

Tawa Swimming Club

Squads Development Pathway



Chrome Squad

COMING JANUARY 2026!



Copper Squad

2-3 sessions/week

Development Squad
Local Swim Meets



Bronze Squad

3+ sessions/week

Junior Squad
Local and some Regional Swim Meets to Junior/Wellington Champs



Silver Squad

4+ sessions/week

Regional Squad
Local and Regional Swim Meets to Junior/Wellington Champs



Gold Squad

6+ sessions/week

Performance Squad
Wellington Champs to National Competitions



Platinum Squad

7+ sessions/week

Elite Squad
National Champs to International Competitions

2025/2026 Swim Squads - Pathway and Criteria

Copper Squad (development level)

Philosophy:

Developing technical skills versus performance

Respecting individual growth development

Developing a lifelong love for swimming via learning to train and compete

Who:

Recommended for swimmers 12 years old and under. Must be able to:

- Swim 100m freestyle, backstroke and breaststroke with correct technique and turns.
- Swim 200m Freestyle without stopping.
- Compete at local meets.
- **Commit to attending a minimum of 2 of the 3 available weekly training sessions.**

Training Focus:

Refining stroke techniques (all four strokes)

Improve starts, turns and finishes

Building endurance with structured swim sets

Coaching Methods:

Short swim sets (e.g. 6 x 50 Freestyle focusing on technique)

Drills for stroke correction (e.g. sculling, catch-up Freestyle)

Turn practice (flip turns, open turns)

Dive practice

Fun-based speed work (e.g. 25m sprints)

Developing autonomy towards interval training (learn how to read and use the pace clock)

When:

Mondays 6:30-7:30 pm; Thursdays 6:30-7:30 pm, Fridays 6:00-7:00 pm, during school terms

NO training during the school holidays

Competitive Requirements:

Register as a Competitive swimmer with Swimming New Zealand/Swimming Wellington.

<https://www.swimmingwellington.org/membership-categories>

Compete at:

- All Club Time Trials (last Thursday of most terms)
- "Gold Coast" Meets (about 6 per year from February to November)
- Tawa Swimming Club Champs (usually in May)
- Swimming Wellington Relay Champs (usually in November)

Bronze Squad (local level, towards regional level)

Philosophy:

Establish strong technical foundations and a positive training mindset. Swimmers are encouraged to refine stroke technique, learn discipline in training, and begin to understand pacing and basic sets. It's about learning how to train, not just how to swim.

Who:

Recommended for swimmers 13 years old and under who have shown improvement in their swimming and are able to:

- Swim 100m Individual Medley under 2 minutes with correct technique, start, turns and finish.
- Swim 200m Freestyle under 4 minutes without stopping, with bilateral breathing and with tumble turns.
- Have the ability to listen and stay focused for the duration of a training session.
- Have a good positive attitude.
- Commit to compete in a minimum of six competitions or meets per year (see Competitive Requirements below).
- **Commit to attending a minimum of 3 of the 4 available training sessions per week.**

Training Focus:

Perfecting stroke techniques (all four strokes)

Basic race skills (starts, turns and finishes)

Increasing endurance while maintaining technique (stroke count)

Learning to follow structured training sets

Coaching Methods:

Longer structured swim sets (e.g. 8 x 100m Freestyle at moderate pace)

Technique-focused drills (e.g. Single-arm Freestyle for catch refinement)

Basic underwater work (streamline push-offs, dolphin kicks)

Fun-based speed work (e.g. 25m sprints)

When:

Mondays 6:30-7:30 pm; Tuesdays 6:30-7:30 pm; Wednesdays 6:00-7:30 pm; Fridays 6:00-7:30 pm

Note: training continues during the school holidays

Competitive Requirements:

Register as a Competitive swimmer with Swimming New Zealand/Swimming Wellington.

