

Greater Pensacola Aquatic Club

Guidelines for Training Group Progression

GPAC Training Groups are designed to give each swimmer the utmost opportunity for improvement in the sport of swimming. Starting with our swim school, each group is specifically designed to pave the way for each swimmer to progress/advance to the next level. GPAC's mission is "To develop all levels of swimmers and instill values and life-skills that foster success in all aspects of life." This is a lofty mission and to accomplish it we must keep the swimmer's well being in mind at all times. GPAC always focuses on the athlete's long term development.

Additional pages provide a breakdown of GPAC's Training Groups and a description of what each group covers. There are requirements for all groups and that Head Coach approval is required for all advancement. This is to ensure that each group contains athletes that are focusing on the same areas of their development.

In general, swimmers can often provide insight into their own readiness for group advancement by thinking about how they practice. A swimmer who consistently demonstrates an outstanding attitude, consistently attends practice, leads the fastest lane in their training group, consistently practices proper technique, etc. is a swimmer that coaches will consider for group advancement. On the other hand, advancing a swimmer who does not attend practice, who demonstrates a poor attitude and/or work ethic, who is not in the fastest lane, etc. would not be in the best interest of the club or that individual.

Progression to the next level in GPAC's program involves several factors. Most of the determining factors are objective (measurable) in nature, such as age (must reach minimum age by the end of the move up period), physical stamina, ability to read the clock and understand intervals, swim practice attendance, and performance. However, some factors such as technical competence, mental preparedness, attitude, and work ethic are subjective in nature and will play a role in determining advancement. Group size is also a consideration as we wish to have a manageable number of swimmers per lane so that training is not hampered.

At the beginning of each advancement period the coaching staff will discuss which swimmers are ready to progress to the next group (i.e. Blue to Green). Only those swimmer who are ready and willing to make a greater commitment and are able to handle longer practices and greater training loads will be considered for advancement. Additionally, it is expected that once a swimmer is advanced to the next group that they will continue to put in the time and effort to train at the advanced level. A goal of advancement for the advancement itself is not a worthy goal. A swimmer is expected to continue to train at the high level that helped them advance, to maintain the attendance requirements of their new group and to compete as the group demands. If a swimmer is unable or unwilling to keep up with the new group they will be moved back to their previous group.

The criteria are guidelines for the GPAC Coaches. Your coaches are the best individuals able to assess a swimmer's readiness to make this next step. Your swimmer's coach will do an initial evaluation for their group and will then speak with you and your swimmer about their interest in advancing and about participating in a tryout. The coaches of each group will make recommendations to the Head Coach on group placement and advancement, based on their experience. It is solely the decision of the coaching staff as to whether a particular swimmer is to be moved from one group to another. The criteria that involve performance standards, USA Swimming motivational times and Southeastern Swimming Championship cuts are all evaluated on a swimmer's Short Course Yards (SCY) times as SCY comprises approximately 90% of GPAC's training. Long Course Meters (LCM) times will be converted to SCY times using the conversion tool on www.usaswimming.org for advancement purposes.

Group testing occurs three (3) times per calendar year at your swimmer's pool. Testing begins during the second half of March, July and November. However, special cases may arise where swimmers can move up during other times of the season (for example a 10 year old new swimmer who starts in the White Training Group may quickly gain the skills necessary to progress to the Blue Training Group). Once your swimmer has successfully completed their testing and has been selected for advancement the move up process takes one month to allow for acclimation to the rigors of the new group. During this time it is possible for the swimmer to decide against advancement. During the first month, swimmers will attend the next group's practice two days per week (typically Tuesdays and Thursdays) and the remaining practices with their current group. At the beginning of the second month your swimmer is in the next group. Again there may be adjustments to this advancement time table depending on individuals, groups and time of year.

Talk to your coach about your goals on a regular basis. He/she is the person who can help you make that jump to the next level!!

Please keep in mind that this information is subject to revision and will be revisited yearly, as GPAC is a youth organization and is in a constant state of change. Parents are asked to abide by the coaches decisions in regard to group advancement, and any questions paramount to your child should be directed to his/her coach and/or the Head Coach.