

Group Promotion Process

Armada has developed our group promotion process over the years. This has been continually developed from year to year along with the growth of the team. This year we further adapted our process to work around the challenges of Covid protocols, limited space and our cohort model. We continue to evolve our process and will continue to work on developing an effective way of graduating kids on to the next stage of their careers.

An important note on terms; we absolutely avoid terms that imply elevation above another, or that one group is better than another. We do not call this process “moving up”. This is a continuum that moves forward horizontally, and can take turns in one direction or another, but no group can say that they have more value on the team than another. Swimming is a long progression and one that we hope the kids will be a part of for many years. Each swimmer’s career in the sport takes them on a different path. Some are bound for swimming at the elite level all the way through college and beyond, and some will be great members of their high school teams, but will want to invest time in other interests. Some will always be dedicated and work hard and some will decide that swimming is not their first priority. And to be honest, in the sports world some kids are more physically inclined to be faster than others, but that does not diminish the value of the sport to the development of who they are as people.

1. Promotion Periods: We have three times each year that we do promotions and they coincide with the ending of seasons. At the end of the Fall season in Dec, the end of Winter season in May, and the end of Summer season in July. We avoid moving swimmers mid-season because it is difficult to get swimmers caught up with all that has already gone on in a group. Mid-season moves are rare, but we will consider a move if the swimmer is not being challenged or if their needs are not met in their current group.

2. Coaches Discussion: The current coach of the swimmer and the coach of the next group discuss the swimmer’s potential to move on. The criteria we consider are as follows:

- Swimmers with a high attendance record
- Swimmers who attend meets or time trials and have been improving their times
- Swimmers who have achieved the skills taught in their current group
- Swimmers who have the desire to put forth the effort into improving

We want kids who are emotionally and physically ready for new challenges. Swimmers should show us in practice that they want to move to the next level by the amount of effort they put into practice and by their ability to listen to and apply instruction. A swimmer’s coachability is just as important as their skill level. We avoid moving

swimmers who are not the appropriate age for the level of workouts, and also consider both emotional and physical maturity. We want the swimmer to be compatible with the group, and not struggle to keep up with the group. Every child is different and matures at a different rate. As such, we must be very conscious of each child's need for challenge and care.

At Armada, we the coaches believe firmly that we would be doing a child a disservice by moving them on if they are only marginally ready, or because the child and parent are very eager to have them move. This is not to say that you can't express interest in moving, or ask what is needed to get to the next group. But we often have to remind swimmers that sport is different than school. They are used to moving from one grade to the next each year with all the other kids of their age. Being in the middle of the class or even the lower end of the class will still get a student on to the next grade. In sports, they don't get to move on just because of their age or because they have been in a group for one year. They must demonstrate that they are capable of performing the skills needed for the next group on a regular basis.

3. Group Visits: This step in the group promotion is not possible with Covid protocols. Instead we have used skill assessments, test sets or timed swims to target group readiness.

**The info below we hope to be able to return to once the Covid protocols and our cohort models are no longer needed.

Once we have discussed and agreed on which kids are getting close to moving on, we have those swimmers practice with the next group a few times. We intentionally pick some swimmers who are not quite ready, because we want them to get a glimpse of what the next group is like. It is often a great motivator for them to realize what they still need to work on and what it is really like. They all have the desire to move on, but they don't always realize how much hard work it is going to take. It is not intended to discourage them or prove to them that they are not ready, and we explain this to them directly before they do the visit. After each visiting practice, we ask the kids how they did, what they think they still need to work on and ask them to be honest about how they fit into the group. It is an important discussion that we want the kids to be active in, because it is their swimming, not ours as coaches or as parents. We want to make it very clear that doing a group visit is not a guarantee that the swimmer will be moving to the next group, and there is no shame in not moving. The learning process should be positive and success or failure in swimming does not define who the kids are as individuals. There is no such thing as success without failure.

4. Promotion: Once the swimmers have achieved the skills or timed test set the coaches review each swimmers group visit. If a swimmer is ready it should be an easy decision for both coaches. We will inform the swimmer in person and the parents via email of the new group practice time and if there is any new equipment needed. For those swimmers that are not ready to move on, we will clearly outline the areas that need improvement so they may work on those skills before their next opportunity to move. We will never hold a swimmer back who is no longer being challenged in their current group.

We understand that there will always be discussion among the swimmers of who is moving and who isn't, but by educating everyone on the team we hope that it will be as positive as possible. There may be disappointment around not moving, but we hope that further motivates them to achieve the needed skills. I have no doubt that the swimmer will continue to work hard and make progress and reach their goal. We will continue to talk with the swimmers about what is required in the next group and questions are always welcome. Things can be very busy on deck during practice, but we are always happy to set up a time to talk with both swimmers and parents about any part of swimming.