

## Cross Country Practice - Summary

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### We ask that each girl bring the following to each practice.

- running shoes – used only to run and designed for HS Cross Country training
- water bottle – please write your name on your water bottle
- watch (with stopwatch function) – very important on distance runs
- running attire – moisture-wicking shirt/tank whenever possible
- post-run snack for after practice (optional, but strongly encouraged)

### Fall Season practice Summary

- Fall Season practice begins on Saturday, August 12, but we are not scheduled to begin with after-school Group A practices until Thursday, August 17.
- Each girl is responsible for arranging her own transportation to practice.
- **Group A girls:** Fall Season practice is Monday through Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday, and will typically last about 90 minutes for most Group A girls.
  - Group A girls start weekday practice at 3:30 at Seneca Park (on weekday race days, we will practice at the location of the meet). On early dismissal days, Group A girls meet for practice at 2:00 at Seneca Park (unless noted otherwise).
  - Group A girls start Saturday practice at 9:30am, practicing at various locations (announced in advance). On meet days, we don't gather for Saturday practice.
  - Group A girls start Sunday practice at 5:00pm at EP Tom Sawyer Park.
- **Group B girls:** Fall Season practice is Monday through Thursday, and will typically last between 60 and 80 minutes. Group B girls don't meet on holidays (i.e. non-school days).
  - Group B girls start practice at 6:00 at Seneca Park (except meet days, when Group B girls are asked to report to their respective meet at the time we ask them to arrive). On early dismissal days, Group B girls also meet at 6:00.

### Basic Rules at Practice

1. Every girl on the team should “check in” when she arrives and “check out” when she departs. On certain days, girls may also be asked to record their run for the day as they check out. Note that “I’m a senior” is not an appropriate excuse for failing to check in or out.

2. Warmup does not begin until the coaches announce that warmup may begin. **No one is ever allowed to start early.** We always start together. Warmup should also include the warmup routine given to you by a coach.
3. Girls should not just disappear and go on a run without first coordinating that run with a coach. During any given practice, stopping at homes, businesses, etc., without permission is not allowed.
4. When running outside the park (e.g. when running trails), each girl should always run in a group. If you have no one to run with, then you should stay at the Park.
5. Girls may only run at practice with teammates, approved adults, and coaches. Girls on our team are not allowed to run with friends or acquaintances who are not members of our team.
6. Girls should always perform each run with the utmost regard for their own safety, and should always embody our team behavioral guidelines at every practice.
7. Please keep the coaches informed of anything that occurs during practice which might be considered “out of the ordinary” (e.g. creepers, rule violations, injuries, etc.). There is typically little that we can do about most occurrences after the fact, but it’s helpful to at least be aware.
8. At the conclusion of a run, there is a warmdown routine. Each girl on the team is expected to do whatever warmdown routine has been given to her by a coach.

### **Fall Season Practice Attendance Guidelines**

- If you are at school through regular dismissal and cannot attend practice that day, then you must tell a coach. If you leave school early or miss school completely, then there is no need to tell a coach that you’ll miss practice (although it’s always appreciated).
  - Missing practice and saying nothing one time will get you in trouble
  - Missing practice and saying nothing a second time will get you in MAJOR trouble
- Do not leave early from practice without saying anything.
  - Leaving early and saying nothing one time will get you in trouble
  - Leaving early and saying nothing a second time will get you in MAJOR trouble
- Work is not an acceptable excuse for missing practice. We allow one work-related absence per season for very special emergencies. “I forgot to tell my boss” is not a very special emergency. *After missing a first practice for work, Group B girls must make up that missed practice by attending a Sunday practice. After missing a second practice for work, our general rule is to drop Group A girls to Group B, and drop Group B girls from the team.*
  - We are willing to work with Group B girls who have 1 regular weekday conflict with practice by allowing those girls to attend on a Sunday evening. This CANNOT be done unless it’s coordinated through a coach and then approved.
- We ask parents to schedule appointments at times that would allow girls to attend practice (e.g. Fridays or at 4:00 on early dismissal days). When this is not possible, an appointment is certainly an excusable absence, *but Group B girls should make up those absences by*

*attending a Sunday practice.* If a girl is expected to have frequent appointment-related conflicts, we ask parents to discuss this situation with a coach.

- Except in very rare situations, school work (i.e. studying for tests, completing homework or projects, etc.) is not an appropriate excuse for missing practice. We expect the girls to manage their time appropriately, and although we realize that exceptional situations can and do exist with the completion of schoolwork, our basic position is as follows. If a Cross Country girl struggles too often with the timely completion of her schoolwork, then academics should come first, and we will consider releasing her from the team if she cannot successfully juggle academics and athletics.
- Girls who have what we consider to be an excessive number of absences or early departures may ultimately be dropped from the team. Group A girls will first be dropped to Group B, but then dropped from the team if their attendance continues to be a problem. This may ultimately also include girls who go on Academic Suspension if we believe those girls cannot successfully juggle academics and athletics during the season.

### **Practice-related Performance Expectations**

Our minimal standard for every girl on the team is that she can run continuously at an appropriate pace for no less than 20 minutes, but given the wide variety of ability and experience levels on our team, we recognize that at least some of our girls may not achieve this goal right away. Our basic expectation of each girl, however, is that she makes a good faith effort to achieve that standard. Note that this is a minimum standard, however, and that we do not expect girls to achieve and then remain at that standard for the duration of the season without progressing at all.

#### **Expectations at Summer practices:**

- During Summer practice, our only requirement is that each girl makes a good faith effort at each practice. Although we encourage the girls to strive toward running and not walking during their distance run each day, we recognize that this is not always possible with every girl on the team.

