

2023 Assumption Cross Country: main Fall practice handout

Fall practice schedule: August 14 - end of season

We're typically asked about our Fall practice schedule, and so this handout addresses that question. The first official day of Fall practice is August 14. We will follow our Fall practice schedule at this point, where each girl's practice schedule depends on whether she is a member of our Group A or Group B, and all Fall practice rules will apply.

Our Group A/Group B system

Group A is the equivalent of a Varsity team and Group B the equivalent of a JV team. Girls who prefer Group B may become members of that group, but Group A girls must all be selected to participate in Group A. That process begins during Summer practices. Girls interested in Group A should speak with Head Coach Barry Haworth during the Summer. Our goal with this system is to ensure that each girl is a good fit with the Group where she participates.

Fall practice: Group A

The basic Group A Fall practice schedule is 3:30pm on Monday-Thursday, 9:00am on Saturdays and 5:00pm on Sundays (Friday is our "rest day"). Group A girls typically meet at the American Legion/Highland Hall building (2921 Bardstown Rd) or at Seneca Park during the week. We rely on available parents and carpools with the older girls to get everyone to Seneca Park after school. Prior to the start of each week, a practice schedule is emailed to the team. This schedule confirms what we're running each day, where we're practicing, etc.

Fall practice: Group B

The Group B Fall practice schedule is Monday-Thursday at 6:00pm at Seneca Park. Group B practices consist of doing a warmup routine, some type of distance run, and a warmdown routine, and are typically over at 7:15pm or so. The girls arrive at practice by getting a ride from parents, or through whatever ridesharing arrangements that parents or the girls set up.

Basic Fall practice attendance rules:

- (1) Fall practice is mandatory (i.e., unlike Summer practice, where we allow girls to miss when they have a conflict or other events, Fall practice is mandatory).
- (2) Any and all absences from practice must be communicated in advance with a coach. I.e., missing and saying nothing can get a girl in a significant amount of trouble.
- (3) If you do not have a ride on any given day, then it's your responsibility to resolve that problem in advance. There are obvious exceptions, but in general, missing practice due to not having a ride is an unexcused absence.
- (4) No girl may leave early from practice without specific permission from a coach.
- (5) No girl may miss Fall practice due to work conflicts, conflicts with outside club practices, participation conflicts with the Fall Play, and most other extracurricular events. This will be discussed in more detail at our Parent Meeting on August 13.

Group A vs Group B

Group A is viewed as a Varsity level training/racing group that practices up to 6 days per week. All Group A girls are expected to attend the Palatine Invitational and are at least considered for participation in our other out-of-town meets. Group B is a JV level training/racing group that practices 4 days per week. Cross Country is a no-cut sport, and so any girl who does not become part of Group A will participate in Group B. This is simply the equivalent of placing girls on a Varsity team or a JV team.

Below, we provide an outline of how this process works.

- During the Summer, the coaching staff assesses every girl on the team in terms of whether we believe she is a better fit for Group A or Group B.
 - Returning Group A girls simply need to show up and start practicing with Group A. I.e., returning Group A girls have an automatic place with Group A each season.
 - New girls interested in Group A should speak with Head Coach Barry Haworth about participating with Group A, and start practicing with the Group A girls during the Summer.
 - Returning Group A girls interested in Group A should speak with Head Coach Barry Haworth about participating with Group A, and start practicing with the Group A girls during the Summer.
- On August 6, the coaching staff will make a final determination of who will participate in Group A and Group B, based on their assessment of each girl prior to August 6.

