

2026-27

Amherst TigerSharks Swim Club **Club Handbook**



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Welcome!

Thank you for choosing the Amherst TigerSharks! We are a year-round, competitive USA Swimming club (not a school team) based out of Amherst Middle School, for youths ages 6-18. We are a nonprofit organization and part of the Niagara LSC (Local Swim Committee). Head Coach Mike Giancarlo, also varsity coach at Amherst High School, leads an experienced and enthusiastic team of coaches.

Our mission is to provide a safe and supportive environment in which we can instill our core values of Courage, Conscientiousness, Commitment, Resilience, and Passion. Our members will be empowered to reach their full potential as athletes and leaders in the community.

We hope you enjoy your time with our team. Please take the time to read through our handbook in order to understand the requirements of joining our team. If you ever have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask!

Photography Opt-Out: Throughout the season, we feature photos of our swimmers online and in the newspaper. If you would like to opt out, please contact us at amhersttigersharks@gmail.com

Team Leadership

Our coaches and board members may be contacted at any point throughout the season if you have any questions or concerns. All of our board members are also veteran swim parents. Questions about specific practice groups should be directed to the coach leading that squad.

Head Coach/Black Squad Coach:	Mike Giancarlo	mikegiancarlo26@gmail.com
Asst. Head Coach/ White and Orange Squad Coach:	Bill Niblock	coach.b@verizon.net
Teal Squad Lead Coaches:	Mariah Glass	glassmariah@gmail.com
	Liz Schiffhauer	lizschiffhauer@gmail.com
Assistant Coaches:	Matthew Koeppel	
	Tess Minigell	
	Ari Stucker	
	Mark Wittman	
Board President:	Jessica Mitrovits	starfish3b@aol.com
Board Vice-President:	VACANT	
Board Co-Treasurers:	Stephen Cammarata	smcammarata@yahoo.com
	Erin Barnes	barnes.erin@aol.com
Board Safe Sport Rep:	Emily Vezina	evezina46@gmail.com
Board Secretary:	VACANT	
Volunteer Coordinator:	Colin Henry	colinmhenry@gmail.com
General Team Info:	Mike Giancarlo	amhersttigersharks@gmail.com
Niagara Registrar:	Rick Aronberg	registrar@niagaraswim.org

Team Communication

You can connect with the TigerSharks on:

- Facebook Team Page: facebook.com/amhersttigersharks
- Instagram: instagram.com/amhersttigersharks
- Website: amhersttigersharks.org

Notifications of canceled practices (due to weather or school closings) will be announced via email.

Getting Started

In order to participate with the team, each swimmer must complete the online registration process. Swimmers must also purchase a USA Swimming membership. Once you register for a season or a session, team and USA Membership fees are non-refundable. You are still responsible for the full season fee even when paying in installments.

Swimmers and their parents or guardians must read the Team Code of Conduct (found at the end of this handbook). Joining the team is an agreement to follow team and USA Swimming rules.

Membership Options and Discounts

Every member is required to have a credit or bank card on file in our Team Unify system through which all payments (membership charges, meet fees, merchandise, etc.) will be charged.

	SHORT COURSE (Sept - Mar)				ANNUAL (Sept - Aug)
Practice Group	Short Course (Sept – Mar) <i>Registration opens in August</i>	High School or Catholic Short Course (Sept – Mar) <i>Registration opens in August</i>	Long Course (Apr – Aug) <i>Registration opens in March</i>	College Conditioning (Sept – Aug) <i>Registration opens in August</i>	Annual (Sept – Aug) <i>Registration opens in August</i>
Black 5-6 practices/week	\$1274*	\$1141*	\$700	\$350	\$1704*
Teal 4-5 practices/week	\$1197*	\$1043*	\$620	N/A	\$1572*
Orange 3-4 practices/week	\$987*	\$868*	\$505	N/A	\$1320*
White 3-4 practices/week	\$945*	\$840*	\$480	N/A	\$1248*

**Please note: Paying your membership in installments is not a monthly or partial season membership.
The entire amount will be charged even if your swimmer does not finish the season.**

Other Membership Notes:

