

DONNER SWIM CLUB

ATHLETE GROUP PLACEMENT & ADVANCEMENT POLICY

2026–2027 Membership Year

Donner Swim Club uses training groups to place athletes in environments appropriate for their current development.

Training groups are not intended to rank athletes or function as rewards. Placement considers the athlete as a whole and seeks to match each swimmer with the training demands, peer environment, coaching support, and competitive opportunities most appropriate for continued growth.

1. Placement Considerations

Athletes develop at different rates, and no single factor determines placement.

Coaches may consider:

- technical skill and movement quality;
- training readiness;
- chronological age;
- physical, emotional, and social maturity;
- peer relationships and social fit;
- attendance, consistency, and practice habits;
- ability to understand and execute training objectives;
- independence, communication, and athlete ownership;
- competitive readiness and experience;
- ability to safely manage the group's training demands;
- long-term athlete development;
- group capacity, staffing, and facility limitations; and
- the overall structure and culture of the Club.

The importance of each factor will vary by athlete.

Athletes with similar swimming ability may appropriately be placed in different groups. For example, an older athlete who is new to competitive swimming may require a different peer and training environment than a much younger athlete with similar technical skills.

2. No Single Benchmark Guarantees Placement or Advancement

Age, race times, technical skills, attendance, friendships, time spent in a group, or other individual factors may influence a placement decision, but no single factor automatically determines the outcome.

Likewise, achieving a particular time, qualifying standard, skill, or performance benchmark does not automatically result in advancement.

Placement is not determined solely by:

- race performance;
- chronological age;
- length of time in a group;
- sibling placement;
- parent preference; or

- comparison with another athlete.

Advancement occurs when the coaching staff determines that the athlete is prepared for the overall developmental, social, physical, and training expectations of the receiving group.

3. Readiness for Advancement

Athletes should demonstrate a pattern of readiness rather than satisfy a checklist once.

Readiness may include the ability to:

- perform the skills expected within the receiving group;
- train safely and productively at the group's level;
- understand and execute the purpose of training tasks;
- demonstrate appropriate consistency and practice habits;
- manage increased training demands;
- communicate appropriately with coaches;
- take increasing responsibility for preparation and development; and
- contribute positively to the training environment.

Advancement does not require perfection. The question is whether the athlete is ready to **benefit from and contribute to** the next training environment.

4. Placement, Advancement, and Reassignment Process

Athlete placement may be reviewed throughout the year.

Lead coaches may recommend that an athlete:

- advance to another training group;
- remain in the current group;
- transition to another developmental pathway; or
- be reassigned when another environment is more appropriate.

The **Head Coach retains final authority over competitive training-group placement, advancement, and reassignment**, consistent with Club policy.

Changes will generally occur at logical transition points, including seasonal registration periods, when practical. Athletes may also move during a season when the coaching staff determines that a change is appropriate.

There is no standard timeline for advancement.

Reassignment to another group should not be viewed as a demotion or disciplinary action. Changes may be appropriate because of development, attendance, injury, extended absence, training readiness, social fit, safety, program restructuring, or other circumstances affecting the athlete's ability to train effectively.

5. Group Capacity and Program Considerations

Developmental readiness does not automatically guarantee immediate placement in another group.

The Club must also consider:

- available lane space;
- coach-to-athlete ratios;

- staffing;
- facility limitations;
- safety;
- training-group balance; and
- the ability of the receiving group to function effectively.

When an athlete appears ready for increased challenge but immediate movement is not appropriate, coaches may provide other developmental opportunities within the existing program structure.

6. Athlete Development Standards

Donner Swim Club may publish developmental competencies, advancement criteria, or Athlete Development Matrix resources to help families understand the progression of the program.

These resources provide guidance and transparency. They do not function as an automatic promotion checklist or replace professional coaching judgment.

Development is evaluated as a whole and over time.

7. Communication With Families

Coaches should communicate significant placement and advancement decisions clearly and respectfully.

When appropriate, those conversations may address:

- demonstrated strengths;
- current developmental priorities;
- expectations of the athlete's current or future group; and
- anticipated next steps.

Athletes and parents are welcome to ask questions and seek clarification regarding placement or advancement.

Questions should follow the Club's normal coaching communication process. Final placement decisions remain coaching decisions.

8. Membership Fees

Training groups may have different membership rates.

When an athlete changes groups, the applicable membership fee may also change. Donner Swim Club will communicate a resulting fee change before it takes effect whenever reasonably practicable.

A family's preference for a particular membership rate does not determine athlete placement.

9. Special Participation Pathways

Donner Swim Club may offer alternative or supplemental pathways that do not represent traditional advancement between training groups.

These may include reduced-participation options, commitment-based opportunities, high-school or multi-sport pathways, or other structures established by the Club.

Eligibility for these opportunities may involve separate requirements. Participation does not automatically change an athlete's underlying developmental placement unless determined by the coaching staff.

Relationship to Club Policies

All placement, advancement, and participation decisions remain subject to:

- Applicable Donner Swim Club policies
- The Membership Agreement
- Parent & Athlete Standards
- Safe Sport and MAAPP requirements, and other governing requirements.