



YMCA of Upper Palmetto RAYS

Group Guidelines and Descriptions

Here at the Y there is a place for all level of swimmer with the Rays! From the beginner wanting to learn how to swim, to the advanced swimmer with dreams of swimming in college or the Olympics, please feel free to email raysadmin@ymcaup.org with any questions about our program.

Attendance Suggestions & Offering:

The number of practices for some groups is a suggestion and other groups a minimum number is required to be in the group. This minimum or suggested number of practices is what we as professional coaches believes in necessary for the proper development of your swimmer in the sport. If your child wants to attend more than what is suggested that is GREAT, we are doing our jobs! However, please consult with your coach. We don't want to overload a young athlete with too many workouts at a young age. We have developed a progression that when followed will be very successful.

Average Age:

The ages are the high and low in each group based on appropriate progression based on age. However, no means are these the set ages for each group. Average age differs by location due to lane and availability constraints

Practice Guidelines:

Every training group for the Rays has established basic practice expectations. These expectations are in place to ensure athlete development and progression through each season. Three practice skills sets are addressed: Individual Medley Training (IM), Freestyle Interval Training; and Kicking Interval Training. The coaching staff believes that these practice guidelines will foster a challenging and fun learning environment for each training group.



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Competition Suggestions:

The Rays is a year round competitive swim team and all swimmers placed into any of the age group levels are strongly encouraged to compete in every swim meet possible. The Mini-Rays will have their own smaller competitions where they compete against each other. Mini-Rays that show the competitive skills and desire to swim in USA/YMCA formatted meets can be allowed in swim meets only at the coach's discretion. Please note, an additional \$100 registration fee will be owed to compete in the year round meets, due to registration fees with USA Swimming. The emphasis of swim meet participation progresses with each level of the groups, certain groups have an expected number of meets the athlete is expected to attend. You will notice other groups have a minimum suggestion based on the coaching staff's expectation. The Rays attend 7 to 10 meets from September to April (Short Course Season) and 3 to 5 meets from May to July (Long Course Season).

Group Moves:

This is a topic that is very hard to put an exact qualification on. The following areas are used to assess group moves for athletes:

- Training Ability
- Commitment Level
- Swim Meet Participation
- Group Availability
- Competitive Skills
- Parent involvement (Volunteering) in the SWIM program
- Age of athletes (age ups will be considered for those changing age groups during the season)

(Note: Fall Group assessments for the new season are based on these categories throughout the Summer Long Course Season. If your swimmer does not compete or practice regularly throughout the summer Long Course season, they will need to do a placement swim prior to the beginning of the next fall season.)

(Note: Group moves can be fluid, if an athlete is out performing their current group or they are struggling to keep up; whatever the case may be, coaches reserve the right to make group moves throughout the season if it is for the best long-term development of the athlete.



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Age Group Program

The guidelines listed below for practice and meets are mostly suggestions by the coaching staff, some are strong suggestions! It is our job as professional coaches to get your swimmer to want to come to practice. We look at each swimmer as their own individual and everyone is different. Stages of development are different for every swimmer just like in all aspects of life. There are early maturer's and late bloomers, however the progression we have established allows for growth and development for every swimmer who buys in. There is a place for every swimmer to foster a passion for the sport and a love for swimming in general that will last them a lifetime.

Mini-Rays

Mini Rays is the gateway to the fun and exhilarating world of swimming! The programs main goal with Mini-rays is to cultivate a love for the sport of swimming that will lead to a lifetime of enjoyment. Whether that love brings them to an Olympic pool or just in the neighborhood pool they have to start somewhere. Mini-Rays will not only learn the proper mechanics and techniques of the four competitive strokes, the coaching staff will teach competitive racing skills that will be beneficial come race time (Start, turns etc)! The coaching staff will also introduce the mini-rays to dryland training (Push Ups, Sit Ups, Lunges, Squats, etc). Every day of practice there will be goals that the coaching staff sets in place. The groups will be offered 3 times a week with a suggestion that you try to make at least 2 a week. Every year the mini-rays will have 3 seasons (September to December, January to May). The fee structure for the Mini-Rays is a monthly payment plus a registration fee at sign up.

All Mini-Rays must be comfortable putting their face in the water and head back with the water over ears. All mini-Rays must wear goggles, caps(if hair is past ears) and a tight fitting swim suit (Jammer or brief for boys, NO board shorts, one piece suit for girls, No girl suits that require tying.)

There are 3 levels of mini-rays that are set up by developmental abilities with age being a second factor. They are not the same level of skills offered at different times. The child's swimming ability and age show which level they should practice in.

Level 1

Must be capable of swimming 25 yards (1 lap) on belly with face in the water with flutter kick (i.e. freestyle). Must also be capable of swimming 25 yards on back with flutter kick (i.e. Backstroke).

