



COMPETITIVE TEAM DIVISIONS

Training is tailored by **divisions** to meet the unique needs of Novice, Age group, Junior, and Senior swimmers. Our coaching staff emphasizes long-term development, ensuring every swimmer has the opportunity to progress at their own pace.

COMPETITIVE TEAM DIVISIONS				
	NOVICE	AGE GROUP	JUNIOR	SENIOR
DIVISION ANCHOR	Learn Fundamentals	Learn to Train	Train to Compete	Compete to Excel
OVERVIEW	The Novice division is designed for swimmers who are newer to the sport of competitive swimming skills. This division focuses on learning the fundamentals of competitive swimming by fostering a love for the sport, learning teamwork, and having fun.	The Age Group division is focused on swimmers who have a solid foundation in all four strokes and are ready to train. Swimmers in this division learn how to set goals, develop consistent training habits and a strong work ethic. Practices follow a more structured workout and swimmers compete regularly.	The Junior division is designed for developing swimmers who are ready to take on more advanced training. Swimmers in this division begin to take ownership of their progress while developing discipline and increased dedication to their training. Practices are more rigorous and require regular practice attendance and participation in competitions.	The Senior division is designed for experienced swimmers who are committed to high-performance swimming. This division focuses on intensive training where swimmers are expected to demonstrate self-discipline, goal-setting, and leadership within the team. Athletes will commit to taking ownership for the purpose of “excelling” towards their career goals
RELATIONSHIPS	Coach & Parent Led	Coach Led, Swimmer & Parent Supported	Coach & Swimmer Led, Parent Supported	Swimmer Led, Coach Directed, & Parent Supported
CHARACTER VALUES	Fun, Teamwork, Passion	Curiosity, Growth, Confidence	Grit, Determination, Accountability	Leadership, Integrity, Discipline



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ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT

DIVISION	NOVICE	AGE GROUP	JUNIOR	SENIOR
DIVISION GOALS	Demonstrates a willingness to try new things	Demonstrates a commitment to developing a good discipline	Demonstrates a competitive drive and willingness to improve	Demonstrates a commitment to a high standard of discipline
	Demonstrates the ability to follow directions	Demonstrates the ability to break out of the comfort zone	Demonstrates confidence and awareness in interval training and personal training habits	Demonstrates maturity, responsibility, and commitment
	Demonstrates good sportsmanship and teamwork	Actively demonstrates good sportsmanship and begins learning leadership qualities	Actively displays leadership in the group	Demonstrates leadership and takes initiative
	Performs drills and technique with a focus on stroke legality	Continues swimming on challenging sets	Completes entire training workouts and with full effort	Fully commits to the training requirements of the group
	Begins thinking about goals and how to achieve them	Establishes short-term and long-term goals and learns ways on how to achieve them	Completes goal plans every season and reviews with the group coach	Completes goal plans every season and reviews with the group coach
	Embraces feedback to continue improvement	Embraces challenges and the ability to overcome obstacles	Embraces the competitive journey and its fluctuations	Embraces the five Steel City Aquatics core pillars daily
DIVISION	NOVICE	AGE GROUP	JUNIOR	SENIOR
FOCUS AREAS	Technique Development	Technique Reinforcement	Technique Refinement	Adv. Technical Consistency
	Training Skills	Training Introduction	Training Development	Training Intensity& Adaptation
	Competing is Fun	Competitive Preparation	Competitive Readiness	Competitive Excellence



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SPECIFICS

DIVISION	NOVICE	AGE GROUP	JUNIOR	SENIOR
AGES	14 & Under	14 & Under	11 - 14 Y.O.	14 & Older
TRAINING HOURS	45 mins. - 1 hour / day	1.25 - 1.5 hours / day	1.75 - 2 hours / day	2 - 2.5 hours / day
TRAINING DAYS	3 - 4 days / week	5 days / week	6 days / week	6 - 7 days / week
DRYLAND DAYS	<i>*No dryland training</i>	2 days / week	3 days / week	4 days / week

