

# Portsmouth & District's Guide to Synchro Competitions

The world of synchro can be a confusing one to new swimmers taking up the sport and their parents, especially when it comes to competitions. We hope that his guide helps to clarify the various synchro events , jargon and rules as well as what to expect at your first competition.



## LEVELS OF COMPETITION

There are lots of different types of competitions held all over the country and internationally, varying in length. Some involve an evening only, some a whole day and some for the whole weekend. Competition events also vary from figures or routines only or a combination of both.

There are also four levels of synchro competition in England, designed to give swimmers the opportunity to progress to national and international standard. Entry for each level is dependent on swimmers achieving different grades.

### THE FOUR LEVELS OF ENGLISH SYNCHRO COMPETITION

**LEVEL 1** competitions are designed as an introduction to the competitive side of the sport. These events are run by either clubs or counties and feature figure competitions only, usually for novice swimmers with no grades.

**LEVEL 2** competitions are also a grass roots event but will involve higher entry standards and may include a free combination team event as well as figures.

**LEVEL 3** competitions introduce free solo and duet routines and will typically be a regional event. Swimmers between 9 and 12 years old will be expected to have achieved at least grade 2 while swimmers over 13 will need to be at least grade 3 standard.

**LEVEL 4** competitions are national events for the most competitive swimmers in the country who have achieved high figure grades.

**ADULT AND MASTERS** competitions operate slightly differently, with no grades required to enter.

## FIGURE EVENTS

### SO WHAT ARE FIGURES?

Synchro is made up of basic positions and movements that combine in a specific way to form what is known as a Figure. Age group figures can be downloaded from the ASA website. Figures are changed by FINA every four years, with new figures due in January 2018.

At figure competitions, swimmers individually perform a number of predetermined figures in front of a panel of judges. All figures have a description and degree of difficulty or tariff. Swimmers are judged based on the accuracy of positions and transitions as specified in the figure description. The control of the movement including extension, height, stability and uniform motion is also judged. Figures are usually executed in a stationary position.

Swimmers receive marks from each judge, based on how well they perform the overall figure according to the figure description, ranging from 0-10 using 1/10th points. Scores for all figures are then combined and an overall score is given to determine the swimmers ranking.

At most figure competitions panels of judges will be stationed around the pool and swimmers will rotate to each panel where they will perform a different figure. Although each swimmer performs individually, all panels run at the same time so they will not be the only swimmer in the pool.

In competitions from Level 3 when solos and duets can be entered, all swimmers may enter a routine but only swimmers with the highest figure scores will be able to swim their solo or duet. For those eligible to swim, their figure results are carried over combined with routine scores to create a final overall score which will determine the competition rankings and medal winners.

## ROUTINE EVENTS

Routines are composed of hybrids (figures and movements linked together), arm movements and travel. Swimmers are synchronised both to each other and to the music. During a routine swimmers can never use the bottom of the pool for support and depend on sculling and eggbeater to keep afloat.

After the performance the swimmers are judged and scored on their performance based on technical merit and artistic impression. Technical skill, patterns, travel, choreography, and synchronisation are all critical to achieving a high score.

### TYPES OF ROUTINE

The four main routines at synchro competitions are:

**Solos** - where an individual swimmer will synchronise with the music.

**Duets** - where a swimmer co-ordinates with their partner and in time to the music.

**Teams**- Usually involve 4-8 swimmers, team members must be in synchronisation and coordinate with each other and the music during the routine. For every swimmer under the full 8 swimmers half a mark will be deducted (as it is easier to synchronise fewer people).

**Combination Team (Combo)**- Involves up to 10 swimmers and unlike a typical team where all swimmers are swimming the same thing, a Combo has segments which separately feature anywhere from one to all ten of its members. No points are deducted for less swimmers.



### TECHNICAL VS FREE ROUTINES

In domestic competitions, free and technical routines are introduced at Level 3 events. Swimmers are required to swim both a technical and a free routine for Solo, Duet and regular Team events.

A technical routine is a shorter routine with predetermined elements that must be performed in a specific order. Technical routines are not commonly held for junior or age group events. Instead, figure competitions are held to test swimmers' execution of certain synchronised swimming moves.

Free routines are slightly longer and have no required elements to perform, meaning there is a much greater emphasis on the creativity of choreography and movement. The final scores of the technical and free routine are combined to determine the winners.

### WALK ON & DECKWORK

Another distinctive aspect of synchro is the deck work. Swimmers have a 30 second walk on to poolside and 10 seconds on poolside before they enter the water.

