



MSABC

Fun, friendship & fitness for life.

Start A Club

A special thank you to Norma Powell for all her work on this document.

As you embark on this journey, remember that the larger the club, the more structure you will likely require. Most clubs start out small, which has the advantage of being manageable by a couple of keen individuals. However, as the club grows, so do the number of tasks. The following comprehensive list encompasses many issues that will be encountered only by large clubs. Don't be frightened by the length of the list!! Most small clubs will initially adopt just a few of these guidelines. Take what you need for now but be prepared in case your club membership "takes off". The most important step is taking the initial plunge!

A. HAVE A MEETING

1. Two or more swimmers need to sit down away from the pool and to think through what they want to accomplish, and who will put in the time and effort to make a club happen.
2. Write down what you want to accomplish and when.
3. Assign job
4. Set a date for the next meeting and/or another means of following up on the plans.

B. REGISTER YOUR CLUB WITH MSABC

1. Get in touch with the [MSABC Registrar](#)
2. Select an appropriate name for your club such as 'The Spuzzum Splish Splashers'. Also include an alternative in case your first choice is rejected or already taken.
3. The registrar will send you a Club/Membership Application form with instructions on how to fill it out. There is no fee to register a club.

C. INDIVIDUAL MSABC MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION

List the founding members of the Club on the Club/Membership Application. Fees are based on a season running from September 1 to August 31. Membership fees for individuals are \$40 which includes membership in both MSABC and MSC.

After you have filled out the Club/Membership Application, recording each member of your club, include a cheque or money order covering all applicants. It helps your registrar if you regularly send in new members and any information changed each month.

Send in the completed Club/Membership Application to the registrar.

Congratulations on forming the latest MSABC club in the province!



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D. SPREAD THE WORD

Put up informative and eye-catching posters in the pool, and have plenty of handouts available and place them in the hands of anyone at the pool that will help you distribute them. Of course, word of mouth while in the pool or locker room is still the best.

Repeat this process in other places where people seeking fitness gather, such as other pools, fitness centres, and triathlon organizations; as well as non-fitness oriented organizations such as churches and community service groups.

Advertise in the paper. They may accept a listing for a club such as yours and would welcome a chance to do a human-interest story about what you are starting, most likely with an emphasis on the "Methuselah angle", unfortunately.

Send the paper results of swim meets or better yet, send them the highlights and play up any records that are set, whether they be club, provincial or national records. Give the papers a focus, an angle. Some papers will publicize an upcoming event, especially if there is anything unusual about them such as the age of the competitors, the events or particular human interest story. Don't forget your local and community newspapers. Most people know how to swim, many may have competed before. Let them know there is an opportunity with your club to bring back that joy of swimming, to improve their technique and explore or get back to the sport of swimming again.

E. CLUB OFFICERS AND JOBS

While it may sound somewhat formal for what you have in mind, you must have some people who will make the club go. Sometimes small clubs do well for a long time with one prime mover. That's up to you. Even if you are set against becoming a heavy bureaucracy, you must cover some of these jobs:

President (or whatever you decide to call her or him). This person should be the driving force of the club. They must display a degree of leadership and should be adept at the equitable delegation of duties to fellow board members.

Treasurer: While vast sums of money usually don't move through her/his hands, it is the treasurer's responsibility to keep you club informed as to just how much you have in the bank, and where club monies were spent. It is highly recommended that club accounts be set-up to require two signatures for any disbursements of fund. The treasurer may also double as the club registrar.



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Activities Chair: One person should be appointed to plan, organize, and manage the various club activities. By enlisting the help of two or more volunteers, the Activity Chair's load will be better spread, making for a more successful event.

Club Registrar/Contact: Keeps track of your members and communicates with the MSABC registrar. This person is the key link between the Association and the local club. You will receive all club mailings throughout the year. It is your responsibility to make sure that all communications sent to the club get disseminated to club members and to coaches, if necessary.

Secretary: Is responsible for the minutes of all club meetings. They receive and reply to all club correspondence under the advisement of the club's executive board. Attempts should be made by the secretary to retain all materials that may be of future historical importance to the club and its members.

