



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Parent Handbook

Altavista Dolphins 2025–2026



| POOL GUIDELINES

1. The pool must be cleared immediately when ONE LONG whistle blast is heard.
2. No swimming without a lifeguard on duty.
3. Walk; do not run to avoid injury.
4. Diving is only permitted in the deep end of the pool. No back flips, back dives, or twists.
5. Horseplay is the primary cause of pool injuries. No pushing, dunking, spitting, sitting on shoulders, chicken fights, or horseplay in the pool area.
6. Please do not hang or sit on the lane lines.
7. Proper bathing attire must be worn at all times while using the pool. Cutoffs or disposable diapers are not permitted in the pool. Children who are not toilet-trained must wear swim diapers.
8. When two or more swimmers share a lane, circle swim etiquette must be used.
9. The pool will close at the sound of thunder or the sight of lightning for AT LEAST 30 minutes.
10. No inflatable pool toys/flotation devices will be allowed.
11. Extended breath-holding exercises may cause blackouts; therefore, it is not permitted.



|SWIM TEST POLICY

At the Y, safety is our top priority. All swimmers 12 & under must complete a swim test. Those who do not take or do not pass the test must wear a coast guard approved life jacket and remain in the shallow end unless accompanied in the water by a responsible adult supervising that child. The responsible adult must be within arm's reach. Lifeguards have the authority to require any person, regardless of age or ability, to complete a swim test or wear a life jacket if deemed necessary.

Children who complete a swim test will receive a Swim Test Completion Card and receive a disposable swim band.

LIFE JACKET

NON-SWIMMERS

PRIVILEGES:

- Life jacket required.
- Must remain in the shallow end of the pool, unless accompanied in the water by a responsible adult supervising that child. The responsible adult must be within arm's reach.

RED BAND

TEST:

- Starting in the shallow end, swim half a length of the pool and back without touching the bottom or the walls of the pool.

PRIVILEGES:

- May swim without a life jacket.
- May swim in the shallow and middle areas of the pool.

BLUE BAND

TEST:

- Starting in the deep end, must submerge above the head and resurface.
- Swim half the length of the pool and back without touching the bottom or walls of the pool.
- Tread water for 1 minute.

PRIVILEGES:

- May swim in the shallow, middle, and deep areas of the pool.

Note: Completion of the swim test does not guarantee a passing result.

Swimmers must complete the test with strong, confident swimming ability and without signs of distress or fatigue.


| SWIM TEAM PRACTICE GROUPS

Bronze Practice Group

The Bronze Group is the YMCA's novice level for athletes 4 to 12 years of age. This group is designed to teach and develop strokes and philosophies of competitive swimming. This group focuses on teaching the basics of all four competitive strokes. The coaches will emphasize proper stroke technique, starts, and turns, and building cardiovascular endurance through drills, sets, and fun activities. The coaches will continue to work on the interpersonal skills necessary to compete in the sport of swimming. Coaches will integrate the YMCA core concepts of caring, responsibility, respect, and honesty into each practice to enforce healthy habits.

Each practice session lasts 60 minutes and includes dryland training on the last Thursday of the month. The Bronze group practices only on Tuesday and Thursday from 4–5 PM. Dryland will include simple exercises and mobility work.

Prerequisites for the Bronze Group:


- Must be able to perform legal freestyle and backstroke for 25 yards, and be able to tread water for 1 minute.
 - Must be able to demonstrate knowledge of butterfly and breaststroke.
 - Ability to jump/dive off the pool's starting block.
 - Ability to focus and follow instructions for 60 minutes.
 - Demonstrates general knowledge of rotary breathing.
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Silver Practice Group

The Silver Group is designed for 8 to 18-year-old swimmers with some previous swim team experience and is legal in all 4 strokes. The Silver Group will focus on stroke technique while working on overall athletic conditioning and endurance by using freestyle and IM training for endurance work. An emphasis will be placed on applying race strategies and techniques. Coaches will teach different diving and relay techniques. Coaches will discuss the importance of teamwork, time management, and mental training. Coaches will continue integrating the YMCA core concepts of caring, responsibility, respect, and honesty into each practice to enforce healthy habits.

