

Tawa Swim Club - Club Swimming

Thursday 29 August 2024 - Parents Meeting

Coaching philosophy for Junior Swimmers

Juniors coaching philosophy and programme are based on:

- 1) Developing technical skills versus performance,
- 2) Respecting individual growth development,
- 3) Developing a lifelong love for swimming via learning to train and compete.

Note: Tawa Swim Club is a competitive swim club and all children are expected to compete when ready.

2024 Goals for Club Swimming from July to the end of the year

- 1) Creation and set up of a **common plan** across the four lanes (school term progression with a different technical focus and stroke every week)
- 2) Having all of our dedicated volunteer coaches following the **same plan & progressions** every week, using the same teaching philosophy and teaching terminology. This is to ensure a smooth pathway between lanes and a smooth transition to competitive squads all the way to the top.
- 3) **Developing technical skills** using simple, efficient swim drills and progressions.
- 4) **Participating to competitions**

2025 Goals for Club Swimming

- 1) **Improve technical skills** in all strokes, dives and turns.
- 2) **Develop self-sufficiency and autonomy** during practices with interval starts and pace awareness. Pace awareness is the ability to read and understand the session plans on the white board, to read and understand the wall pace clock, to calculate own speeds and to adjust pace as required.
- 3) **Increase training attendance** as swimmers get older and improve their techniques.
- 4) **Increase participation in competitions** with an emphasis on the development pathways & squad criteria.
- 5) **Promote and prolong longevity** in swimming training and competing after 13 years old by developing a clear development pathway, squad structure and individual goal setting.

Coaching methods

Some of our poolside coaching goals for Juniors:

1) Creating the best possible training environment and atmosphere

➤ Action plan: Delivering and coaching the programme with excited and motivated coaches with consistent expectations.

2) Providing an enjoyable session

➤ Action plan: Different sessions and various sets every day all year round

3) Improving technical skills in all four strokes

➤ Action plan: Teaching swim drills, emphasise distance per stroke, getting them engaged & focused

➤ Resources: Strokes progressions, Strokes criteria, how to detect the common technical errors and how to correct them, swimming terminology (verbal Q's), etc.

➤ Limitation / difficulties: Relying on individual ability to listen and focus in a challenging teaching environment and straight after school. Relying on the ability to retain information and try hard.

4) Providing equal individual attention

➤ Action plan:

A) Being enough poolside junior coaches to deliver the programme to allow one of us to be available to provide individual technical feedback and to follow up.

B) Within 5 to 10 seconds only, a coach has to know what to look for, how to recognize technical mistake(s), select and prioritise which mistake to correct, and use the appropriate vocabulary or terminology to correct the mistake or give to the swimmer one point to focus on !
Knowing individuals and learning difficulties is crucial.

➤ Limitation / difficulties: Allocated time and number of swimmers. Following up technical correction.

5) Providing enough physical challenge while respecting individual growth development

