



## **SCSC Group Placement Criteria**

SCSC coaches are guided by a team-wide philosophy that drives our decisions, and we hope that communicating these ideas will allow for a better understanding of group placement decision-making. SCSC coaches work together towards a common goal: **Long Term Athlete Development**. Finding the appropriate training group for every swimmer is of the utmost priority for the SCSC Coaching Staff. Every swimmer should have the appropriate challenges placed upon their group, all while ensuring the swimmer is not given “too much, too soon”. We here at SCSC value long term progression for all swimmers and focus on having our athletes thrive in a focused practice environment. The SCSC program will foster athletes who will go on to be successful in all areas of their swimming, and in life.

Each season, coaches evaluate swimmers for the best placement within the divisions and reassign them to different groups as they age and/or progress. Swimmers may move to a different level within their division (e.g., from Age Group Orange to Age Group Blue) or transition to another division (e.g., Age Group Orange to Junior Yellow), the latter of which is generally driven by age. Divisional advancements often require a change in level as well, since those swimmers will be among the youngest and least experienced in their new division. For example, a Mini swimmer who just aged up may very well be moved to Age Group Yellow the following season. In order to foster healthy, excellent bodies and attitudes, this progression must be gradual and age-appropriate. There are what we call “soft” moves in December and April, when coaches consider those who are aging out of their division and those who demonstrate tremendous improvement by continually training above and beyond their peers in the same group, during these points of the season.

Group placements and transitions are based on many factors, including a fair bit of coaching instinct. Some of the most important factors driving group placement are a swimmer’s training ability, maturity, a continuous willingness and desire to improve, and prioritization of the sport. Coaches also consider the value of a swimmer being at the top of the group – never underestimate the tremendous value in being a leader. In the upper divisions, commitment (practice attendance, meet participation, prioritization of the sport) becomes a factor in group placement. Qualification standards are not a primary factor, although they will be taken into consideration because those times translate to meet qualification and training needs. Group size and making sure that groups are filled with athletes who exhibit similar abilities and qualities are also considered.

The following helps to better break down what the coaches consider when deciding to move a swimmer into a different group:

- 1. Training ability – the ability to hold technique while training on, and making, intervals**
  - a. The coaches look at who the lane leaders are in a group. If a swimmer is clearly training above the rest of his/her group, then that indicates that he/she may be ready for a group move. This is a huge factor in deciding to move a swimmer up regardless of meet times.
  - b. The coaches consider if a swimmer is not being challenged by the intervals in his/her current group and would benefit from a higher level training interval. This is another factor that is very heavily weighed when deciding on a group move.
  - c. The coaches look at a swimmer’s endurance and his/her ability to start a set strong and finish strong. A high level of endurance and the confidence to push his/her self for a whole set is a determining factor in group moves.

- d. The coaches look at a swimmer's ability to successfully hold technique, do streamlines and focus on other details, while also training at the highest level of their current group.
  - e. If a swimmer is not training above the rest of the current group, is being challenged by the intervals of the current group and struggles to hold technique and focus on the details, then a move to a higher level group is not appropriate as this does not lend itself to SCSC's philosophy of "Long Term Athlete Development."
2. **Maturity and Attitude** – Coaches take into consideration chronological age, psychological age, and emotional development. Boys and Girls are often at different levels of maturity so that has to be taken into consideration when discussing group moves. Several factors considered when assessing maturity and attitude are as follows:
  - a. The ability to self-motivate
  - b. The ability to be a leader in all aspects of the sport (swim, dryland, meets). This includes following the team's policies (i.e. the suit policy).
  - c. Respectfulness to his/her teammates and coaches
  - d. A continual willingness and desire to improve
3. **Attendance and prioritization of the sport** – At minimum, a swimmer needs to be making the current group's attendance recommendations in order to be considered to move up. If a swimmer isn't making his/her current attendance requirements then he/she is not giving the coaches confidence that he/she will make the next level up's higher attendance recommendations. When considering swimmers for placement in the top tiers of their divisions, especially for 13 and older, prioritization of the sport is a major consideration. While SCSC encourages and supports participation in summer swim league and other sports, attendance at SCSC practices and meets should be a priority for those striving to be in higher level groups. This category includes both practice attendance and meet attendance, during the short course and long course seasons.
4. **Group size** – Group size is another important factor that coaches will consider when placing swimmers. We realize that the pool is a learning environment just like a classroom in a school. And in order to be effective teachers, we must treat it as such. Therefore, groups will be an appropriate size and filled with athletes who exhibit similar abilities and have common goals.
5. **Qualification Standards and Times:**
  - a. Qualification standards are not a primary factor in the decision to move a swimmer to the next level group, however, they will be taken into consideration because times translate to meet qualification and training needs.
  - b. It is important that the swimmer coming into a new group has times which fall within the margin of the current swimmers' times in that group. Coaches want to move a swimmer into the middle of a new group, not the bottom. This is in order to avoid a swimmer falling behind and struggling to keep up, which often leads to poor technique, injury and discouragement in the swimmer.
  - c. There is an element of coach's discretion involved in this category as certain swimmers may be within the group's average in certain events and not others. However, racing times do not directly correlate with training intervals and a swimmer's ability to train at a particular level. This is where the coaches must decide where the swimmer should be placed to meet that swimmer's training needs so they continue to have the opportunity to improve.
6. **Coaches Discretion** – There is always a level of coach's discretion after all these factors are considered. Coaches are the experts in the field in this case and their experience and expertise does play a part.

[Click here](#) for a great article that speaks to group moves and will further help to explain!