Publicity Chair: Someone should be out there beating the drums about what you are all about and what you are currently doing. Other officers can take on this job, but it is just not as effective. There is nothing worth less than old news. Typically, by dividing responsibility for this important club building task, the news slips through the cracks and the opportunity is lost. You are best to use one reliable person, and to have them on a first name basis with the local media. Find out the interesting stories in your club, i.e. overcoming diversity, first swim meet, past or present excellence etc., and get it to the media. Pictures are great too.

Telephone Tree: A group of people each responsible for phoning a number of the club members so that they may be contacted about upcoming events.

F. CLUB DUES

When setting your fee structure, keep in mind that pool usage and coaching will likely be your two largest ongoing expenses. Swimming can be fairly inexpensive. After pool fees and coaching are deducted, costs are minimal. Swim meets and clinics are pay as you go and will usually cost less than a modest evening out. The point is, since the total tab for swimming is fairly low already, don't be too penny pinching with club dues. This is where you can get some seed money to spread the word and try new activities.

Presumably you want to encourage others to get into Masters Swimming. It does not happen automatically. Use these events to encourage new memberships. You should constantly be coming up with new ideas and ways to fund activities. Of course you can settle for something like \$40 a year for membership and make all your activities self-supporting. It is common practice and can't be faulted, but more is definitely better here.



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G. YOUR CLUB AS A SOCIETY

The main purpose for forming a Society is the broad range of recognition and protection that it offers to the directors and members of the Society. Under the Society Act a member of a society is not, in his individual capacity, liable for a debt or liability of the society. In order to maintain this protection, there must be a minimum of 3 directors of the society. Societies are eligible to apply for fund-raising through the BC Gaming Commission.

A registered Society must hold an Annual General Meeting within 15 months of incorporation and after that date an AGM must be held each calendar year, not to exceed 15 months of the previous AGM. An Annual Report is to be filed with the Registrar of Companies after each AGM. The procedure for incorporating under the Society Act seems complicated, but is really very straight forward. It can be done by any individual of a club or can be handled by a lawyer.

Steps:

1. Contact the Registrar of Companies, Society Department, Tel: 250-356-8626. Obtain a package that outlines the procedures for incorporation and a copy of the Society Act. All forms that are required are included in the package and are quite easy to complete.
2. Determine a formal name for your Society. Then apply for a name reservation with the Registrar of Companies. Once approved the 'name' will be reserved for 56 days.
3. Complete the following forms:
 - Constitution: Use standard form or review other club constitutions and modify.
 - Bylaws: Use the bylaws of the Society Act as your standard for incorporation.
 - Notice of Directors: Complete with list of your directors (minimum 3)
 - Notice of Address: An address to have documents sent to.
 - Cost: \$30 for name reservation, \$65 for incorporation.

H. THE POOL

Go for the best and make the best of what you've got. No pool is ideal. Balance the factors of cost, hours, location, staffing water temperature, cleanliness, lighting, etc. You may have one pool for workouts and others for meets or vice versa. While there are obvious advantages to having all members use the same pool, it is not a must.

Some clubs have no home pool for workouts or meets. What they do have is the ability to line up pools that are appropriate to the club member's needs, particularly for meets. Moving around from pool to pool for club activities is a good way to publicize, especially if you already have advertising at the host pools.



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I. TRAINING SESSIONS (WORKOUTS-it's not work but fun!)

These fall into three types: 1) Individual, 2) Group and 3) Coached. They could be viewed as good, better, and best. Groups are preferable to individual workouts as they tend to build team spirit. Providing coached workouts adds that layer of organization and expertise that many swimmers seem to need to keep them at it. Some clubs practice year round, while others are more seasonal.

Individual workouts: You are on your own and doing the best you can. For some this is their only choice. It works best with those swimmers who are perfectly content to train on their own and don't mind the lack of coaching. Sources for workout can be from your club coach, the Internet (<http://www.usms.org>), books, magazines, other swimmers and yourself.