➤ Action plan: Having the most homogeneous lanes with stronger children in front

➤ Resources: Key / Test sets progressions

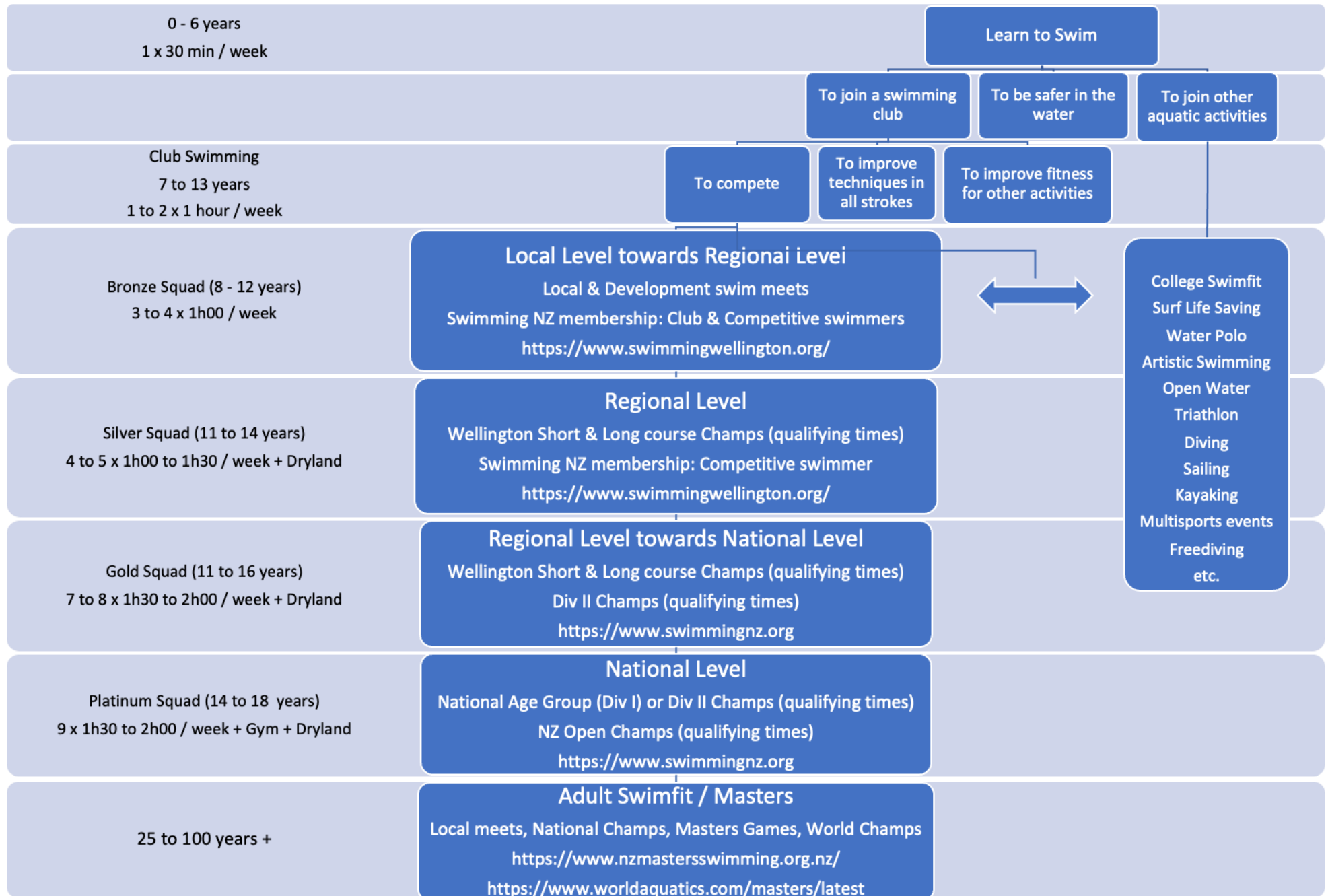
6) Developing autonomy to allow coaches to focus more on techniques

➤ Action plan: Teaching how to read and use a pace clock readiness and developing pace awareness

7) Getting them ready to race

➤ Action plan: Practising and improving dives, turns, underwater parts and finishes

The swimmer's journey, a lifelong activity - Where is your swimmer and what's next



Types of swimmers

In the 7 to 10 years old age group, we often find three types of swimmers:

Swimmer A: The majority of club & non-competitive swimmers who swim 1 or 2 x / week.

Swimmer B: Over trains and mostly motivated by winning and achieving Pb's (personal best) at every race.

Swimmer C: Having fun at training and competing while following the development pathways.

This type of swimmer is often a minority of the population however and this is the one, us coaches want to nurture as we believe it provides the most benefits in the child's personal development.

The age window for competitive pathway

The following is based on my last 30 years of coaching experience and observation.

Swimmer A and B are likely to give up swimming from the age of 14 (or younger).

→ Swimmer A will not become strong enough or competitive enough to remain motivated.

→ Swimmer B will likely have enough of training hard for results.