PATH TO PROGRESS

DIVISION	NOVICE	AGE GROUP	JUNIOR	SENIOR
TRAINING ATTENDANCE	Athletes should strive to attend 75% of all training sessions offered	Athletes should strive to attend 80% of all training sessions offered	Athletes should strive to attend 85-90% of all training sessions offered	Athletes should strive to attend 90-95% of all training sessions offered
DRYLAND	Dryland training not offered	Dryland training is built into training sessions and is designed to aid athletic performance		
COMPETITIONS	Athletes should compete in all meets deemed appropriate (approximately 1-2 meets per month) Athletes are required to compete in at least 1 STEEL hosted meet per season			
CHAMPIONSHIP MEETS	Athletes should compete in several skill-appropriate championship meets. Athletes are expected to compete in the highest level of competition that they have achieved; no less than 1 meet per season			
COMPETITIVE EVENTS	Athletes are encouraged to have an IMR score, 1x every season	Athletes should have an IMX or IMR score, 1x every season	Athletes should have an IMX score, 1x every season	Athletes should have an IMX score, 1x every season
	All events as recommended by the group coach	Athletes should compete in all events as recommended by their group coach	Athletes are expected to compete in all events at least 1x every season	Athletes are expected to compete in all events at least 1x every season



COMPETITIVE TEAM TRAINING GROUPS

Within each division, swimmers may be placed into **training groups** based on skill proficiency, training readiness, commitment level, and long-term goals. This tiered approach allows us to tailor practices, expectations, and coaching to the individual swimmer while promoting team unity and progression.

COMPETITIVE TEAM DIVISIONS				
TRAINING GROUPS				
DIVISION	NOVICE	AGE GROUP	JUNIOR	SENIOR
TRAINING GROUPS	Sparklers	Fireworks	Rockets	National
	Swimmers who are beginning their journey in competitive swimming focus on learning the basics of all four competitive strokes, and developing foundational skills in endurance training and technique.	This group is designed for swimmers who have a strong technical base and are ready to increase their training capacity and commitment.	Age group swimmers who have set themselves apart by committing to excellence and advanced training.	Swimmers who have demonstrated excellence and commitment to furthering their swimming career by achieving qualifying standard times above LSC and Zones championships.
	Mini Sparks	Firecrackers	Dynamite	Ironmen
	Same as above	Developing swimmers who have a solid foundation in all four strokes and are ready to build upon those fundamentals with more structured training. and commitment. consistent in race techniques, and train at a more consistent level.	Age group swimmers who consistently train the correct technique and skills and are ready to expand their aerobic base and implement race strategies.	This training group is designed for High School aged athletes who are balancing swimming with other activities or continuing skill development. Swimmers must possess a willingness to train and compete.



DIVISION AND TRAINING GROUP ADVANCEMENTS

Swimmers progress through our training groups based on a combination of skill level, training readiness, age, commitment, and character. Advancement between groups is carefully evaluated to ensure each swimmer is placed where they will be most successful in their development. Training group placement is **evaluated continuously** throughout the season. Advancement may occur at scheduled checkpoints (mid-season, end-of-season) or organically when a swimmer demonstrates readiness.

Coaches assess group readiness based on a **combination of factors**, including:

- **Technical Proficiency**
 - Mastery of stroke mechanics for all four strokes, starts, turns, and underwaters
 - Willingness to learn and apply technique corrections
- **Training Habits**
 - Focus, effort, and consistency in practice, including attendance, coachability, and resilience
 - Ability to complete group training and test sets with appropriate intervals and intensity
- **Performance Metrics**
 - Meet attendance, time standards, meet results and feedback, and applying race strategies
 - Consistently demonstrates division goals and focus areas
- **Emotional and Social Maturity**
 - Readiness to handle increased expectations, training load, and group dynamics
 - Commitment to oneself, the team, training and effort to improve
- **Long-Term Development**
 - Alignment with the swimmer's goals and pathway within the sport
 - Demonstrates responsibility, teamwork, leadership, and readiness for higher training expectations

Group movement is not based on age or times alone — it is a comprehensive decision based on the swimmer's progress, mindset, and readiness to take on new challenges. The goal for every swimmer should not be focused on advancement; rather swimmers should focus on excelling where they are.