- All swimmers must be registered with USA Swimming. Parents are responsible for registering their swimmer with USA Swimming through the Swims 3.0 system. You will pay that fee directly to USA Swimming. More information will be provided after registration.
- We offer a 5 percent discount per athlete for families with multiple swimmers for all registrations except High School / Catholic Short Course rates and Full Year Memberships.
- Registrations will not be pro-rated if a swimmer joins late, or refunded if a swimmer leaves the team before the end of a season.
- Installment payment option is only available for swimmers who are signed up by 10/31 for short course, and by 5/31 for long course.
- If a swimmer has a balance on their account after charges are completed at the beginning of the month (due to an expired credit card, etc.) they will have two weeks to update their payment method. After that point if there is still a balance on their account they will not be permitted to swim with the team until the balance is paid.

Transferring From Another Team

If your swimmer is joining the TigerSharks from another USA Swimming team, please let us know. We will take care of updating your membership information. (If you are transferring mid-season and have already purchased a USA Swimming membership, you do not have to purchase it again. There is, however, a small transfer fee charged by USA Swimming.)

Two-Week Trial Period

Swimmers who have not previously swam with the TigerSharks are welcome to a two-week trial period during which they may attend the full number of practices attended by their practice group. Before attending their first practice, trial swimmers must complete registration (so that we have all guardian and emergency contact information). [REGISTRATION](#) is available on our website. After the initial two-week period, members are financially responsible for the entire session.

Practice Groups

Swimmers are assigned to a group by age and skill level, based on the coach's assessment. The goal is to have each athlete in a group which provides the best potential for growth. For the first two weeks of practice, new swimmers should attend practice groups according to their age. Coaches will make any necessary adjustments after observing swimmers.

NOTE: The grouping criteria on the next few pages are meant to be a guideline only. Group assignments are entirely at the discretion of the coaching staff.

White Group

Ages 5-10 - Novice swimmers who are able to swim at least one unassisted length of the pool in both freestyle and backstroke. This group focuses on the basics of all four strokes (freestyle, backstroke, butterfly, breaststroke) and will also work on proper dives and turns. Swimmers will be taught proper lane etiquette.

- Requirements to join group:
 - ☐ Ages 5-10
 - ☐ Can swim 25 yards of freestyle continuously and unassisted
 - ☐ Can swim 25 yards on backstroke continuously and unassisted
 - ☐ Kick 50 yards with a kickboard continuously & unassisted
- Skills to master
 - ☐ Ready position
 - ☐ Streamline
 - ☐ Complete dive progression from deck
 - ☐ Proper breathing
 - ☐ Understand IM order
 - ☐ Proper finishes/touches for all 4 strokes
 - ☐ Circle swimming
 - ☐ Intro to pace clock
- Competition/Attendance Expectation
 - ☐ Regularly attend at least 2 days a week, can practice up to 4 times a week
 - ☐ Attends all home meets & at least 1 of 3 Super STAR Series meets
- Threshold Expectations to Move to Orange
 - ☐ Can swim 300 yards without stopping

Character Development (Life Skills)

1. Is comfortable in a practice setting with several swimmers
2. Ability to follow directions
3. Good listening skills

Orange Group

Ages 8-12 – Intermediate swimmers learning to master each of the four competitive strokes. Swimmers are given a more structured practice. The goal for this group is to be able to legally compete in all four strokes. Swimmers complete workouts based on the pace clock. Sets consist of 50s and eventually 100s.

- Requirements to join group:
 - ☐ Ages 8-12
 - ☐ All skills & threshold expectations from White complete
- Skills to master
 - ☐ Underwater Body dolphin
 - ☐ Able to Dolphin at least 15 meters (no fins) our 25 yards (with fins)
 - ☐ Can legally execute each of the 4 competitive strokes
 - ☐ Consistently using Legal finishes & turns for all 4 strokes during practice & meets
 - ☐ Become familiar how to utilize a pace clock & interval training
 - ☐ Introduction to Goal Setting
- Threshold expectations to move to Teal
 - ☐ Can swim consistently perform 10x100's Freestyle on 2:00 interval or 8x100 IM 2:15
 - ☐ Can perform a repeat of 8x50's kicking on a 1:20 interval
 - ☐ Can Dolphin Kick 25 yards Underwater (no fins)
- Competition/Attendance expectations
 - ☐ Attends all home meets & at least 2 of 3 Super STAR Series meets
 - ☐ Regularly attend 2 days a week, can practice up to 4 times per week
 - ☐ Can legally finish the 200 IM
 - ☐ Complete IMR
 - ☐ Compete in and finish the 500 Freestyle