Group workouts: Team spirit and loyalty really blossom under this set-up. New friendships are born and it is easier to keep to a program when there is mutual encouragement. Another positive feature is that you tend to push yourself more when working with a group which benefits all from a fitness perspective. If there is a negative it is that these groups tend to stay small and may even disappear when the "lead swimmer" drops out. Also, there is a tendency for workout patterns to become stale or too narrowly tailored to the wants and needs of only a small portion of the group.

Coached workouts: A coached workout should involve not only a posted workout for various levels to meet the needs of all your swimmers, but a coach who will advise you throughout the workout about your technique, give you encouragement and keep you interested.

How to choose a Coach: The more swimmers you collect at a pool at one time or cluster of times, the more you will be able to do in terms of attracting an experienced coach.

The club should look for someone who knows swimming from technique, physiology, nutrition, to meet preparation. A local age group coach may welcome making a little more money while enjoying a change that comes with working with adults. They must be reminded however, that you are not 'kids' and your goals are different and varied. Some groups may even explore using inexperienced undergraduate or graduate physical education students for coaches and be very satisfied. Few groups can afford to have big name coaches. Coaches tend to be more concerned about their workouts than other club activities, so beware that your club's vitality isn't left in the workouts. There are various ways you may retain a coach. The club may arrange a contract with the coach, the swimmers at the pool could make their own arrangements or the pool can hire the coach. Again, whatever works is fine.



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J. SWIM MEETS

In some clubs, the majority of their members compete in meets, while in others, very few do. For some it is a challenge that keeps them swimming.

Meet sizes vary. Big meets can have 100 to 500 or more swimmers, and last from one to four days with almost every event imaginable. Whatever the size the aim is to run a flawless meet. The pace of a meet is very important. Correcting mistakes are often painful and time consuming. Disputes over disqualifications etc. can be traumatic. The meet manager needs either previous experience or a fine mentor at their virtual beck and call. Meet managers will find the MSABC publication, Swim Meet Manager's Guide for running a swim meet to be an invaluable resource.

Officials are volunteers but make sure to have relief and backup for them. Coffee, juice, sandwiches and some goodies should be made available to them throughout the meet. It is a significant aid (but not necessary) having the electronic timing tie in with a computer for the results of each event. Medals or ribbons (depending on the calibre of the meet) are awarded for at least the first few places in every age-group. Everybody appreciates correct and timely processing of the meet results. Consider relays, food concessions, T-shirt and swim cap sales (bigger meets) and a nice-looking program to wrap around the heat sheets. Advertising in the heat sheets can help to defray the cost of printing.

In addition to local meets, there are Provincial (short course or long course) and National championships each year, along with several International meets. So, get out your travel bags! Locations vary.

Open Water Swim Meets: These are usually held in the summer in both lakes and the ocean. Notices of meets are listed in the Newsletter.

Triathlete Races: There is no law that says you have to be either a Masters Swimmer or a Triathlete. Many swimmers work both sides of the aquatic fence. Since there are more triathletes than Masters Swimmers, soliciting Triathletes' participation in Masters Swim Meets can bring in a lot of new faces and even some true converts!

Dual Meets: Challenge a nearby club. Set it up so whatever obvious advantage either club has is somehow neutralized by the selection of events, age grouping, sex mixing, scoring methods, or whatever it takes. Make it close and make it fun.

Relay Meets: Just relays. There are 12 official relays and only your imagination limits the additional unofficial relay possibilities. Some or all can be less than serious, with the plunge, dog paddle, swim fins, ball carry, nightshirt, etc.



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Less Serious Meets: Like the relays. Nothing official. Costumes, couples, wet sweatshirts, special awards linked to a theme perhaps.

Postal/FAX Meets: These can be dual meets, relay meets or regular meets. The events are run over a specified period of time at your own pool and then submitted to the meet manager for tabulation and awards.

K. THE MSABC Electronic Bulletin

Members in good standing can sign up to receive MSABC's blog. The blog can include:

- Announcements of coming meets, clinics, meetings etc.
- Results of meets
- Write-ups of past events
- News of members. Feature membership diversity. Where do your people come from? What have their past experiences been in swimming? People are interested in other people. Use the diversity of your club to your advantage in creating interest.
- Articles about swimming technique, nutrition, psychology or physiology

Photos add a lot. The more frequently the blog is published, the more chance to contact the members and the more-timely the content.