Whilst their walk on to the pool and the position they take do not count towards a score, they do set the tone for the routine and judges will already be forming their impression from it.

### ROUTINE SCORES

Routines are judged by panels of judges around the pool, their marks are combined to create a final score. Each judge gives a score out of 10 for one of three categories below.

1. Execution- this is based on the execution of the movements and the synchronisation of the swimmers both to the music and to their teammates.
2. Artistic Impression - scores are given based on the choreography of the free routine, the musical interpretation and the presentation of the routine.
3. Difficulty - the final category is simply a score for the difficulty of the elements and synchronisation of the routine.



### COSTUMES

For figures and technical routines swimmers are required to wear a plain black costume and plain white hat.

For free routines things get a little more interesting. Costumes are more elaborate and can be of any colour and design (as long as they are tasteful) and are often decorated with sequins. Hair is put into a bun and gelatine applied and headdresses are worn to coordinate with the costumes. Non-theatrical makeup (always waterproof!) is also allowed to be worn, further adding to the artistic element of the sport.

## WHOS WHO AT COMPETITIONS

Officials are the name given to the individuals who volunteer to help run the competitions- they are usually the ones wearing white t-shirts on poolside. All of these individuals are volunteers from the competing clubs. All clubs are required to provide a specified number of volunteers, depending on the number of swimmers they have entered, to fill these roles otherwise swimmers from the club will not be able to enter.

### REFEREE

The role of a synchro referee is to oversee the control of a synchronised swimming competition. They interpret the rules if a mistake is made by a swimmer and will decide if penalty points should be awarded. The referee makes sure all aspects of the event are run smoothly and follow FINA rules.

### JUDGE

Synchro judges are essential to run synchronised swimming competitions as they provide scores based on the performance of each routine or figure.

To reduce the level of subjectivity in scoring, all synchro judges must be trained and have an understanding of FINA and the ASA's rules and regulations for competitions.

There are three levels of synchro judge in England – basic, general and national judge. Basic judges are required for most of the Level 1 and 2 competitions.

### SCORER

The role of a synchro scorer is to record marks from the judges and make the necessary computations for each routine.



There are two levels of synchro scorer training in England – national scorer and chief recorder.

National scorers write down and calculate all the scores that come in for figures and routines at competitions and can officiate at any level of domestic competition in England.

Chief recorders are in charge of scoring at synchronised swimming events and are trained to manage related computer results systems at national and regional competitions.

### CALLER

The role of a Callers is to call out the scores as they are held up by the judges so that the scorers can record them.

### RUNNER

Runners transfer the swimmers score sheets to each panel.

### CLERK

The role of a synchro clerk is vital during the competitions as they ensure swimmers are in the right place at the right time. At competitions they confirm competitor's are in the correct order of draw and inform swimmers when and where to enter the water and what at figure competitions which figure they are doing. They are a great support and reassurance to swimmers and it is a great role to support the swimmers on poolside.

### TEAM MANAGER

The role of a Team Manager (TM) is to ensure the smooth running of synchro events away from the club's home pool. They are responsible for the swimmers during the event and provide a central point of contact for the team. They also help the swimmers get ready, gel hair and make sure they are ready to swim. Each club brings their own TM, who is responsible for their own club only. Depending on the number of swimmers at the competition there may be more than one TM present, each responsible for a different age group for example.

There are two levels of TM, level 1 for local competitions and level 2 for overnight stays.

### VOLUNTEERING

In order for our swimmers to enter competitions the club is required to send volunteers in the form of judges, clerks, scorers and of course team managers. If we cannot send volunteers the number of swimmers we can send is limited.

We encourage all parents to help out at competitions, the more volunteers we can get, the less each individual has to commit to, it is also a great way to get involved in synchro and support your daughter and the club. Prior synchro knowledge is not needed for any of the roles mentioned above as the courses cover all the basics.

Training courses are available throughout the year for most of the roles and will be funded by the club. If you are interested in volunteering please contact us.

## CLUB KIT AND EQUIPMENT

Club kit is compulsory for all competitions. This includes club t-shirt, black shorts and club holdall.

Jewellery and nail varnish is not allowed to be worn at any event.

Swimmers will need a few towels as well as an extra towel or a dressing gown to wear on poolside to keep them warm whilst waiting in between figures.

As it gets very hot on poolside, swimmers should have plenty of non-fizzy drinks for poolside (we also recommend this to spectators too)

For longer competitions swimmers should also bring suitable food and snacks to have on poolside.