- Age: 6-9 years old
- 2-3 practices a week
- No times necessary
- Comfortable in water, must have passed a RAYS Swim evaluation. Free/back necessary.
- Learning lane etiquette and to read a clock, learn send offs.
- Mini Rays meets are highly recommended.



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Level 2

Must be capable of all listed above and the following: Freestyle with a knowledge of breathing to the side without lifting head completely from water. A basic knowledge of the breaststroke and Butterfly Kick.

- Age 7-10
- 2-3 practices a week
- No times necessary
- Comfortable in water, must have passed a RAYS Swim evaluation. Free/back necessary. Grasp of other strokes, close to legal or at legal.
- Learning lane etiquette and to read a clock, learn send offs.
- Mini Rays meets are highly recommended.
- USA Swimming meets at coach's discretion ONLY.

Level 3

Must be capable of doing what is required to be in Level 1 the only difference is in Age. This group is specifically designed for those swimmers who are starting their swimming adventure in their middle school to high school years.

- Age 10-12
- 2-3 practices a week
- No times necessary
- Comfortable in water, must have passed a RAYS Swim evaluation. Free/back necessary. Grasp of other strokes, close to legal or at legal.
- Learning lane etiquette and to read a clock, learn send offs.
- Mini Rays meets are highly recommended.
- USA Swimming meets at coach's discretion ONLY.

Group moves from or within Mini-Rays or to the year-round swim team will be assessed by the YMCA Coaching staff based on Age, Ability, Commitment level, group availability, and competitive level.



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Atlantic Rays

Atlantic Rays is the first step of the year-round swimming program for the YMCAUP. Fun Fact: Atlantic Rays are some of the smallest RAYS in the ocean! The focus of this group is primarily stroke development. The swimmers in this group have knowledge of all four strokes and competitive skills, but require a great deal of instruction to be able to swim them legally and consistently. There is an introduction to aerobic training and dryland strength training that will not only benefit them physically now but more importantly in the years to come. There will be 5 workouts offered a week for this group. Attendance of 2-3 days per week is recommended so that you see the development and improvement in your swimmer. Group moves from the Atlantic Rays will be assessed by the YMCA Coaching staff based on Age, Ability, Commitment level, group availability, family commitment to the volunteer program, and competitive level and will generally be to the Blue Rays or Electric Rays.

Attendance: 2 to 3 Days a Week (4 practices offered per average week)

Practice Guidelines:

1 x 100 IM Legal and Continuous

4 x 50 Free Swim on 1:30 (SCY)

6 x 50 Free Kick on 1:45(SCY)

Ages: 7 to 10yr olds

Swim Meet Participation:

Short Course (Sept to late March): 4 Meet Minimum, End of Season Meet (March) is HIGHLY RECOMMENDED!

Long Course (April to July): 2 Meet Minimum, End of Season Meet (July) is HIGHLY RECOMMEND!

Atlantic Rays Generalities:

- Age 7-10 (by Coaches Invitation if age outside the general)
- 3-4 practices a week are encouraged. Drylands are encouraged as well.
- No times necessary, however Meets are available to this group.
- Meets are encouraged (even one day of the weekend)
- Comfortable with all four strokes, mostly proficient in all strokes.
- Can do 100 IM, basic set awareness.
- Mastering lane etiquette and to read a clock, learning send offs.
- Working towards IM Tough and/or IMR achievements. Variety in events at meets (when ready). [IMX info Link](#)
- Should be able to do 50's of free and 25's of stroke in sets.



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Blue Rays

Blue Rays is the second step in the year-round swimming program for the UPYMCA. Fun Fact: Blue Rays are not a step up from DVDs, they are actually called blue-spotted RAYS, they are greenish in color with blue spots! The primary focus of this group is to provide our age group swimmers with a continued emphasis on stroke technique while providing more opportunity for some aerobic training. Dryland training will continue with more emphasis. Goal Setting will be introduced with primary focus being on meet to meet goals. Specific training goals and racing goals will be put into every practice. Group moves from the Blue Rays will be assessed by the YMCA Coaching staff based on Age, Ability, Commitment level, group availability, family commitment to the volunteer program and competitive level and will generally be to the Electric Rays, Manta Rays, or Pre-Senior 2.

Attendance: 3 Days a Week (5 practices offered per average week)

Practice Guidelines:

3 x 100 IM Legal and Continuous

8 x 50 Free Swim on 1:15 (SCY)

8 x 50 Free Kick on 1:30(SCY)

Ages: 8 to 11yr olds

Swim Meet Participation:

Short Course (Sept to late March): 5 Meet Minimum, End of Season Meet (March) is HIGHLY RECOMMENDED!

Long Course (April to July): 3 Meet Minimum, End of Season Meet (July) is HIGHLY RECOMMEND!

