



## 2025-2026 Swim Information Packet



Westerly- Pawcatuck Y Dolphins  
Swim Team Website



# About the Dolphins Team

## 1.1. Mission

The Dolphins swim team is a competitive swim program and encourages youngsters to fulfill their potential as:

- Accomplished athletes
- Caring teammates
- Good community members



## 1.2. History

The Dolphins swim team has been in existence for over 50 years and continuously strives to help young athletes achieve their athletic and personal goals. The team is led by an outstanding group of active adult volunteers, which is one of the keys to the team's ongoing success.

## 1.3. Facility

The Westerly-Pawcatuck YMCA provides for scheduled practice and meet times in a 6-lane, 25 yard pool. The Dolphins also use touchpads, starting system, and pace clocks from Colorado Timing Systems.

## 1.4. Seasons

### 1.4.1. Fall / Winter (Sep – Mar)

This is the Short Course season because meets are conducted in 25 yard pools.

### 1.4.2. Spring / Summer (May - July)

As an additional option we offer a Long Course season for our swimmers. Meets during this season are typically held in 50 meter pools (Olympic swimming standard).

## 1.5. YMCA Sponsorship

The Westerly-Pawcatuck YMCA leadership and staff provide support to the Dolphins and we are considered a valued program within this YMCA organization. The Aquatic director provides leadership, consultation and support. In addition, aquatic instructor staff are available for optional individual tutoring/lessons.

## 1.6. Certified Coaches

We have an awesome staff of 9 coaches, many whom have a competitive swimming background. Coaches have earned certifications from both the national YMCA as well as USA Swimming. Coaching credentials include Safe Sport, First Aid, CPR, Water Safety, Coaching Foundations, and Stroke Fundamentals. The combined staff has more than 50 years of coaching experience.

## 1.7. Boosters

There is a Booster leadership team which provides operational governance for the program, including Policies, Finance, and Operations support. The leadership team is comprised of 6 individuals: 5 elected officers, 1 head coach, and 1 YMCA professional. If you are a parent / guardian of a dolphin swimmer then you are automatically invited to attend / participate in these monthly meetings. Meetings are held regularly (typically 1 per month).

Your active participation in booster meetings will help the Boosters continue to focus on providing a positive experience for each Dolphin competitive swimmer.

## 1.8. Program Registration

The Dolphins Swim team is a program offered by the Ocean Community YMCA, and program registration is managed via the team's self-service web site. Instructions will be provided upon request. All Dolphins swimmers must have an Ocean Community YMCA membership. If you are new to competitive swimming and unsure, we offer a limited time no-charge practice trial.

## 2. Join the Dolphins Swim Team



### 2.1. Why Join a Competitive Swim Team

Swim team is intended for swimmers aged 6+ who would like to develop and enhance their strokes and build endurance at a faster pace than they would in lessons.

Competitive swim team allows the opportunity to build stronger:

- Safety skills in the water
- Fitness level
- Friendship thru teamwork
- Self-esteem and self confidence
- Family involvement

### 2.2. Prerequisite Skills to Join

Swimmers must be comfortable in the water and be able to swim 1 length of the pool without assistance. It is preferred that the child has had some previous swimming instruction.

### 2.3. Alternative Programs

- YMCA group or private swim instruction – program for gaining basic swimming skills

### 2.4. Prerequisite Skills to Compete

The YMCA offers opportunity for beginners to compete in a meet. Dolphins coaches consider the following skills as a prerequisite for meet participation.

- Rotary breathing
- Swim 25 yards(8&U) or 50 Yards (9+) each of following: Freestyle or Backstroke

### 2.5. Swimmer Equipment requirement

- swimsuit, snorkel, alignment board, swim cap, fins and goggles (best to have a backup set)
- paddles and pull buoys (required for swimmers beyond Beginner level)

### 2.6. Program Fee (Fall-Winter)

- Buckley Pool:
  - \$300 Novice
- Fuller Pool:
  - \$409.00 Beginner
  - \$456.00 AG
  - \$652.00 Senior
- The Program Fee covers:
  - Full season of practice / instruction and facility costs
  - League membership fees
  - Cost of dual meets and League championship meet
- Fee Notes:
  - \$163.00 (25%) discount for HS swim team kids due to conflict in Fall-Winter season
  - \$30.00 discount for multiple children families. Discount applied to each sibling after the first.
  - Financial assistance is available via the Y Cares Program (contact Michelle Smith: [msmith@oceancommunityymca.org](mailto:msmith@oceancommunityymca.org) for more info)

### 2.7. Invitational Meet Fees

- Swimmers may optionally choose to compete at various invitational and specialty meets offered by the league (i.e. Freestyle Frenzy, Winter Carnival, Pentathlon etc.). Meet fees for these meets must be paid by the swimmer at the time entries are accepted.

