



# VJO Group Placement, Progression & Advancement Protocols

## VJO Group Placement

Each VJO swimmer is placed into a practice group by the coaching staff when they join the team. The group placement decision will take into consideration a variety of factors such as

- Age
- Physical maturity
- Social and Emotional maturity
- Skill / Technique development
- Level of Aerobic conditioning
- Experience in the sport
- Level of commitment (practice and swim meet attendance)

The VJO coaching staff takes a great deal of time making these decisions each month and you can rest assured that the group placement decision is made with care and concern for your child's long term development as a competitive swimmer.

## VJO Group Progression Summary

Typically, beginner to intermediate level age group swimmers (swimmers age 12&under) will enter the VJO program at the Pre-Team, Hammerhead 1 or Hammerhead 2 level where they begin to focus on developing proper stroke technique in all four of the competitive strokes along with the racing starts and turns necessary for competition. Swimmers are exposed to swim meets at the H1 and H2 level of the program and the focus of competition is the application of proper techniques at race speed.

VJO believes in developing age group swimmers who are capable of competing successfully in all four competitive strokes and a complete range of racing distances. A big emphasis is placed on competing on the IM (Individual Medley) whether the distance be 100, 200 or 400 IM. It is for this reason that we prioritize swimming correctly from a technique perspective at each level of the program. Once a strong technical foundation has been developed, a swimmer will be moved to a training group that is appropriate for their age, skill, and level of commitment (practice and swim meet attendance).

The training groups will continue to focus on the technical side of the sport. However, the focus on the aerobic development of the athlete will begin to increase in importance. Swimming correctly over longer distances at faster aerobic paces will take years to develop and the training progressions are designed with this important aspect of long term development as a priority. As the swimmer progresses through the training group structure, they will also be introduced to the appropriate levels of anaerobic training.

The focus of competition at the training group level will involve correctly executing racing strategies and approaching the swim meet environment with a clear and goal-

driven purpose. We introduce the athlete to the important life skill of goal setting as early as the Hammerhead 1 Group level.

### **VJO Group Advancement Protocols**

The VJO coaching staff hold a coaches meeting at the end of every month. Here the VJO coaches discuss the progress of individual swimmers in their groups. When a VJO coach believes an athlete is ready for a group change or transition, he/she will approach the coach of the next group and the head coach for approval. Once the group change or transition is approved, then coach approaches the swimmer and family of the swimmer to discuss the group change. Group transitions are done to gradually get a swimmers used to a new group. This transition period can vary greatly from swimmers to swimmers, but usually lasts 1-6 months.

If a group change is made, the Treasurer or Membership Chair will contact you regarding any changes to your training fees.

### **Tips and Advice for Parents when Discussing Group Advancement with your Child or Coach**

- **Encourage Your Child to Ask Questions** - Encourage your child to ask their primary coach any questions that may arise about their group placement whether regarding their current group placement or criteria for advancement to a different group.
- **Group Advancement should NOT be the primary goal of the season** - Do not view or allow your child to view group advancement as a primary goal for the season. Group advancement will take place when they are ready and your child's focus should be on mastering the skills necessary to improve as a swimmer in the group they are currently placed in.
- **Kids develop and mature at different rates** and group advancement will not be rushed to keep your child with a friend, peer group, or carpool.
- **Commitment level of the Swimmer** - One of the first things a primary coach looks at when considering a group advancement is the commitment level of the swimmer (swim meet and practice attendance). If the swimmer is not displaying the necessary commitment to be successful at the next level, they should not expect to be considered for group advancement.
- **There is no strict linear progression from group to group** – In the VJO program, there are many factors that go into group placement as mentioned above. While the more advanced groups are typically linked to the higher commitment levels, there are multiple paths a swimmer can take to advance through the program.
- **Ask questions. Ask questions. Ask questions** - Your child's primary coach is available to answer questions outside of practice time. While we certainly encourage the athletes to develop the comfort level and confidence to ask their

coaches about their progress on a daily basis, parents are also encouraged to do the same weekly or monthly.

- **Talk to Your Coach in Person** - Email is not the best forum for questions regarding your child's group placement or status. Please take the time to set up an appointment with your child's primary coach to discuss questions of this nature.
- **Be patient** - The most happy and successful swimmers and parents understand that developing as a swimmer will take years and not a single season. There is no need to rush through a program and premature advancement will only stall the developmental process. Trust the professional coaches you have hired to guide your child through this exciting journey!