Character Development (Life Skills)

1. Demonstrates a good work ethic by regular practice and meet attendance.
2. Demonstrates an understanding of sportsmanship by their behavior in practice and at meets

Teal Group

Ages 10-14 – Our junior competitive team. Swimmers will experience challenging sets and practices while honing their technical skills. Sets include longer distances, such as 100s and 200s. Swimmers must be able to legally compete in all events.

- Requirements to join group:
 - ☐ Ages 10-14
 - ☐ All skills & Threshold expectations from Orange complete
 - ☐ Demonstrate Core Values of AMTS: Courage, Conscientiousness, Commitment, Resilience, and Passion
 - ☐ Focus on process over outcome
 - ☐ Understand standard drills of the team
- Skills to master
 - ☐ Proper IM transitional turns
 - ☐ Back to Breast Crossover turn (introduction)
 - ☐ Underwater Body dolphin
 - ☐ Able to Dolphin at least 25 yards (no fins)
 - ☐ Fully understand how to utilize a pace clock
 - ☐ Consistently understand goal setting
 - ☐ Knowledge of qualifying times for Championship meets
 - ☐ Knowing their swim GOLF Score (Stroke counts)
- Threshold expectations to move to Black
 - ☐ Can consistently perform a repeat of 10x100's on 1:30 (Freestyle) or 10x100 IM on 1:45
 - ☐ Can perform a repeat of 8x50's kicking on a 1:00 interval
- Competition/Attendance Expectation
 - ☐ Competes in all home meets
 - ☐ 12 & under athletes – Competes in all 3 Super STAR Series meets
 - ☐ Competes once per month
 - ☐ Regularly attend 3 times per week, can practice up to 5 times per week
 - ☐ Can legally finish the 400 IM
 - ☐ 200 of each stroke
 - ☐ Complete IMX
 - ☐ Compete in and finish the 1000 Freestyle

Character development (life skills)

1. Demonstrates a good work ethic by regular practice and meet attendance.
2. Is a role model for other swimmers through their work ethic, sportsmanship in meet settings, and mannerisms around other swimmers, coaches/staff, and parents.

Black Group

Ages 13 & up - Our senior competitive team. High school swimmers who compete at the varsity level. Swimmers execute challenging practices and improve their technique. Practice up to six times a week.

- Requirements to join group:
 - ☐ Ages 13 & up or one year of High School varsity experience
 - ☐ All skills & threshold expectations from Teal complete
 - ☐ Demonstrate Core Values of AMTS: Courage, Conscientiousness, Commitment, Resilience, and Passion
 - ☐ Focus on process over outcome
- Skills to master
 - ☐ Proper IM transitional turns
 - ☐ Back to Breast Crossover turn mastered
 - ☐ Meet preparation
 - ☐ Positive thinking
 - ☐ Visualization
- Threshold expectations
 - ☐ Athletes expected to maintain thresholds during the entire time with Black group.
- Competition expectations
 - ☐ Competes in all home meets
 - ☐ Competes once per month
 - ☐ Practice 3x a week, can practice up to 6 times per week
 - ☐ Complete IMX
 - ☐ Compete in and finish the 1650 Freestyle

Character development (life skills)

1. Demonstrates a good work ethic by regular practice and meet attendance.
2. Is a role model for other swimmers through their work ethic, sportsmanship in meet settings, and mannerisms around other swimmers, coaches/staff, and parents.