Blue Rays Generalities:

- Age 8-10 (by Coaches Invitation if age outside the general)
- 3-4 practices a week are encouraged. Drylands are encouraged as well.
- Recorded times in events are preferred, however if skill dictates the swimmer is beyond the Atlantic Group that is fine.
- Meets are highly encouraged, multiple days if possible.
- Proficient in all 4 strokes and legal IM
- Proficient lane etiquette and very familiar with clocks/set management
- Working towards motivational times (USA Swimming) and 10 and under state cuts
- Working towards IM Tough and/or IMR achievements. Variety in events at meets. [IMX info Link](#)
- Should be comfortable with sets of 100's (1:45ish) free and 50's of stroke (1:15-25) and repeat IM swims (mostly 100's a 200 every now and again)



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Electric Rays

Electric Rays is the group for any 10 to 12yr old that is interested in year-round swimming but loves doing other sports as well or is just not ready for the training level of the Manta Rays. Fun Fact: Electric Rays have the power to sting a prey with 220 volts of electricity. The Electric Rays group is about electrifying a swimmers love for swimming! It continues to introduce swimmers to an aerobic training base with the main focus still on teaching and fine tuning proper stroke mechanics. Dryland is used to develop strength for older age groupers to compete in a wider range of events. Swimmers of various abilities will be challenge on different levels within the same practice. Group moves from the Electric Rays will be assessed by the YMCA Coaching staff based on Age, Ability, Commitment level, group availability, family commitment to the volunteer program and competitive level and will generally be to the Manta Rays, Pre-Senior 2, or Pre-Senior 1.

Attendance: 2 Days a Week Suggestion (4 practices offered per average week)

Practice Guidelines:

1 x 100 IM Legal and Continuous

4 x 50 Free Swim on 1:30 (SCY)

6 x 50 Free Kick on 1:45(SCY)

Ages: 10 to 12yr olds

Swim Meet Participation:

Short Course (Sept to late March): Meet participation suggested, End of Season Meet (March) is HIGHLY RECOMMENDED!

Long Course (April to July): Meet participation suggested, End of Season Meet (July) is HIGHLY RECOMMEND!

Electric Rays Generalities:

- Age 10-12 (by Coaches Invitation if age outside the general)
- 3-4 practices a week. Drylands are encouraged as well.
- Starting to get into swim meets, even away meets. Begin the competitive swimmer process so that they experience the sport.
- Working to master all 4 strokes and IM.
- Familiar and comfortable with lane etiquette and clock/set management.
- Meets are encouraged to all in this group. Even one day participation is ok.
- Working towards IMX or IMR achievements. Variety in events at meets, when ready. This is encouraged but not required. [IMX info Link](#)
- Sets of 100's free (1:50) and IM (2:10). Starting to work 50's of stroke into 100's



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Manta Rays

Manta Rays are the final step in the age group program of the YMCAUP Rays. Fun Fact: Manta Rays are the largest of all RAYS! The focus of the Manta Rays group is continued stroked development with a greater emphasis on endurance training. Swimmers in this group have the skills and desire to begin training and competing on a more serious level. Goal setting will once again be used with the emphasis still on meet to meet goals but introducing entire season goals and planning. Swimmers also are familiar with interval training and utilize it more often. Group moves from the Manta Rays will be assessed by the YMCA Coaching staff based on Age, Ability, Commitment level, group availability, family commitment to the volunteer program, and competitive level and will generally be to the Pre-Senior 1 or Pre-Senior 2.

Attendance: 4 Days a Week (6 practices offered per average week)

Practice Guidelines:

2 x 200 IM Legal and Continuous

8 x 75 Free Swim on 1:40 (SCY)

12 x 50 Free Kick on 1:20(SCY)

Ages: 10 to 13yr olds

Swim Meet Participation:

Short Course (Sept to late March): 6 Meet Minimum, End of Season Meet (March) is **required!**

Long Course (April to July): 4 Meet Minimum, End of Season Meet (July) is **required!**

Manta Rays Generalities:

- Age 11-12 (by Coaches Invitation if age outside the general)
- 4-5 practices a week is expected. Athletes must communicate with the lead coach if prolonged absence is anticipated. Drylands are expected as well.
- Swim meet participation is expected frequently.
- All Four Strokes and IM are proficient and efficient.
- Working with coaches and teammates to build competitive culture and teamwork.
- Working towards SC State Championship times and Age Group Sectionals Time Standards.
- All events, age appropriate, are competed in every season.
- Working with coaches to establish season goals, training goals and individual goals
- IMX Score required. Every Year. [IMX info Link](#)
- 100's free @ 1:30/IM @ 1:45. 100's of primary stroke 2:00-2:10. 200 IM repeats (a few at a time)



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