#### **Expectations at Fall practices:**

- Once Fall practice begins, girls must demonstrate that they can achieve the team's minimal standard of running continuously for no less than 20 minutes at an appropriate pace. Girls who cannot achieve that standard are placed in our Seneca Park group.
  - On Monday, August 7, we have a 2 mile time trial for the Group B girls designed to assess each girl's fitness level. Group B girls who cannot demonstrate that they can meet our minimum standard in this time trial are placed in the Seneca Park group.
  - Girls who join the team after one of our joining deadlines also face being placed in the Seneca Park group if they cannot demonstrate that they are clearly capable of meeting the team's minimal running standard.

**The Seneca Park group** consists of girls who may not leave the immediate area of the park. E.g. at Seneca Park, these girls cannot cross the road to run trails, they must stay within the park itself. This group will include injured girls and any girl we believe cannot achieve our minimal standards for practice (i.e. running continuously for no less than 20 minutes at an appropriate pace). For girls who miss significant amounts of practice over the Summer or who join late, if we have no idea what they've been running, then they will also be assigned to the Seneca Pk group. Girls can be added to the Seneca Pk group at any time during the season, but once a girl demonstrates in a tempo run or race that she is capable of satisfying our guidelines, then we will give her permission to leave the Seneca Pk group.

As the season progresses, girls may move both into the Seneca Park group and out of the Seneca Park group. Generally speaking, a girl may be allowed to leave the Seneca Park group after clearly demonstrating that she is capable of meeting the team's minimal running standard. There are situations, however, where girls may be moved into the Seneca Park group after the original group is determined and season begins. Those situations are discussed below.

- **Voluntary placement:** some girls who normally meet our minimal running requirements may not be able to achieve them on certain days due to not feeling well. In these situations, we strongly encourage those girls to voluntarily place themselves within the Seneca Park group until they are able to return to running more normally. Moving into and out of the Seneca Park group for these girls is at their discretion, not that of the coach. I.e., a girl may choose to remain at Seneca Park on her run during any day where she does not feel capable of running well, but she is free to leave the park on any subsequent day when she feels better.
- **Involuntary placement:** girls observed walking outside the park during the Fall, which includes walking too far at the start of a run, will be moved to the Seneca Park group for a period of time that is solely within the discretion of the coaching staff. I.e., a girl who is placed (involuntarily) within the Seneca Park group cannot just leave that group when she wants to do so. Obvious exceptions to this rule are situations where a girl is injured and cannot run, or walking with an injured teammate so that she does not return to the park alone.

### **Miscellaneous items**

1. **Bad Weather and Practice.** Unless weather conditions are considered hazardous and expected to remain unchanged for a significant amount of time, we will meet for practice. Parents with concerns about their daughter practicing in certain types of weather may withhold their daughter from practice on those days but must communicate that with the coaches directly. Please do not simply withhold your daughter from any practice without letting us know, as your daughter risks getting in trouble for missing practice and saying nothing (see above for how we deal with that).

2. **Giving Blood:** please do not give blood during the season as this can have a significant impact on your ability to train and race. Girls who give blood will be held out of practice and races until the coaches believe it is appropriate to allow those girls to return. I.e. *these girls will still attend*

***practice, but what they do and when they return to full participation will be at the discretion of their coach.*** If you would like information on this topic, then feel free to ask.

**3. Outside Road Races:** it is not appropriate to compete in outside races during a competitive Cross Country season. Doing so can lead to injury and other physical issues, so please refrain from entering these races until the season ends, and let us know if you are considering a race.

**4. Injuries and Practice:** although we do our best to prevent injuries, running-related injuries are often inevitable in Cross Country. When a girl experiences pain or anything out of the ordinary, those girls should speak with a coach. If it is possible to treat an injury by icing the affected area, then we will do so, but ice is not always available at practice. We also always try to direct each girl to the school's trainer for evaluation. ***Injured girls must still attend practice***, they are not allowed to skip practice and only return when they are better, but those girls will not necessarily run.

**4. Meets:** here is our basic expectation regarding arrival, departure and behavior at meets. Note that each girl is responsible for arranging her own transportation to meets – with the obvious exception being when we attend out-of-town trips.

- **Group A girls** are given an arrival time for each meet, and they should arrive no later than that time with their podium shirt over their uniform top. We ask each Group A girl to stay and cheer for her teammates in other races, but if she must leave before the meet is over, then we do allow this with Group A girls. Note, however, that unless you have a really good reason for leaving, you are strongly encouraged to stay and support your team.

When Group B girls have weekday meets, we will practice at the location of that meet.

Group A girls may leave after their practice ends on those days, but we do ask that they stay as long as possible at the meet to either help in the running of the meet and/or to support their Group B teammates.

- **Group B girls** will be given an arrival time for each meet, and should arrive no later than that time with their podium shirt over their uniform top. We ask Group B girls to support their teammates in races where they do not compete, and then stay until the meet has concluded. Group B girls may not leave early and are expected to arrange their transportation around this requirement. There are obvious exceptions to this rule, but they should be something on the level of a family or medical emergency. Family dinner, work, or any other similar excuse is not an appropriate excuse to leave early from a meet.

**5. Team Events:** our two in-season Chapel Meetings are mandatory for Group A girls and optional-but encouraged for Group B girls. In particular, Group B seniors are strongly encouraged to attend the Chapel Meetings. Participation in all other team events (e.g. Wacky Wednesdays, Spaghetti Dinners, etc.) is optional for everyone, but very strongly encouraged.