<https://www.swimmingwellington.org/membership-categories>

Compulsory Swim Meets (competitions):

- "Gold Coast" Meets (about 6 per year from February to November)
- Tawa Swimming Club Champs (usually in May)
- Club Time Trials (last Thursday of most terms)
- Swimming New Zealand Junior Festival (usually in March)
- Swimming Wellington Junior Sprint Challenge (usually in July)
- Swimming Wellington Relay Champs (usually in November)
- Swimming Wellington Junior Champs (usually in October), **if qualified (pinnacle event for 12 years and under)**
- Wellington Short Course (25m) Champs in June, **if qualified (12 & over)**
- Wellington Long Course (50m) Champs in December, **if qualified (12 & over)**

Optional Swim Meets:

- National Qualifier meets (recommended for 12 & over)
- Div III Meet (all ages - qualification times apply)
- Other local swim meets (all ages)

Silver Squad (regional level)

Philosophy:

Progress skills, foster commitment, and introduce competition with a growth mindset. Swimmers improve aerobic capacity, race skills, and self-discipline. Coaches foster a team culture where effort, resilience, and improvement are valued over outcomes.

Who:

Recommended for swimmers 13 years old and under who have:

- Shown improvement in their swimming.
- Attended 3 training sessions per week on average over the last 6 months with Bronze Squad.
- Demonstrated they can take instruction and then make technique or skill changes.
- Registered as a Competitive swimmer with Swimming New Zealand/Swimming Wellington.

Swimmers must also be able to:

- Read and understand the pace clock for lap times & intervals.
- Handle an increased workload.
- Have a good work ethic and positive attitude.
- Swim 400m Freestyle in under 7 minutes with correct technique and bilateral breathing.
- Swim 200m Individual Medley in under 3 minutes and 40 seconds with correct start, turns and finish.
- Commit to compete in a minimum of eight competitions or meets per year (see Competitive Requirements below).
- **Commit to attending a minimum of 4 of the 5 available training sessions per week.**

Training Focus:

Stroke efficiency (stroke count) and endurance

Improving underwater work (streamlines, dolphin kicks)

Introduction to race pace training

Learning pacing strategies and race splits

Dryland warm-ups (mobility, core strength)

Coaching Methods:

Longer aerobic sets (e.g. 8 x 100m freestyle @ steady pace)

Stroke-specific drills (e.g. 3 x 100 IM focusing on transitions)

Underwater breakout drills (e.g. 4 x 25m push-off + 15m underwater kick)

Basic speed endurance (e.g. 4 x 50 sprint @ 90% effort)

Dryland: stretching, light resistance exercises

When:

Tuesdays 6:30-7:30 pm; Wednesdays 6:00-7:30 pm; Thursdays 6:30-7:30 pm; Fridays 6:00-7:30 pm; Saturdays 7:00-8:30 am

Note: training continues during the school holidays

Competitive Requirements:

Compulsory Swim Meets (competitions):

- "Gold Coast" Meets (about 6 per year from February to November)
- Tawa Swimming Club Champs (usually in May)
- Club Time Trials (last Thursday of most terms)
- Swimming New Zealand Junior Festival (usually in March)
- Swimming Wellington Junior Sprint Challenge (usually in July)
- Swimming Wellington Relay Champs (usually in November)
- Swimming Wellington Junior Champs (usually in October), **if qualified (pinnacle event for 12 years and under)**
- Wellington Short Course (25m) Champs in June, **if qualified (12 & over)**
- Wellington Long Course (50m) Champs in December, **if qualified (12 & over)**

Optional Swim Meets:

- National Qualifier meets (recommended for 12 & over)
- Div III Meet (all ages - qualification times apply)
- Other local swim meets (all ages)

Gold Squad (regional level, towards national level)

Philosophy:

Train smart, compete hard, and build character. Training intensity increases with a focus on individual goal-setting, accountability, and high performance habits. Respect, responsibility, and mental toughness become key themes.

Who:

Open to swimmers who have:

- Shown improvement in their swimming.
- Attended 4 training sessions per week on average over the last 6 months with Silver Squad.
- Demonstrated they can take instruction and then make technique or skill changes.