Each practice session will last 60 minutes and is scheduled Monday-Thursday from 5-6 PM. Dryland activities will occur on the third day of practice immediately following the pool session. Dryland exercises include simple movements to increase both strength and mobility.

Prerequisites for the Silver Group:


- Able to legally perform all 4 strokes.
 - Must be able to swim 100 yards of backstroke and freestyle.
 - Must be able to swim 50 yards in butterfly and breaststroke.
 - Must know how to read a pace clock.
 - Must know how to perform a proper and safe dive.
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Gold Practice Group

The Gold Group is designed for 12 to 18-year-old swimmers with swim team experience. The coaches will continue to focus on proper stroke technique using stroke-specific drills while teaching race strategies/techniques and overall athletic conditioning and endurance. Coaches will teach different diving and relay exchange techniques while working on reaction time. Each Gold swimmer will establish personal goals and work towards achieving those goals. Coaches will discuss the importance of teamwork, time management, and mental training. Coaches will continue to integrate the YMCA core concepts of caring, responsibility, respect, and honesty into each practice to enforce healthy habits

Each swim practice session will last 60 minutes and is scheduled Monday–Thursday from 5–6 PM. Dryland activities will occur on the third day of practice immediately following the pool sessions. Dryland activities include advanced exercises and skills focusing on strength and mobility.

Prerequisites for the Gold Group:

- Must be able to swim 200 yards of freestyle and backstroke.
 - Must be able to swim 100 yards in butterfly and breaststroke.
 - Must read a pace clock and swim intervals without coach assistance.
 - Must be able to demonstrate a breaststroke pullout.
 - Ability to swim a 100 IM in 1:45.
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| REQUIRED PRACTICE EQUIPMENT

ALL SWIMMERS ARE REQUIRED TO HAVE

- Goggles
- Swim Cap
- Fins
- Wet Bag or another way to properly store and organize personal equipment

SILVER

In addition to the required supplies, Silver swimmers also need:

- Paddles

GOLD

In addition to the required supplies, Gold swimmers also need:

- Paddles
- Snorkel

Equipment can be bought through the Altavista Area YMCA or through websites such as Swim Outlet. Used and discounted fins and paddles are available to purchase through the swim team at a limited amount.

| 2025/2026 SWIM MEET SCHEDULE



| SWIM MEET INFORMATION

Parents and swimmers are responsible for attending as many meets as possible. At least 3 YMCA-sanctioned meets must be attended for a swimmer to participate in PYSA Championships. Parents must notify coaches of any last-minute scratches 12 hours before the start of the meet unless the circumstance is an emergency. Swimmers may be entered in up to three individual events and two relays. If your child is entered in a relay, please arrive on time and do not leave the meet early. Doing this eliminates another swimmer's opportunity to compete. Coaches will place swimmers in events that benefit the team and the individual and are not up to parental discretion.


All swimmers must have a parent or guardian 18 or older at each swim meet. You **MAY NOT** drop your child off at any of the meets.



| HELPFUL SWIM MEET TIPS

Swim meets can be very hectic for swimmers and parents. Please talk with your coach if this is a new experience for you. Every meet provides a chance for swimmers to demonstrate their improvement. Encourage your child, promote personal accomplishments, and foster team spirit.

Here are a few helpful hints to making the most of your swim season:

- Know your child's events.
 - Swimmers are seeded according to time. In general, slower heats swim first, and faster heats swim last.
 - The Individual Medley (IM) and Medley Relay are set differently. The IM consists of butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, and freestyle, all swum by one swimmer. The Medley Relay swims as follows: four different swimmers, one following the completion of the other, swimming backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly, and freestyle.
 - When swimming shorter distances, the smallest amount of dropped or lowered time is an enormous improvement. Be supportive, and remember to congratulate even the smallest of accomplishments.
 - Try to keep your swimmer from eating sugary snacks or drinks before swimming. Try pasta or fruit as an alternative, and your swimmer will feel better and swim stronger.
 - Always have fun!
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| SWIM MEET PACKING LIST

- **Swim Suit**

A must-have. Always make sure its in your bag.

- **Swim Cap**

Pack two. They tear easily. The coaches always have extras at meets if needed.

