Leisure Wicklow, Station Road, Wicklow Town, - Tuesday morning 7am to 8am.
- Coral Leisure Wicklow, Station Road, Wicklow Town, - Wednesday evening 7pm to 8pm.
- Coral Leisure Wicklow, Station Road, Wicklow Town, - Thursday evening 8pm to 9pm.

Membership has to be paid in full to attend any of these pool sessions.

b. Sea Swimming Coaching Sessions

The club does not organise any sea-swimming coaching or training sessions. For all new members wishing to practice in the sea, it is advised to contact a member of the committee who will provide you with contact numbers of numerous individuals who swim regularly each day and evening during the summer. For safety reasons, it is advised to swim with groups of individuals rather than swimming on your own. Also, as the water temperature can vary greatly from one week to the next, it is also important that you acclimatise yourself to the water and do so regularly.

8. Swim Ireland & Open Sea Races

The club shall be affiliated to Swim Ireland or any Association, which may succeed Swim Ireland. A large percentage of the membership fee is paid to Swim Ireland for insurance purposes. All swimmers must be registered with Swim Ireland before their first competitive swim.



In order to be eligible to swim in any open sea event you must be affiliated to Swim Ireland.

Please refer to the Swim Ireland website, the Rule Book and Constitution for further details.

There are other Open Sea Swims held in various locations in Dublin. Once you are a member of Swim Ireland, you are eligible to participate in these races. Please go to the Swim Leinster website for details of these. On regular occasions, a number of club members attend these races, so ask other members and you may be able to car pool.

9. Club Gear

The club is in the process of organising Club gear, including t-shirts, hoodies and hats which all members can purchase. Further information on this will be provided over the coming weeks.

10. How the club is funded

The club is a non-profit organisation so all funds and fees are re-invested back into the club. The club runs a number of events each year to raise funds for the club along with the membership fees. These include (to name but a few):

- Table quiz
- Fancy dress social night
- 3 Open Sea Swims

All members are encouraged to take part in the 3 Open Sea swims but your help is required before and after the event for set-up and clean-up. Members will also be requested to bring sandwiches etc. to the event but this will be specified in advance of each race. Please watch the website and Facebook page for regular updates.

NB: These are key events for the club throughout the year so your support is essential.



11. Additional information

Please note that our Club Rule book and Constitution are available on the website or upon request from the Club Secretary. The information contained in these takes precedence over any information contained in this handbook.

***"I wouldn't say anything is impossible. I think that everything is possible as long as you put your mind to it and put the work and time into it".
Michael Phelps***