Swimmers must also be able to:

- Read and understand the pace clock for lap times & intervals.
- Handle an increased workload.
- Have a good work ethic and positive attitude.
- Swim 400m Freestyle in under 6 minutes with correct start, tumble turns, bilateral breathing and finish.
- Swim 200m Individual Medley in under 3 minutes and 20 seconds with correct start, turns and finish.
- Swim consistently holding the following sets with about 5" to 10" rest:
 - 4 x 100 Freestyle Kick on 2'00
 - 4 x 50 Butterfly Swim on 1'00
 - 4 x 100 Backstroke Swim on 1'50
 - 4 x 100 Breaststroke Swim on 2'00
 - 8 x 100 Freestyle Swim on 1'40
- Commit to compete in all compulsory competitions (see Competitive Requirements below).
- **Commit to attending a minimum of 6 of the 8 available training sessions per week.**

Training Focus:

Training at higher intensity levels. Speed development and race-specific training. Advanced starts, turns, and underwater efficiency. Dryland training: strength, flexibility, and injury prevention.

Coaching Methods:

Periodisation (seasonal plan) around major competitions (Regional Champs, Div II)

Mixed aerobic & anaerobic swim sets (e.g. 10 x 200m freestyle aerobic; 6 x 50m sprint)

Race simulation sets (e.g. descending 100m freestyle reps)

Strength & conditioning (resistance bands, core work)

Tactical race planning (pace control, split strategies)

When:

DAY	AM	PM
Monday	6:00 - 7:30	4:30 - 6:30
Tuesday	6:00 - 7:30	
Wednesday	6:00 - 7:30	4:30 - 6:00
Thursday	6:00 - 7:30	
Friday		4:30 - 6:00
Saturday	7:00 - 9:00	

Note: training continues during the school holidays

Competitive Requirements:

Participation in all National Qualifier competitions in the Wellington Region is compulsory for all Gold Squad swimmers, regardless of whether they have already qualified for the next national event. Specific objectives and strategies will be individualised.

Remember: it's not always about Pb's! Some competitions are an opportunity to race different strokes and/or distances, others are dedicated to experimenting or rehearsing race strategies (e.g. negative splits, even splits, underwater goals, etc.), and others are peak competitions (season or yearly goals such as National or Regional Champs).

Platinum squad (national level, towards international level)

Philosophy:

Pursue excellence with integrity and purpose. This squad is for dedicated athletes aiming for top-level performance. The focus is on mastering details, maximising potential, and balancing ambition with humility and team support.

Who:

Open to swimmers who have:

- Shown a desire and capacity to commit to higher training loads and train at consistently high level.
- Attended a minimum of 6 training sessions per week on average over the last 12 months with Gold Squad
- Qualified for NAGS (NZ Champs if 17 years old and older) and NZSC.
- Demonstrated they can take instruction and then make technique or skill changes.

Swimmers must also be able to:

- Have good skills, technique, turns and rules knowledge.
- Show independence and responsibility for own training.
- Handle an increased load – to step up to the next level.
- Have a good positive attitude and show effort, perseverance, guts – never giving up!!
- Swim consistently holding the following sets with about 5" to 10" rest:
 - 6 x 100 Freestyle Kick on 2'00
 - 6 x 50 Butterfly Swim on 1'00
 - 6 x 100 Backstroke Swim on 1'45
 - 6 x 100 Breaststroke Swim on 2'00
 - 10 x 100 Freestyle Swim on 1'30
- Show very good commitment to training and to competing (see Competitive Requirements below).
- Be a role model for the younger Club & Junior Squad swimmers.
- **Commit to attending a minimum of 7 of the 9 available pool training sessions and 1 gym session per week.**

Training Focus:

High-volume endurance training. High-intensity race-pace training. Fine-tuning technique & maximizing efficiency. Strength & conditioning: explosive power, injury prevention. Psychological & nutritional preparation

Coaching Methods:

Periodisation (seasonal plan) around major competitions (National Champs)

Race-specific training sets (e.g., 6 x 100m @ race pace with short rest)

Tapering strategies before major meets

Advanced dryland: weights, plyometrics, mobility work

Mental training: visualisation, focus, and resilience

When:

DAY	AM	PM
Monday	6:00-7:30	4:30-6:30
Tuesday	6:00-7:30	4:30-6:30
Wednesday	6:00-7:30	GYM
Thursday	6:00-7:30	4:30-6:30
Friday		4:30-6:00
Saturday	7:00-9:00	

Note: training continues during the school holidays)

Competitive Requirements:

Participation in all National Qualifier competitions in the Wellington Region is compulsory for all Platinum swimmers, regardless of whether they have already qualified for the next national event. Specific objectives and strategies will be individualised. Remember: it's not always about Pb's! Some competitions are an opportunity to race different strokes and/or distances, others are dedicated to experimenting or rehearsing race strategies (e.g. negative splits, even splits, underwater goals, etc.), and others are peak competitions (season or yearly goals such as National Champs).