Practice Locations

- **Amherst Middle School** – Our main practice pool located at 55 Kings Hwy in Amherst, NY
 - Enter the school through the double doors in the small parking lot to the right side of the school (Entryway No. 4).
 - To enter the pool area, females should enter the girls locker room to the immediate right of the entryway. Males should continue straight ahead, through the gym, and enter through the boys locker room.
 - Doors open to the team 10 minutes prior to practice and remain open 10 minutes after the practice time has started.
 - Parents and spectators will not be permitted in the pool area. Spectators may sit on the benches outside of the facility or wait in their car in the parking lot.
- Some practices during the summer months are held at Maryvale High School or Clark Hall on UB South Campus

Sessions and Practice Schedule

Practice Schedules

- Practices for all squads take place in the evenings on weekdays and weekend afternoons.
- Visit the [PRACTICE SCHEDULE](#) page on our website to see exact times and days.

Short Course Season

- Short Course season runs from September through March
- Short Course competition pools are 25 yards in length
- Swimmers who have qualifying times participate in championship level meets:
 - Silver Championships are held in late February
 - Gold Championships are held in March
 - Eastern Zone Championships are held in April

Long Course Season

- Long Course season runs from April through August
- Long Course competition pools are 50 meters in length
- Swimmers who have qualifying times participate in a championship meet in July
- Swimmers who have qualifying times participate Age Group Zones & Senior Zones in August

Qualifying Times

- The qualifying times for all of these championship meets can be found on the Niagara League website (niagaraswimming.org) under “Times.” The coaches will also keep you informed if your swimmer has, or is close to qualifying for championships.

Meet Registration

- Meet information and entry deadlines will be announced via email and will also be posted on the events section of our website.
- All swimmers will default to being opted in to meets that they are eligible for in our meet schedule. If your swimmer is unable to attend a particular meet, it is your responsibility to update their availability and opt them out of the meet so that the coaches know they will not be attending.
- Your swimmer's group coach will choose your swimmer's events. You should speak with him or her before registration closes to discuss any event requests. If you are unable to attend certain days (or sessions) of a multi-day meet, please include this in the Notes part of online meet registration.
- When registering for a meet there is typically a meet fee (usually around \$6-10) as well as a fee for each event entered (usually around \$5 per event). If your swimmer competes in four events, your total meet fee might be around \$25-30.
- If your swimmer withdraws from the meet for any reason after the registration deadline, you will still be charged for the meet fees. We must reserve their spot(s) at the meet and pay in advance for each swimmer.

Meet Registration Policy

All swimmers will be opted in for any meets or scrimmages on our schedule that they are eligible for (based on age or qualifying times if applicable). **If your swimmer is unable to attend a particular meet, you must opt out of the meet on the registration page. You must opt out before the registration deadline or you will be charged the meet fees** regardless of whether or not your swimmer participates as we use this information to submit registrations and event sign-ups to the meet organizers.

AMTS Relay Policy

Relays help foster our core values of dedication, commitment to the team / each other, while also helping our athletes develop confidence and a greater passion for the sport. To encourage participation in relays the team will cover the cost of relays at meets (~\$4 per swimmer per relay).

If a swimmer cannot be entered in a relay or is unavailable on a particular day of the event, it is the parent's responsibility to let the team know when signing up. Our coaches rely on the information shared (days available, event requests, etc.) when entering swimmers in meets. Once the registration window has closed, coaches must be notified immediately if there has been a change. **If a swimmer does not inform coaches that they will be unable to participate in the scheduled relay, the full relay charge will be the responsibility of the swimmer (approx. \$15 per relay).**

Team Volunteer Policy

The Amherst TigerSharks are a non-profit organization run by a parent volunteer board. In order for our coaches to spend their time coaching, we rely on volunteers to ensure the success of our swim meets, team events and everyday operations.

Why we need volunteers

- Meets and events cannot run without volunteers
- Volunteering helps build team spirit and community
- Keeps participation fees lower by reducing operational costs

Volunteer Commitment

Each family is expected to contribute to the operation of the club by fulfilling **10 volunteer credits** per session. Credits can be fulfilled through meet duties, helping on the board, organizing events or purchasing supplies. The number of credits received for a particular activity varies based on the number of hours and level of commitment and will be posted with the activity sign-up.