The optimal age window to enter and stay in the competitive pathway is approximately between 10 and 12 years old for boys and 9 and 11 years old for girls. After that, they will struggle to catch-up with the training advantage of swimmers who started sooner.

The most common regret of triathletes and adult swimmers that I coach, is to not have swum enough during their childhood.

Some key factors to help them choose the competitive pathway: swimming ability, passion for swimming, desire to compete and emotional maturity.

Meanwhile, it is also important to do other activities before 12 years old in order to continue developing other motor skills such as coordination and flexibility as well as mental, emotional, and social health.

This is during the growth peak (11-13 years for girls and 13-15 years for boys), that the development of aerobic metabolism (endurance) seems optimal. Therefore, it is recommended to start endurance activities early since it constitutes the basis of physical condition and health in general.

Some benefits of competing in swimming

- Fosters water safety skills
- Provides a break from screen time
- Improves social well being
- Stress reliever
- Teaches team-building skills
- Life skills: Beyond fitness and competition, swimming imparts valuable life skills such as time management, dedication, teamwork, and resilience. These skills are transferable and can benefit everyone in their academic, professional, and personal pursuits.
- Kids and teenagers who swim become active adults
- Competitive swimmers are more confident in their life.
- Goal setting: Setting and achieving swim-related goals can be immensely gratifying. Whether it's achieving a certain time, mastering a particular stroke, or competing at a higher level, swimming provides ample opportunities for goal setting and achievement.
- Low-impact exercise: Swimming is gentle on the joints, making it an ideal exercise for all age groups. It reduces the risk of injuries and provides a full-body workout.
- Can be a family bonding activity

Swim meets available for Club Swimming

- Six or eight Gold Coast meets each year, depending on space on the calendar. NTs (NO times) are allowed, and Recreational swimmers can enter.
- Local Novice Carnival, around April. PCA Div. III Meet.
- Tawa Club Champs, and three Time Trials.

Next level after Club Swimming:

Bronze Squad (9-12 years old)

Entry level / criteria

1. 12 years old or under and have shown improvement in their swimming.
2. To be able to swim 100m Individual Medley under 2 minutes with correct technique, start, turns and finish.
3. To be able to swim 200m Freestyle without stopping and with tumble turns (usually under 4 minutes)
4. To have the ability to listen and stay focused for the duration of a training session.
5. To have a good positive attitude.
6. To compete in a minimum of four competitions or meets per year.
7. To undertake to train a minimum of 3 training sessions per week.

Reflections from some of our senior swimmers

Questions to Curtis Mellsop (21 years old) – Current competitive swimmer

1) What benefits has swimming brought to your daily life and in general ?

I find swimming really helps you get into a routine in your daily life. I find when I'm swimming more consistently it helps keep me motivated in other aspects of my life as well such as school and work. I also find having goals associated with swimming encourages you to stay fit and healthy and also gives you a purpose outside of those expected for every kid (like good grades and such).

2) What made you choose the competitive pathway ?

In all aerobic sports I've done (swimming, cycling, and running) I've found competing to be one of the best motivation tools. I find competing to be the best recognition of your effort and you're more likely to want to train harder (or just train period) if you're working towards a time or a specific goal. Ultimately, I decided to compete as it gives a purpose and an enjoyment to what can be a very monotonous sport.

3) What life skills did swimming and/or the competitive pathway bring you ?

There are a lot of things that all competitive aerobic sports help within everyday life. The main ones I would say is habit forming and goal-oriented improvement. In swimming you have to identify areas of weakness, find out how to improve this and then swim like that over and over again until it becomes a habit. Habit forming is a useful trait that can be utilised in everyday life with your goals outside of swimming. You can start a habit of eating a piece of fruit after breakfast each day or studying for an extra hour each night before bed. Goal oriented improvement is also a useful skill. You're much more likely to achieve something if you first set out what you want to achieve, figure out how to achieve it and plan what you need to do to achieve it. A set goal also helps motivate you in whatever your chosen area of improvement is.

4) How do you balance your life between social life, swimming training, studying, and perhaps participating or competing in other sports ?