Progression through the Squads

Why does each squad have criteria?

The entry criteria have been created to help the swimmers to:

- Assess their current level
- Help them to target and achieve their goals
- Show them the way to raise their swimming level

How do swimmers progress through the development pathway?

Towards the end of each school term (usually week 8/9), swimmers in are assessed by coaching staff to identify which squad is appropriate for the upcoming preparation cycle. Progression through the development pathway is based on a combination of:

- Training commitment and attitude to training
- Technique
- Training attendance
- Time trials and/or swim set tests
- Competition participation and/or results
- Availability of a vacant position in the appropriate squad

After a squad move takes place (at the beginning of a school term), a one-month trial period will be in place to assess that the move is appropriate for the swimmer. Swimmers are expected to train with the squad for which they have qualified. Should an individual not be able to meet or maintain the training or competitive requirements for their current squad, movement to a more suitable group (e.g. Youth Swimfit) or a return to their previous squad may be necessary. The coaching team retains overall discretion and may allocate swimmers to a squad where criteria have not been met.

When are the criteria reviewed?

The coaching team will conduct an annual review of the squad criteria as part of the club's comprehensive evaluation of past performance and the development of strategic objectives for the upcoming year. This review is aligned with the club's financial and membership year, which is from 1 July to 30 June.

How many training sessions should a swimmer attend?

Each training squad has specific attendance requirements appropriate for the objectives of that group. In order to obtain the maximum benefit from the program swimmers will need to attend all recommended training sessions. If during some weeks this proves to be difficult, the parents/carers and/or swimmer should discuss this in advance with the Squad Coach.

A positive attitude towards training is important and it begins with the determination to start on time and to obtain full value the training time available. Swimmers are expected to remain for the duration of each session.

All squads have attendance requirements that must be met. Failure to do so may result in the withdrawal of a place in the Swimming Coaching Program or movement to a training group with less rigid attendance requirements (e.g. Youth Swimfit).

Your Role as a Parent/Carer

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 swimming. Show your interest by ensuring your child's attendance at training, and by coming to, and helping at competitions.

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.

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 gets DQ'd, 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. When it comes to loving and supporting your child – particularly in public – winning and losing make no difference.

Let the Coach, Coach

Please do not give race advice or technical instructions at training or competitions as this risks confusing your child or even contradicting the advice they get from the coaches. **Leave the coaches to give all coaching instructions. NO extra coaching during training or outside of training is allowed.**

Be Realistic, and Prioritise Fun and Enjoyment

No one swims Pb's every time they swim and nor should they. Different competitions have different goals. Trust in the coaches to do their job.

External success (times, placings) 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. 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.

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 and 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 and events generally go as planned. Late or inconsiderate members hurt everyone.

Become Involved!

Tawa Swim Club is NOT a business. As with most clubs, Tawa Swim Club is run by volunteers. Each family must 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. A good way to start, and something that is required for every meet your child enters, is to offer to volunteer at swim meets. 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 as your child progresses along the development pathway. Very few other sports provide this opportunity.

To find out more about the different ways you can volunteer or be an official at a swim meet please contact: officials@swimtawa.org.nz

Questions & Resources

- Regional competition pathway: <https://www.swimmingwellington.org/post/wellington-event-structure>
- Regional events structure <https://www.swimmingwellington.org/post/event-pathway>
- Swimming NZ membership categories: <https://www.swimmingwellington.org/membership-categories>
- Swimming Wellington pool events: <https://www.swimmingwellington.org/events-2>
- Tawa Swimming Club website - upcoming meets: <https://swimtawa.org.nz/upcoming-meets>
- Tawa Swimming Club meet/competition information: <https://swimtawa.org.nz/meet-information>

Note that specific meet information is also sent regularly from our Race Secretary.