Lap Swimming Etiquette
Enhancing the aquatic experience of all patrons.

Many patrons can enjoy lap swimming at the same time. There can be as many as eight swimmers in a 25-yard lane or even 12 swimmers in a lane of 50 meters. To maintain order, we must agree to observe lap swimming etiquette. Please adhere to a primary goal: do not inhibit the progress of others sharing the same lane as you.

Entering the pool:

• Make note of lanes oriented to “fast,” “medium,” and “slow.”
• Select a lane most congruent to your preferred swimming speed.
• Lifeguards may assist you with selecting the appropriate lane or ask you to move if your speed is not similar to those in your lane.
• Always enter the water feet first and clear of other swimmers already occupying the lane. If there is a swimmer approaching the wall as you are preparing to enter, wait until they have turned and started the next lap before entering so you do not interrupt their progress.

Passing:

• If you need to pass in your lane, move up to the swimmer and tap his/her foot. It is inappropriate to grab, pull, or tickle the person. However, a tap is a clear indication of your presence and your intent to pass.
• If your foot has been tapped there is no need to stop, as this could cause a collision. Once you are aware of another’s intent to pass, slow down just slightly and slide over as close to the lane rope as possible.
• If the indication to pass has occurred right before the wall, it is appropriate to pause at the wall in the right hand corner to allow the swimmer to advance through his/her turn.
• If you are passing a swimmer, it is the custom to pass on the left after you have indicated your intent by tapping his/her foot. Even in well-matched lanes, passing or getting passed is often unavoidable while circle swimming.
• A pass must be initiated in time to overtake the slower swimmer before the wall. Otherwise, there exists a strong potential for a collision as both swimmers attempt to turn at the same time. In the case of ambiguity approaching the turn, the swimmer whose head is closest to the wall has the right-of-way and the swimmer whose head is behind must yield the turn in the interest of safety.
• A bulk pass can occur in the rare case that a faster swimmer comes upon a line of slower swimmers and there is no other lane of equal speed in which to move. To pass several swimmers in a line, the faster swimmer can move to the other side of the lane and change directions. This pass can be done only after being certain the space is clear and he or she is slightly ahead of the line once he or she has turned around.
• Swimmers being tapped should acknowledge the communication of a desired pass and not try to speed up or try to tag back once passed.
• Slower swimmers starting a set or swim should wait until faster swimmers have passed and push off close behind to extend the time it will take before they are passed again.
• Faster swimmers should give slower swimmers as much space in front of them as possible before pushing off, or start their set or swim just before the slower swimmer reaches the wall to avoid passing them right away.
Lap Swimming Etiquette
Enhancing the aquatic experience of all patrons.

Common Courtesies:

• If the pool is busy, those swimming in lanes by themselves or with one other person may want to stay circle swimming due to the likelihood of being joined by a third party shortly and being forced to change pattern again.
• Be courteous of drafting. Just as in cycling, it is possible to create a drafting situation when circle swimming close behind another. Be sure the lead swimmer is comfortable with this, as it causes an increased workload to lead when others are drafting.
• Drafting swimmers wishing not to pass need to be sure to keep from tapping on the lead swimmer’s toes, as this will create an undesired leap-frogging in the lane, which is disrupting to others.
• Always start, turn, and finish at the wall. This will enhance your fitness and keep clear communication within the lane.
• When switching lanes, exit the lane at the shallow end, walk to the desired lane, and enter feet. Never slip under a lane rope to switch lanes; this is dangerous and disruptive to the traffic pattern in the lane being entered.
• Smile and enjoy your workout. When we work together, lap swimming can be a wonderful experience for all levels of need and fitness.

Circle Swimming:

• Unless the lane has only two people in it that would rather split the lane, circle swim.
• The customary traffic pattern in the United States is congruous to our driving pattern of staying to the right. This means swimming in a counter-clockwise circle in the lane.
• It is the responsibility of the swimmer entering the lane to be sure all other swimmers in that lane are aware of his/her presence and the desired or necessary traffic pattern before any swimming is started by that patron. This may take a few minutes, so be patient.
• Always swim complete laps of the pool. Avoid stopping in the middle of the pool for any reason, as this can interfere with others progress and cause collisions.
• Stop only at the wall, and once stopped, stay in the corner of the lane, preferably the left hand corner (from the perspective of the approach to the wall). Other lap swimmers need space to turn. Always leave the middle third of the wall clear for turning purposes.
• Be aware of your space in the lane and the orientation of others.
• If you are approaching the wall and another lap swimmer is swimming at a faster rate then you are, pause at the wall to allow the faster swimmer to pass.
• If more than one swimmer is getting congested behind a slower swimmer, the lead should stop at the wall and let all the others advance before pushing off the wall to continue his/her swim.