

Cross Country Practice - Summary

1. What to bring to practice
2. Fall season practice summary (Group A schedule, Group B schedule)
3. Basic rules at practice
4. Attendance guidelines during the Fall season
5. Practice-related performance expectations
6. The Seneca Park group
7. Miscellaneous: bad weather, giving blood, competing in outside races, injuries, nutrition, etc.

We recommend 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 Monday, August 15, during the first full week of school. August 15 is also the start of required practice (i.e. unlike Summer, girls cannot just miss).
- 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 3:20-3:30, at either the Legion/Highland Hall or Seneca Park. Any change from these locations will be announced in advance.
 - Group A girls start Saturday practice at 9:00am, 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 (locations are TBA).
- **Group B girls:** Fall Season practice is Monday through Thursday, and will typically last between 60 and 75 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 the meet at a specific, earlier time).

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, Group B 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 your 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 relatives, friends or acquaintances who are not members of our team.
6. Girls should always perform every run with full attention to 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 her 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
- **Missing practice for work:** 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 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 shift Group A girls to Group B, and drop Group B girls from the team. Any Group A girl switched to Group B would then be dropped from the team if she missed for work on a third occasion.*
- **Missing practice for the Fall play:** girls who plan to participate in the **Fall play** must understand that this participation will likely conflict with Cross Country practice. Those girls will need to choose between these two activities. We will apply our “missing practice for work” policy with any girl who misses Cross Country practice to participate in the Fall play.
- **Missing practice for club or other extracurricular group functions:** we expect that our girls will properly manage their club and extracurricular group responsibilities in a way that allows them to attend practice. If not, then we will need to discuss with that girl whether she can continue participating on the Cross Country team.

- **Appointments:** we ask parents to schedule appointments at times that would allow girls to attend practice (e.g. Fridays or before practice for Group B girls). We realize that this may not always be possible, and so appointments are an excusable absence. If a girl has frequent appointment-related conflicts, then this is something that needs to be discussed with the coaching staff so that we can work out an appropriate solution.
- **Missing practice for schoolwork:** except in **very rare** situations, schoolwork (i.e. studying for tests, completing homework or projects, etc.) is not an appropriate excuse for missing practice. If this issue arises, where a girl believes that she must miss practice to finish schoolwork, then we will speak with that girl about her ability to successfully juggle academics and athletics. We don't take punitive action for something like this, but we also must recognize the possibility that a girl may not be a good fit for our program if she must miss practice to complete schoolwork on more than one occasion per season.
- **Academic problems:** Assumption Cross Country team is one of the highest performing academic teams in the State and our expectation is that Assumption Cross Country girls will contribute toward maintaining our academic standards. Although rare, we also realize that it's possible for individual girls to struggle occasionally with one or more of their classes. We strongly encourage these girls to speak with us. If there is something we can do to help, then we will certainly consider those options. In extreme cases, it may also be necessary to release a girl from participating with the team so that she can focus on her academics.
- **Academic suspension:** when girls are placed on academic suspension by the Athletic Department, then they are allowed to attend practice but cannot participate in meets. If a girl remains on academic suspension for what we consider to be too long, then we will consider making a change in her status on the team so that she can focus on her academics.
- **Excessive absences and early departures:** 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 20-25 minutes (i.e. 2-2.5 miles). No girls will be admitted to Group A without achieving this standard, but given the wide variety of ability and experience levels within Group B, we realize that at least some of our Group B girls may not achieve this goal in the short run. Our basic expectation of each girl is that she makes a good faith effort to strive toward achieving that standard or that she remains at the standard once she achieves it.

We expect every girl on the team to make a good faith effort at doing whatever we ask of her at practice. If she cannot perform at an expected level (e.g. girls who normally run must walk, girls who are asked to run a certain distance are unable to do so), then we expect those girls to communicate with us so that we are aware of what's going on. **No girl is allowed to walk during a run (i.e., when**

she is supposed to be running) when she is outside the park. This rule is clearly subject to discretion when a girl must suddenly stop to walk during a run due to an injury that prevents her from completing her run. Girls who cannot complete runs without walking must stay within the park during practice (see below). Girls who choose to walk during practice when they clearly could and should be running, and say nothing about why they are doing so, are not making what we consider to be a good faith effort. We will meet with those girls to discuss their choices and, if these choices continue, whether Cross Country is a proper fit for them.