The first thing I'd say is it's hard, it requires a lot of dedication and that's where you want or your need to achieve your goals really gets tested. The main thing is to ensure you get about food and sleep, because swimming is so aerobically taxing it requires a lot of energy, so you need that rest and recovery. In terms of managing time that's where routines and habits start to form. I know when I start Uni, I'm not going to have time to nap throughout the day, so I need to ensure I'm going to be at least 8 hours before I have to wake up, this becomes really easy once it becomes a habit, just like getting up at 5am becomes really easy once that's become a habit. In terms of a social life, you usually have to make sacrifices and compromise by only going out when it meets your routine. I usually do whatever I want on Saturday nights as I know I can sleep in on Sunday, and I only go out on other nights if I know I can get to bed early enough to keep to my routine. The easiest way around this is to have friends who understand your routine or have similar routines themselves.

The main point is that if you want to be a competitive swimmer - such is the case with most aerobic sports - you have to make sacrifices to your social life and you have to work a lot harder to stay ahead of your study, however, it is manageable once you get into that routine.

5) What advice or recommendations would you like to give to an under 11-year-old new to a swim club?

My main advice I would have for 11-year-olds wanting to swim is make sure to put your enjoyment before anything else, including performance!! I've seen a lot of amazing child swimmers quit before they hit their prime because they just never really enjoyed the sport and put all this pressure on themselves to constantly hit their goals. I myself went through a period where if I didn't hit my goal times in every session, I'd get super demoralised. It's definitely not a healthy way to swim and it doesn't help you improve. So just make sure you enjoy the sport in your own way and don't primarily let times and goals dictate that enjoyment.

Questions to Charlotte Gibbs (18 years old) – Current competitive swimmer

1) What benefits has swimming brought to your daily life and in general ?

Better physical health is probably the most obvious due to the copious amounts of training swimming involves, but other things such as really strong friendships (ranting about how close you are to throwing up after a hard set is a great bonding exercise), better mental health (as well as better skills in working through negative emotions and thoughts), and so many cool opportunities, from competing at national meets and living in a house with your teammates for a week, to being able to continue to compete in a sport I love while also getting a tertiary education.

2) What made you choose the competitive pathway ?

There wasn't ever really a choice for me, I'm a hugely competitive person by nature and I also used to have huge FOMO when I was little, so when I heard others in my group talking about the competitions they were going to and all the ribbons and medals they were getting I decided I had to start racing too.

3) What life skills did swimming and/or the competitive pathway bring you ?

Definitely resilience first and foremost. Swimming is such a tough sport, both mentally and physically, and if you want to achieve at any level, you really have to be able to just keep pushing no matter how much you want to stop. Mental resilience is probably the hardest part because it's so easy to just stop trying. I think being able to push past the negative thoughts is one of the major things that separates those who excel in swimming compared to those who don't. Perseverance has also been something I've developed over my years in swimming. There'll be periods where your times just aren't improving, no matter how hard you work, but you've just got to keep believing in yourself, trusting the training, and persevering.

4) How do you balance your life between social life, swimming training, studying (and/or working) and perhaps participating or competing in other sports ?

I don't know if I could say I really have a social life, but time management and fuelling properly before and after training have been absolutely key for me to balance everything. Making sure I know what I have to do and when I have to do it for work and coaching, knowing when swim meets are, and what training sessions I'm going to. Having enough good food also really helps, so ensuring I've got high protein and nutrient dense meals and snacks throughout the day so I can concentrate properly on work or school really helps too. To be honest though, it really depends on your priorities. If you want to focus on doing well in swimming and school, socialising might have to take a back seat, although I've found that the many hours you spend with your squad more than make up for it.

5) What advice or recommendations would you like to give to an under 11-year-old new to a swimming club?