Volunteer opportunities include:

- Timers at swim meets
- Meet marshalls
- Concessions and hospitality
- Committee or board positions
- Team event coordination

Sign-Up Process

- Volunteer positions will be posted online through TeamUnify and will typically appear within a particular event. The number of credits received for a particular activity will be included.
- First come, first served basis
- It is each family's responsibility to sign up and ensure that their hours are completed
- No-shows for volunteer shifts must be made up in order to receive volunteer credit
- **Families who do not meet their full volunteer commitment each session will be charged \$75 at the completion of the session** (in March of short course or in August for long course), no partial credits will be given

Tracking

- Volunteer hours will be tracked by our volunteer coordinator
- Reports will be shared throughout the session to help families track progress

Team Apparel

We require competitive suits and caps for meets. A team suit or plain black competitive suit should be worn for meets. These items can be purchased through the TigerSharks team store through Swim Outlet: <https://www.swimoutlet.com/collections/amhersttigersharks>

As a Speedo brand sponsored swim club, we ask that practice items (goggles, practice suits, backpacks, equipment) carry the Speedo logo. Speedo items can also be found at very reasonable prices at [swimoutlet.com](https://www.swimoutlet.com).

Typical Swimmer Equipment:

- Team swimsuit and team swim caps
- Practice suits and Practice caps
- Goggles
- Swim backpack or Mesh bag
- Water bottle
- When advanced:
 - ◆ fins
 - ◆ pull buoy
 - ◆ paddle

TigerSharks Code of Conduct

By joining our team, all swimmers, coaches, parents, guardians and family members agree to follow our team's Code of Conduct (as well as USA Swimming's Code of Conduct):

1. **Eyes and ears on the coaches!** Stay above water while receiving instruction.
2. **Show respect and courtesy for others and their property.**
3. **Do not bully or isolate any person.** (For more information on USA Swimming's anti-bullying policy, please refer to the Safe Sport section on our website.)
4. **Leave all facilities in a neat and clean condition after use.**
5. **Demonstrate good sportsmanship at all times.**
6. **Respect and follow the directions of coaches.** Do not interfere with coaching in any way.
7. **Do not possess or use any illegal substance.**
8. **Do not exhibit destructive behavior,** including stealing and vandalism.
9. **Do not behave in an unruly or inappropriate way.**
10. **No use of inappropriate language** (e.g.: swearing or derogatory comments).
11. **Arrive at practices and meets in time to change and appear on deck ready to swim.**

If a parent has a dispute to settle with another individual or party on the team, they should contact a coach or a board member in order to set up a meeting to discuss the issue.

USA Swimming Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy (MAAPP)

USA Swimming's top priority continues to be keeping our athletes safe. No form of abuse, including child sexual abuse, has a place in our sport. As a part of our continued commitment to safeguarding our athletes, USA Swimming has enacted enhancements to our Safe Sport policy requirements.

The Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy (MAAPP) addresses one-on-one interactions, social media and electronic communications, travel: local and team, locker rooms and changing areas and massages, rubdowns and athletic training modalities. Every USA Swimming club, Zone and LSC is required to implement the MAAPP in full.

[USA Swimming Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy \(MAAPP\)](#)

Each family must read this document: [AMTS Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy](#)

Acknowledgment of the USA Anti-Doping Statement:

As the parent/guardian of the swimmer(s) previously named, I acknowledge that my athlete(s) has/have read and agree to this requirement of the US Anti-Doping Agency:

I understand and agree that the FINA Anti-Doping Rules and U.S. Anti-Doping Agency Protocol for Olympic and Paralympic Movement Testing (USADA Protocol) and all other policies and rules adopted by FINA, USADA, and the USOPC apply to me and that it is my responsibility to comply with those rules. I agree to submit to drug testing at any time and understand that the use of methods or substances prohibited by the applicable anti-doping rules would make me subject to penalties including, but not limited to, disqualification and suspension. If it is determined that I may have committed a doping violation, I agree to submit to the results management authority and processes of USADA, including arbitration under the USADA Protocol, or to the results management authority of FINA and/or USA Swimming, if applicable or referred by USADA.

If a parent/guardian of a swimmer participates in any club activities, you must also acknowledge receipt of these documents. (This applies to coaches, board members, officials, volunteers at swim meets, etc.)