### EQUIPMENT FOR FIGURES

- Plain black costume
- Plain white hat
- Noseclip
- Goggles

### EQUIPMENT FOR ROUTINES

- Costume of choice
- Head dress
- Noseclip
- Goggles are not allowed
- Non-theatrical Makeup is permitted



## TRANSPORT TO COMPETITONS

Transport to local competitions is usually arranged individually by parents, coaches and officials. For competitions further afield group transport is sometimes arranged, such as minibus or coach.

### LIFT SHARING

Any swimmers that wish to enter a competition but are unable to get there please speak to your coaches as lift sharing can always be arranged with other swimmers, coaches or officials. We will always do all we can to ensure swimmers can get to the pool to compete.

## COMPETITION ETIQUETTE

Portsmouth and District Synchro Club expects our members to adhere to our etiquette policy at all times and this includes whilst away at competitions.

Swimmers are to remember they are representing the club as well as themselves at competitions and we expect personal behaviour and conduct is to be of a high standard at all times.

Swimmers are expected to

behave in a manner that shows respect to the club, their team mates, coaches and members of other competing clubs. Swimmers are encouraged to cheer on their team mates and other competitors as they would expect others to do for them.

Swimmers are also expected to be presentable at all times. Team kit is to be worn on arrival and

during all competitions and swimmers should make sure that they have all appropriate kit with them on poolside.

Forgotten kit can be very disruptive at competitions and a kit checklist is usually sent out with the competition information beforehand.

Most of all we want all our members to have fun at competitions. They are a great ways to get to know swimmers with in our club

as well as mix with swimmers from other clubs, who you will usually bump into again at the next event.

As previously mentioned It is also a great way for parents to get involved with synchro and to support the swimmers and if any parents would like to know more about helping out at competitions in any of the roles previously listed, please contact us.

## WHAT TO EXPECT AT COMPETITIONS

### ARRIVING

When swimmers arrive at competitions, especially to their first, it can be very overwhelming. Clubs often meet in the swimming pool lobby so there is usually lots of swimmers, noise and excitement.

### REGISTRATION

Swimmers will need to have club t-shirts and club holdalls for competitions and should arrive wearing their club kit so they are easily identified. It is important that they report to their Team Manager (TM) straight away to sign in. Once all the swimmers have arrived the TM will register the swimmers with the competition officials to confirm they have arrived.

### GOODBYE TO MUM AND DAD

Once registration has taken place it is time for swimmers to go into the changing room and parents to go to the spectator area.

From this point on the TM is in charge of the swimmers and is "Mum" for the day, swimmers will not be able to see their parents until the end of the competition.

Any medication that swimmers are taking should be reported to the TM and they should also be made aware of any allergies swimmers may have.

Only swimmers, TM's and Coaches are allowed in the changing room. All TM's and coaches have been through a DBS procedure.

If they have any problems or questions, swimmers should speak to their TM as parents will only be contacted in an emergency. We ask that parents respect the rules of the competition

and do not come poolside or enter the changing rooms at any point. If the spectator area is on poolside we ask that you please do not approach your daughter during the competition. We obviously encourage lots of waving and cheering!

### CHANGING ROOM

As their belongings will be kept in the changing rooms, it is really important that swimmers have everything they need for the whole competition in their club holdall, including all equipment, drinks and snacks. We advised labelling all belongings so any lost items can be easily returned.



*PADS 12 & U Team at NAGS 2016*

There are often over 200 girls in a competition, so it is often very crowded in changing rooms. This is why it is important for the club swimmers to stay together and listen to their TM.

### COMPETITION TIME

Swimmers will usually compete in the figure competition first and will be ushered by Clerks into their correct starting positions around the pool and swimmer will then rotate to each panel until all figures have been completed.

Once the figure competition is finished swimmers can prepare for the routine competition if they are taking part or can change back into their club kit ready for the swimmer parade and medal ceremony.

Swimmers are expected to stay until the end of the competition and cheer on their fellow team mates and may only leave early if it has been previously arranged with the TM before the competition.



*Time for hair and makeup*

For swimmers taking part in the routine part of the competition, it will be time to get into routine costumes, get hair into buns and start gelling. After this there is time to walkthrough the routines for some last minute practice.

For competitions that only have a routine element, hair can be gelled before arriving to the competition to save time.

### SWIMMER PARADE

Once all competition elements are complete all swimmers will change into their club kit where they will take part in a swimmer parade around the pool, involving all of the clubs in alphabetical order. Swimmers then line up around the pool and the medal presentation will take place.



*Swimmers line up for the medal presentation*

All swimmers will need to sign out with the TM before leaving the pool with their parents.