L. CLINICS

Clinics appeal to the novice and the expert alike. There is always something to be learned for all, whether it be new ideas on training, new techniques, fitness concepts, nutrition, dry land training, etc. Swimming is never static and there is always something new or slightly different to be learned. Clinics need to be designed to meet specific needs and to be publicized accordingly. They need to be well planned with carefully structured sessions that may include classroom lectures, question and answer periods, videotapes of how strokes are being done, in water instruction, videotaping with critiquing of the individual swimmers.

Clinics can be two hours on a Saturday morning or an evening, or an all day affair with lot of fanfare, and a big name coach or two. Fees should probably just aim to cover costs, but don't skimp on the niceties like hearty snacks, T-shirts, or handouts.

Your club can also apply to MSABC for a clinic.

M. CLUB MEETINGS

Different strokes for different folk. Some clubs thrive on regular (monthly?) meetings. They provide an excellent opportunity to plan and review what has happened while issues are still



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fresh. Other clubs would burn out if the leaders were required to meet too frequently. In any event, swim clubs need some sort of process to keep on top of things and meetings serve that purpose. It's good to have a clear idea of what you want to accomplish at each and every meeting. The meeting can be after a workout, before a swim meet, or even over a pizza. When your club grows to a certain size you will probably need a more structured governance in terms of meetings, club officers, job assignments and protocol.

N. SOCIAL HAPPENINGS

Some say that's what holds clubs together. Certainly, some of the warmest recollections swimmers have is not of their big races but of the nice parties and friendly outings. This is an important part of a club. Typically, your members come from a wide swath of Canada, more so than the people you spend much of your other time with at work and play. This diversity adds to the spice of club social events. At workouts or swim meets there is little time to get to know fellow swimmers, so a social gathering after a meet or training session can be a welcome change especially if the setting is simple and familiar. So go for breakfast after your weekend practice!

O. EQUIPMENT

The pool is well equipped if it has at least one pace clock that even those without their reading glasses can figure out. A second clock at the other end is an added bonus. Some sort of blackboard for writing out workouts is beneficial if that is the way your group operates. Kick boards, pull buoys, hand paddles, and fins can be personal or pool property. Back stroke flags should be used at every practice for safety. They are set 5m from the ends of the pool so swimmers can count strokes while swimming on their back from the flags to the end of the pool. Weight machines in a nearby area are a plus.

For meets, you need some additional equipment. MSABC lists in its Swim Meet Manager's Guide the following resources available from their Equipment Manager:

- Meet Manager computer program
- Stopwatches
- Awards (Provincials only)
- Length Counters

** Record Book will be forwarded by contacting Julie Jones 604-943-6561

Other items such as a Bullhorn, clipboards, an ample supply of pens, Hi-Lighters (for record attempts), rubber bands, masking tape, staplers, etc., stored in a club bag should do the trick.



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P. COMPUTERS

Life and swimming got along pretty well before computers but having one is really an asset. The role a computer could play within your club would be to simplify such sometimes mundane tasks as maintaining the club membership list, updating club swim records, and helping to run swim meets. A further application would be in the assembly of a newsletter, club correspondence and the like. Don't be surprised if you find people in you club who enjoy computers so much that they will gladly volunteer to take on some or all of these tasks. They will get a big kick out of doing this, something akin to swimming a 1500 perhaps. The key is to identify that person!

Q. T-SHIRTS, SWIM CAPS, AND MORE

Also window decals, bumper stickers, imprinted swimmer, bags and pins. Put you club name and logo on them. Come up with a good logo and general theme artwork. They build club identity and pride and publicize the members of your club. Most will pay whatever it costs to produce the item plus a modest profit for the club. Come up with items that appeal to the members. Sell these items at big meets and through your newsletter.