- **Goggles**

Pack two pairs. You can also pack extra straps.

- **Team T-Shirt**

To ward off the chill and look like a team.

- **Towels**

Pack at least two big towels.

Everything around the pool will get wet

- **Something Warm**

Bring a warmup jacket, sweats, fleece, or a hoodie to keep warm.

- **Water Bottle**

Bring a water bottle filled with water or a sports drink. Staying hydrated is important!

- **Snacks**

Bring things like raisins, trail mix, Ritz crackers, Goldfish, grapes, power bars, jerky, string cheese, small fruit, or veggies.

- **Toiletries**

Shampoo, conditioner, hairbrush, comb, contact solution, deodorant, feminine hygiene products, and other necessities.

- **Dry Clothes**

A change of clothes for after the meet. Keep them dry in your bag by putting them in a Ziploc.

- **Inhaler**

If your child is asthmatic, please bring their inhaler.

- **Tylenol/Motrin**

For older swimmers. It can be taken for a headache or a bodyache.

- **Entertainment**

Books, tablets, even homework! There is time between events.



| PARENT PARTICIPATION

Parent participation is essential to the success of the YMCA swim team. For your child's swim meet to run successfully, we need parent volunteers. It is a **REQUIREMENT** that parents of swimmers volunteer for their child to continue as a swimmer on the team. If volunteer positions are not filled at any time during a meet, the meet will halt until filled.

Some positions require additional training. The YMCA will offer training to individuals wanting to be certified free of charge.

The volunteer positions include:

- 1 Starter
 - 6-12 Timers
 - 1 Head Timer
 - 2 Stroke and Turn Judges
 - 1 Runner
 - 2 Volunteers for the Blocks (to make sure swimmers get to the blocks on time)
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| VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTIONS

- **Starter**

Operates the starting system, announces the events and heats, and starts each race as directed by the Meet Director.

- **Stroke and Turn Judges**

Discern whether or not a swimmer is within league regulations for their stroke, turns, and finishes.

- **Head Timer**

Starts two watches every race and uses them to replace malfunctioning watches on the lanes. Coordinates with Meet Director.

- **Timer**

Ensures the proper swimmer swims in the right event, the right heat, and the right lane. Operates timing devices (stopwatches or buttons) and records the time for the swimmer in their lane.

- **Runner**

Picks up lane timer slips from each lane after each event and delivers them in lane order to the Meet Director.

- **Parent Volunteer- Blocks**

Ensures that swimmers (especially the younger ones) are on the blocks for their events.




| SWIMMING RULES & REGULATIONS

Strokes & Turns

The Federation Internationale de Nation Amateur (FINA) governs the conduct of all international aquatic sports. The US's national governing body for swimming is USA Swimming, Inc., part of the US Olympic Committee in Colorado Springs, CO. The rules and regulations of swimming ensure fair and equitable competition for all swimmers.

Breaststroke: Forward start. The swimmer is permitted one full arm pull (beyond the hipline), one downward butterfly kick, and one breaststroke kick while submerged at the start and after turns; the head must surface by the widest part of the 2nd stroke (before hands turn inward). Arm pulls shall be in the same horizontal plane (parallel to the water surface). Hands shall be pushed forward from the breast on or under the water (elbows must remain in the water except at a turn or finish). The stroke cycle consists of one arm pull and one kick in that order; the head must break the water surface at least once each cycle. Swimmer's leg motions must be simultaneous; feet must be turned out in the downward propulsive part of the kick. No flutter or butterfly kick is allowed. On the turn and finish, a simultaneous two-hand touch is required. On a turn, shoulders must be past vertical toward the breast when the swimmer leaves the wall.

Common Violations: Two strokes or kicks underwater; alternating kick; scissors kick; butterfly kick; arms not moving in the same horizontal plane; out-of-cycle; over water recovery; non-simultaneous or one-hand touch



| SWIMMING RULES & REGULATIONS

Butterfly: Forward start. The swimmer is allowed one arm pull and as many kicks as desired at start and turn, but the head must surface at the 15-meter mark. The first arm pull must bring the swimmer to the surface. Arms must pull and recover simultaneously, with forward arm motions over the water surface. Up and down movement of legs and feet must be simultaneous. Breaststroke or flutter kicks are not allowed. Both hands must touch simultaneously at the turns and finish, but do not have to be on the same level. At the turn, the shoulders must be past vertical toward the breast when the swimmer leaves the wall.