Group B placement during practice:

The purpose of Summer practice is to provide the girls with an opportunity to demonstrate that they can achieve the team's minimal standard of running continuously for no less than 20 minutes (or 2 miles) at an appropriate pace. We typically also have girls who clearly can achieve our minimal standard, but fall short of regular attendance at Summer practice or they are girls who join late. If these girls have not clearly communicated their running with us during those periods where they missed practice, then those girls will be placed in our Seneca Park group.

The Seneca Park group consists of Group B girls who may not leave the immediate area of Seneca Park. I.e., these girls cannot cross the road and must stay within the park itself. This group will include injured girls and any girl we believe cannot achieve our minimum running standards (i.e. running continuously for no less than 20-25 minutes at an appropriate pace). Girls who do not attend practice regularly over the Summer or who join late, and do not communicate with us about what they are running while missing, will also be initially placed in the Seneca Park group.

As the season progresses, girls can move 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 her coach believes she has clearly demonstrated that she is capable of meeting the team's minimum running standard (e.g. in a tempo run or race). There are situations, however, where girls may be moved into the Seneca Park group after the original group is determined and the 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). Note that we do not cancel practice when there is rain and that practice can always be relocated to the American Legion/Highland Hall.

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, she should speak with a coach. We will discuss basic treatment options and can help arrange for injured girls to visit the school's trainer for evaluation. *Injured girls will still attend practice*, they cannot skip practice just because they've been injured, but injured girls will not run. We have a variety of roles that an injured girl can perform at practice that do not involve running.

5. **Caloric deficit and nutrition:** our team strives to actively educate the girls about the importance of fueling properly and eating right. We have several articles for new parents on these topics at our team website (<http://crosscountry.ahsdistance.org>) which explain how improper fueling can lead to an irregular menstrual cycle, and make her more susceptible to injury (e.g. stress fractures).

6. **Meets:** we will provide our basic expectations regarding arrival, departure and behavior at meets in a separate handout. 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.

7. **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.

8. **Leaving the team:** girls who quit or are kicked off the team are subject to certain rules when it comes to rejoining the team at a later date. More specifically, we impose the following rules:

- **Being kicked off the team:** girls who are dropped from the roster due to any violation of team rules must receive specific permission from Head Coach Barry Haworth in order to ever rejoin the team at a future date (i.e. do need permission to rejoin). Although it is unlikely such permission will be given, we do treat each situation on an individual basis.
 - **Being released from the team** (e.g., for academic reasons): girls who are released from participation with the team are not kicked off the team. These girls remain on the roster and are not subject to the rules that apply to girls who were kicked off the team. I.e., girls released from the team for academic reasons are free to rejoin the team in a future season without specific permission from the Head Coach.
 - (a) If a girl is released from the team for academic reasons and she has earned a JV certificate or Varsity letter prior to her release date, then she will receive that award at our team's Awards Night Celebration.
 - (b) Seniors who are released from the team for academic reasons are welcome to participate in our Senior Night activities if they are able to attend.
- **Quitting the team on or before August 14:** girls who discover that they cannot continue with Cross Country after August 14 (i.e. when mandatory practices begin) should inform us of their situation as soon as possible. Doing so allows us to drop them from the official roster. Girls in this situation are free to rejoin the team at a later date if they would like to do so (i.e. they do not need permission to rejoin). This includes girls who start attending practice and then basically disappear (i.e. quit prior to August 14, but say nothing).
- **Quitting the team after August 14:** girls who quit the team after August 14 must receive specific permission from Head Coach Barry Haworth in order to ever rejoin the team at a future date (i.e. do need permission to rejoin). Although it is unlikely such permission will ever be given, we do treat each situation on an individual basis.