Here is some additional discussion regarding participation in Group A

- **Provisional Group A:** if we do not believe a girl who's interested in Group A is capable of participating in Group A practices, then we reserve the right to place her in a provisional Group A setting. Group A has a maximum limit of 50 girls, and so if we ever have more than 50 girls interested in Group A, those extra girls would also be placed in our provisional Group A.
 - Provisional Group A girls will practice with the Group A girls.
 - Provisional Group A girls would attend the Palatine meet if there is available space and the coaching staff believes that this would be an appropriate meet for them.
- **Dropping from Group A to Group B during the season:** girls are always free to drop from Group A to Group B, but during the season, we may also reassign Group A girls to Group B in certain situations. E.g., if a girl develops certain injuries, has attendance issues, or cannot maintain appropriate academic standards, then she could potentially be switched to Group B.
- **Elevating from Group B to Group A during the season:** we have no set rule on this, each situation would be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Criteria for assigning a girl to Group A

Below, we provide the main criteria used in determining whether a girl should be assigned to Group A. Note that this is based on her potential as an athlete, and ultimately whether she is a good fit for Group A.

- **Attendance at practice**
 - Prospective Group A girls should attend practice 6 days per week beginning on July 15. Girls trying out for other sports who do not make those teams can still join the Cross Country team and be considered for Group A, but they should begin with us as soon as possible so that we have sufficient time to evaluate their potential.
 - For prospective Group A girls with conflicts (e.g. Summer job, vacation, etc), you should regularly communicate these things with a coach and then let us know what you are running when not at practice.
- **Performance at practice**
 - In order to appropriately place girls in what we consider to be the proper training group, we need at least several weeks of observation time. E.g., girls who join the team later in the Summer are much less likely to be placed in Group A.
 - There are some basic practice standards we expect all girls in Group A to achieve. Girls who cannot achieve these standards are more likely to be considered developmental runners at least initially more appropriate for Group B.
 - Group A girls should be capable of running no less than 2-3 non-stop miles at what we would consider to be an appropriate pace.
 - Group A girls should be capable of training with their teammates.
 - Group A girls should be girls who follow our basic team training guidelines (e.g. always giving an honest effort at practice) and demonstrate an attitude that's consistent with what we expect from Group A girls.
- **Performance history**
 - We often have girls who are placed in Group A without any previous Cross Country or Track experience, and so previous participation in either of these sports does not necessarily affect a girl's placement in Group A. When a girl does have a performance history, however, we will certainly consider that history when deciding where to place her.
 - Some girls interested in Group A may not be necessarily capable of achieving the performance standards of Group A. For these girls, we will also consider their loyalty to and support of our program (both Track and Cross Country) over time. This criteria may allow certain seniors to be accepted into Group A over non-seniors.
- **Team support (non-freshmen)**
 - Group A girls are specifically asked to embrace our team concept, and so we consider non-freshman girls as potential Group A members in terms of their support of team activities

Fall jobs, Fall Club practice & the Fall School play

Prior to our Fall practice schedule, attendance at practice is not mandatory, but strongly recommended. On August 15, we begin our Fall practice schedule where attendance at practice is mandatory.

When we've had attendance-related conflicts in the past, there are 3 main areas where those conflicts arise. In order to be perfectly clear about how we address absences, please note the following:

1. We do not allow girls to miss practice for work.
2. We do not allow girls to miss practice in order to attend club team practices/games.
3. We do not allow girls to miss practice in order to participate in the Fall School play.

In these 3 instances, we allow girls 1 unexcused absence, but will drop them from the roster after the second occasion. We strongly encourage our girls to consider this before committing to join our team, and we are very happy to discuss these situations with the girls in advance.

More generally, we have a list of conflicts that we are willing to excuse, and a list of conflicts that would involve an unexcused absence. This will be discussed in more detail at the Parent Meeting on August 14.

Team Website. We maintain a team website at <http://crosscountry.ahsdistance.org> that has a variety of handouts, including a discussion of our Group A and Group B, Fall Meet schedule, team guidelines, and information for new Cross Country parents regarding nutrition, health and other important running-related topics.

Contact info: Head Coach Barry Haworth can be reached by email (bmhaworth@louisville.edu). We also have a team twitter account (@AHS_Distance) and will maintain an email distribution list once official practice begins (please contact Coach Haworth to be included on that list).