R. CLUB BANNER

Don't leave home without it. It is really a good feeling to go away somewhere to a swim meet and hang out around your conspicuously displayed banner. It promotes a sense of team pride. Bright colours and clear wording are a must. Great design is a bonus.

S. INSURANCE

Individual membership with MSABC, within your club, automatically provides those members with liability coverage at those facilities your club uses, and at sanctioned events attended by these club members. All participants must be current MSABC members to have this insurance in effect.

T. RULE BOOK

MSC frequently updates its rule book. MSABC affiliated clubs receive an updated rule book whenever there is a major revision. This can be expected to occur approximately every two years. You really should have one or more of your members become conversant in at least the parts that distinguish Masters Rules from other swim rules. A prime example of this is the section of the rule book dealing with disabled swimmers. Additional copies of the rule book may be obtained by contacting the MSC office.



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U. RECORDS AND TOP 20 TIMES

MSC publishes national records and world records periodically. It also publishes a list of the swimmers who swam the 20 fastest times in the previous year for men and women in each 5 year age group for each event. These can also be found at: www3.sympatico.ca/chberger/index7.html

Your club should submit all meet results to the MSABC Records Keeper, who will glean your club's fastest times for forwarding to the MSC National recorder for national top 20 consideration. Some clubs may also keep their own club records or top ten times going back over the years.

V. PUBLICATIONS

Masters Swimming Canada has a good website and it is at mymsc.ca

W. SWIMMING LOG

Swimmers are frequently required to furnish the meet organizer with recent times. In addition to those records kept by your Club Secretary, club members may wish to keep a log of personal performances including such things as workouts done, mileage and best times. We recommend using the swimming log provided at mymsc.ca

X. TRIATHLETES, CYCLISTS, JOGGERS, ET AL

Many of these people consider swimming the bane of their athletic existence. Keep them in mind when you are developing your programs. There are generally more of them than there are of you, and they are used to spending money on their sports habit. Some of them are hungry for insights into how to swim better. Facilitating them with coached workouts and clinics is an ideal way for you to increase your membership. Should they become injured in their main sport they may have to quit that sport, pull on their skimpy suits and get serious about swimming. So welcome!

Y. VARIETY OF LEVELS OF SWIMMERS

Your club should try to cater to all swimmers. Clubs are usually filled with swimmers of all ages and abilities. The idea of the club is to try to provide resources and activities to aid all in maintaining a lifelong interest in swimming. Everyone is important. Each swimmer has his/her own challenges to meet whether it is to learn a new stroke, be able to swim a continuous mile, complete a full workout, break a record in a meet, compete in a meet for the first time or just to relieve the stress of the day. The challenge for the coach is to provide different workouts and approaches within the same time frame to allow all swimmers to strive to reach their personal goals. This is very different from youth clubs where there is a common goal of excellence.



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Z. SPOUSES, CHILDREN, & FRIENDS

Many are supportive to the swimmer's commitment to swimming and others need a little convincing of the value of your chosen sport. Try to get them involved in the social part of your club and then perhaps helping out with a meet or organizing an activity. Perhaps you can ask them to lend their expertise in such matters as computers, organization, promotion and the like. Travel to meets can provide for a chance to visit some interesting places where the swimming will only be a small part of the trip.

ZZ. MEDICAL CONCERNS

Watching yourself in slow motion as you flip a turn or glide smoothly or otherwise down the pool can be a very revealing and helpful experience. Much can be learned very quickly by watching the visions that appear. Even if you are not up on the latest theories of wave mechanics, you can appreciate and profit from the good and inefficient parts of your stroke that the video reveals. Find someone who is able to do some impromptu videotaping of your team's meets and workouts. Perhaps that person could be retained on an on-call basis. When possible, include underwater footage of your swimmers in action. The video should be viewed as soon as possible and analyzed by the coach for the best feedback. If swimmers provide their own blank tapes, it is then possible for them to take the tapes home for further inspection.

ZZZ. VIDEOTAPING

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ZZZZ. FUN

Remember, if your members don't have fun over the long haul they won't stick around, don't take yourselves too seriously too much of the time. Enjoy and good luck!