### 2.8. USA Swimming Option

- We are also registered as a USA swim club, and the more serious swimmers may choose to add that option for additional competition. We typically like to wait for age 9+ before recommending this option. Membership fee for USA swimming is \$100 /year, and USA meet fees must be paid by the swimmer at the time entries are submitted.



## 3. Swim Team Practice & Structure

### 3.1. Setting Goals

All returning swimmers are expected to collaborate with coaches and set outcome goals for themselves. An outcome goal is something that is easy to measure such as learning a skill, setting a personal best time, or qualifying for a championship meet. Please see section 7 for more details.

### 3.2. Practice Groups

Coaches will evaluate and group swimmers by skill level and age to effectively and efficiently run practice sessions within a 6 lane pool. These groupings allow the coaches to better differentiate the skills needed in each lane and teach at the correct pace. These grouping also allow greater confidence and increased connections between the swimmers in their lane.

General practice groups include:

- Novice (NOV)
- Beginner (BG)
- Age group (AG)
- Senior (SR)

### 3.3. Practice Times

Practice takes place Monday thru Friday in the late afternoon and into the evening. Practice times are broken into 5 daily sessions during the week. Practice duration can be 45 to 105 minutes depending on skill level. The actual practice times and groups will be published at the start of the fall season.

### 3.4. Practice Frequency

Novice / Beginners should attend 2 to 3 times per week, and seniors should consider 4 to 5 times per week. Age groupers should attend between 3 and 5 based upon their goals and desired level of improvement. A time investment is required to make progress. We understand that some swimmers have to balance their swim team schedule with other commitments such as band, CCD, and other sports.

### 3.5. Age Groupings

All youth swimming in our country is divided by both gender and age grouping. There are 10 distinct groups (5 for each gender) as follows:

- 8 & Under
- 9 & 10
- 11&12
- 13 & 14
- 15 & Over

In youth swimming, the age is effective on the swimmer's birthday.

## 4. Swim Meets



### 4.1. Novice Eligibility

Novice swimmers must achieve coach certification to compete in a meet. The Dolphin Novice program is structured to provide the fundamental training for new swimmers to become eligible to participate in swim meets and includes basic competitive skills for breathing, body balance, sculling, and rhythm.

### 4.2. Types of Swim Meets

- 4.2.1. YMCA League – Dual meets
- 4.2.2. YMCA League – Specialty meets
- 4.2.3. Invitational meets (both YMCA and USA)
- 4.2.4. Championship Meets (both YMCA and USA)

### 4.3. Mandatory Swim Meets

All certified Dolphin swimmers are expected to compete in YMCA league dual meets when possible. All certified swimmers are required to swim in the YMCA league championship meet in March. All remaining meets are optional, including league specialty meets, invitational meets, and USA meets. In order to compete in the league championship, a swimmer must have competed in 3 league meets (dual and/or specialty) during the season.

### 4.4. How does a Swim Meet Work?

#### 4.4.1. Meet Announcements

All meets will be advertised on the Dolphins web site. Please ensure that you have credentials to log in.

#### 4.4.2. Sign Up Process

The Dolphin web site provides a sign up process for all meets along with a convenient note section for communication with coaching staff.

#### 4.4.3. Pre-Meet Communication

The coach will issue an email message to all signed-up competitors prior to the meet, including information such as event participation, warm up time, meet start time, and meet location. Our web site contains detail directions to all league sites.

#### 4.4.4. Meet

The meet will take approx 3-4 hours once it has started. There will be a warm-up period for all teams before the meet that will likely take about an hour.

#### 4.4.5. Post-Meet Communication

The coach will issue an email message with results to all participants including scores, times, and place position. The timing of this email depends upon the race director sending out result files to coaches.

### 4.5. What to Bring to a Swim Meet

Just as in practice, it is recommended that the swimmer bring along towels, flip flops, caps and an extra pair of goggles. Additional sports clothing is necessary for warmth in bullpen and staging area. Parents often bring an extra towel and folding chairs, as meets can last up to 4 hours.

## 5. Dolphins Communication



### 5.1. Web Site

The Dolphins use a web site hosted by Team Unify, a platform designed specifically for swimming and integration of swim team activities. The Dolphins web site is a center of communication and includes: team information, race results, calendar schedules, meet information and sign-up. It also contains the database of our members, including family contact information and swimmer information required for meet participation.

Coaches and Boosters also use the team unify “email center” computer application to initiate large email broadcasts.

### 5.2. Your Web Site account

#### 5.2.1. Public and Private

While we maintain a public site, we keep most of our site private including all of your account information. You will be issued credentials for effective use of this site when you join the team.

#### 5.2.2. Your account information

Your account serves as the basis for our automated communication process. Each family account can store 3 email addresses and 2 SMS (text) numbers. Please ensure these are correct so that you receive all of our communications.