First and foremost, have fun. Swimming should be enjoyable, don't forget to have a good time and celebrate any achievements, big or small. Secondly, listen to and trust your coach. They'll know what they're talking about and all they want is for you to improve. Lastly, be patient. Improvement takes time, don't get discouraged if you don't see results immediately. Keep practising and you'll see progress :)

Your role as a parent

Competitive swimming programs provide many benefits to young athletes. They develop self-discipline, good sportsmanship, and time management skills. Competition allows the swimmer to experience success and to learn how to deal with defeat, while becoming healthy and physically fit. As a parent, your major responsibility is to provide a stable, loving, and supportive environment. This positive environment will encourage your child to continue. Show your interest by ensuring your child's attendance at practices, and by coming to competitions. Parents are not participants on their child's team, but obviously contribute greatly to the success experienced by the child and his/her team. Parents serve as role models and their children often emulate their attitudes. Be aware of this and strive to be positive models. Most importantly, always show good sportsmanship toward coaches, officials, opponents, and teammates.

Be Enthusiastic and Supportive

Remember that your child **IS** the swimmer. Children need to establish their own goals and make their own progress towards them. Be careful not to impose your own standards and goals. Do not overburden your child with winning or achieving best times. The most important part of your child's swimming experience is that they learn about themselves while enjoying the sport. This healthy environment encourages learning and fun, which will develop a positive self-image within your child.

Let the Coach, Coach

The best way to help a child achieve their goals and reduce the natural fear of failure is through positive reinforcement. No one likes to make mistakes. If your child swims poorly or struggles, remember that they are still learning. Encourage their efforts and point out the positive aspects of their swimming, things they did well. As long as they give their best effort, you should make them feel like a winner.

No Race or technical instructions

This would be the greatest disservice for your child.

Leave the coaches dealing with this.

Be Realistic With Times

No one swims Pb's every time they swim. Coaches cringe when swimming parents approach them saying "*Steve didn't do a Pb in his butterfly today – what's wrong? What's the problem?*" The child might have done a Pb in seven other events, have done five football practices throughout the week and sat for four school exams but because they didn't do a Pb in one event, there's a problem?! Trust in the coach to do his or her job.

Quality Performances Should Not Equate to Better Treatment

Child **wins** – love them with all your heart. Child **loses** – love them with all your heart. Child does ten Pb's (Personal best) – **love and support them unconditionally.** Child doesn't do a Pb for six months – **love and support them unconditionally.** How fast a child swims should have no bearing on how they are treated, spoken to or loved. When it comes to loving and supporting your child – *particularly in public* – winning and losing make no difference.

Encourage them to prioritise fun and enjoyment before times and results

Times are important. Results are important. External success is something your child should be encouraged to strive for and work for. However, those things won't matter in any meaningful way if your child achieves them by feeling like swimming is some kind of miserable grind.

You need to make sure your child understands that their love for swimming, the fun they have doing it, and the joy they get from participating in it is, and always will be, more important than any time, result, or medal. Not only is loving swimming, having fun, and enjoying the process important for preventing burnout, it will help them perform better and, consequently, help them achieve the external success both you and they would like to achieve.

Your responsibility as a parent

Get Your Child 'There' on Time

As in all sports there are many events that your child must attend, practices, team meetings, competitions, special events, etc. The coach wants your child to enjoy the experiences of swimming as much as possible. The coach also has a responsibility to look after the team as a whole. Start times are very important to get the most use out of pool time, ensure arrival commitments are made and events generally go as planned. Late or inconsiderate members hurt everyone.

Become Involved

Tawa Swim Club is NOT a business. As most clubs, Tawa Swim Club is run by volunteers. Each family has to do their part to help !

This does not mean you have to run for President your first year, but try and get involved in some aspect of the club. The easiest position is to sign up to be an official at the first swim meet. You get to enjoy the competition, meet other parents, and watch your child participate. Officiating can be fun and you can progress through the levels at a similar rate as your child. Very few other sports provide this opportunity.

Other information for Club Swimmers to learn:

Lane etiquette

- Don't push off right before a swimmer turns,
- Turn at the centre, never stop in the middle of the lane,
- Line up immediately after touching the wall when finishing the given distance,
- Let the faster person go before you,
- Go 5 seconds apart,
- Overtake if safe to do,
- Just be nice!