### 5.3. Announcements

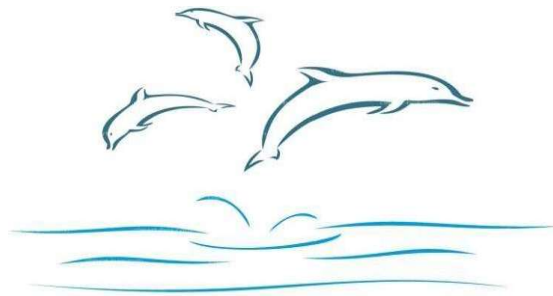
Most announcements originate from either the head coach or an executive of the Booster group and are generated via email.

### 5.4. Booster Meetings

The Booster president runs close to 10 meetings per year, and our Dolphin families are invited to attend most. If you are interested in knowing more, or having your opinion heard, please join us at these meetings. All Booster meetings stay within the announced time limitations in order to respect everyone’s busy schedules.

### 5.5. Contact the Dolphins

Please note that there is a “Contact Us” feature on the web site. Please feel free to use this feature when you need help, and someone on the distribution list will respond.



## 6. Volunteer Roles

### 6.1. Coaches

The Dolphin coaching staff is primarily a volunteer group. Most of our coaches have competitive swimming experience and prior coaching experience. In addition, the staff has earned certifications from the YMCA (mandatory) and USA Swimming. Most current coaches have family members on the team.

### 6.2. Booster Officers

The Dolphin Boosters are led by an elected president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and meet manager and all serve a 3-year term. All of the Booster leaders have children who are current Dolphin swimmers.

### 6.3. Parents/Boosters

Like all other swim teams, we could not survive without the incredible volunteer participation of our parent boosters—likely the largest and most active volunteer group in the Y. Some of the roles where parents can contribute include:

- Publicity / Newspaper
- Web site administration
- Concession stand (very important fundraiser)
- Swim-a-thon assistance (another fundraiser)
- Swim meet Officials (act as meet judges, referees, starter)
- Swim meet Volunteers (act as lane timers, bullpen crew, meet director and meet announcer)

### 6.4. Parent-Instructors

We need a large number of teachers for helping Novice swimmers learn critical skills. Our goal is to have a volunteer staff of 6 people (or more) who will work alongside coaches and provide a high ratio of teachers to new swimmers. We have a documented methodology, and the coaches will provide training, guidance, and leadership. This is a great volunteer opportunity for our older swimmers as well.



## 7. Dolphins Swimmer Responsibilities



### 7.1. Practice Attendance

We do not require mandatory practice, but we do offer the following guidance to help athletes with their progress, conditioning, and self-esteem. Please consider the following guiding points to swimmer development:

- Attend 3 to 5 practices per week – as you age, increase frequency
- Develop a routine, and stick with it
- Progress in the sport of swimming requires time in the water

### 7.2. Swim Meet Attendance

We expect that all our swimmers try to attend all YMCA dual meets unless they are ineligible (typically 1-2 away and 3 home meets). Team members are also expected to swim the league championship meet in March. All other meets are optional and available as you wish.

### 7.3. Being a Good Teammate

Swimmers spend a lot of time working together to improve, and it is important to the coaching staff that we have a positive social environment (and we will give our best to foster that feeling). We ask all Dolphins to:

- Bring a positive attitude to practice
- Respect their teammates
- Listen to coaches
- Maintain a sense of humor

### 7.4. Setting Goals

Just as in all other forms of athletic competition, it is very difficult to continue to improve without setting and achieving goals. All returning Dolphins swimmers are responsible for establishing one or more athletic goals and actively striving to attain each. It is important that goals are established with the help of a coach.. This process is most effective when the swimmer keeps a weekly log of progress, skills learned, and areas which require more attention.

### 7.5. Communication

Effective communication between coach and athlete is a fundamental building block for team athletic success. We expect each swimmer (and supporting family) to notify the coaching staff when conflicts arise which interfere with swimmer carrying out their responsibilities (listed herein), or are having difficulty with athletic performance.

Examples of conflicts that should be clearly conveyed include:

- Sickness or injury
- Family events and commitments
- School activities
- Need for more skill instruction

This is a very large team, so please do not assume that the coaches always know what is going on outside the pool – likely not.

### 7.6. Swim-a-thon participation

All Dolphin swimmers are expected to participate in our annual swim-a-thon. This event allows us to raise money both to fund initiatives (ex. equipment) which benefit all Dolphins athletes as well as for our high school senior scholarship program.

## 8. Athlete Awards and Recognition



### 8.1. Race time Awards (Medals and Ribbons)

Swimmers have the opportunity to win awards for their race time performance at swim meets. Ribbons are typically awarded for top 3 places at dual meets, and medals are awarded for top 10 places at championship meets. There are also many invitational meets and the awards (type and quantity) are determined by the race director. Almost all of our Dolphin swimmers will earn some performance award/recognition ribbon during the swim season. Ribbons and awards are distributed at our annual banquet.

### 8.2. Record Breakers (Plaque)

We track and update Dolphin team records by age group, and have been doing so since the 1970's. We celebrate and publicize every swimmer who lowers an existing record time, and we place their name on the record in the Fuller Pool.