Common Violations: Submerged past the 15M mark; alternating kick; scissors kick; non-simultaneous arm stroke; underwater recovery; non-simultaneous or one-hand touch.

Backstroke: Backstroke start. The head must be surfaced by the 15-meter mark. Shoulders must be past vertical toward the back throughout the race, except at the turn. Shoulders may turn past vertical as part of the continuous turning action at the turn only. Continuous single or simultaneous double arm pull may be used to execute the turn; kicking or gliding must be part of the turning action. The swimmer must be passed vertically toward the back when he/she leave the wall. The swimmer must remain on the back and may not be submerged entirely except at the touch at the finish.



| SWIMMING RULES & REGULATIONS


Freestyle: Forward start. The head must surface by the 15-meter mark. Some part of the swimmer must touch the wall at the turn and finish. No pulling on lane lines, walking, or pushing forward off the bottom of the pool.

Common Violations: Submerged past the 15M mark; no touch on the turn; walking on or pushing off the bottom of the pool; getting artificial assistance (pulling on lane ropes or pushing off the sides).

Individual Medley: Butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, and freestyle in that order. Individual stroke rules apply to respective legs. When changing from one stroke to another, the touch must conform to the finish rules for the completed stroke.

Common Violations: Stroke and turn infractions; transition infractions; swimming strokes out of order; swimming butterfly, backstroke, or breaststroke during the freestyle leg.

Relays: Freestyle (any stroke) and Medley (backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly, freestyle, in that order). Individual stroke rules apply to the respective legs. When changing from one stroke to another, the touch must conform to the finish rules for the completed stroke. Swimmers cannot lose contact with the start block until the previous swimmer touches the wall. Swimmers must swim in the order listed on the entry card.



| SWIMMING RULES & REGULATIONS

Common Violations: Stroke and turn infractions; transition infractions; swimming strokes out of order; swimming butterfly, backstroke, or breaststroke during the freestyle leg; early take-off; swimmers out of order.

Starts: The start is the most critical part of a swimmer's race. Most events use the forward start- swimmers start the race from the starting blocks, the deck, or the water facing the racing course. When the referee blows a series of short whistles, the signal to "Get Ready!" swimmers should be behind the blocks in their lane, remove all clothing except their suits, have caps and goggles on, and be ready to race. When the referee blows one long whistle blast, the signal to "Step Up!" swimmers should step onto the starting block. When all swimmers have stepped up, the referee or starter extends his arm, closing the heat to further competitors. If a swimmer fails to show up or step up before a heat is closed, he/she will be disqualified for Delay of Meet unless there were extenuating circumstances. When the swimmers are ready, the starter says, "Take your mark." Swimmers will assume their starting positions with at least one foot at the front of the block (or edge of the pool). Once the swimmers are stationary in their start positions, the starter sounds the start signal, and the swimmers dive into the water. A false start occurs when a swimmer is in motion (leaves his/her mark) before the start signal is sounded. The starter and referee will disqualify a swimmer for a false start, and the swimmer will be notified at the end of the race. If a fair start is not achieved, the starter will recall the heat. If the heat is recalled, no false start can be attributed.



| SWIMMING RULES & REGULATIONS

Each swimmer is responsible for his/her start. If a swimmer moves before the start signal, the starter may release the rest of the heat by saying, “Stand”. Any swimmer who enters the water will be disqualified unless the starter determines he/she did so in reaction to the command. For backstroke events, the backstroke start is used– swimmers start in the water facing the starting end of the pool. The procedure is essentially the same, except the swimmers enter the water on the first long whistle, and the referee blows a second long whistle for the swimmers to place their feet in the start position. Swimmers must place both hands on the gutter or the starting grips and feet below the water’s surface.

Swimmers may also be disqualified for:

- unsportsmanlike or unsafe conduct
- not starting or finishing his/her lane
- standing on the bottom during any stroke
- walking or pushing off the bottom of the pool
- using the lane lines or sides of the pool for forward assistance
- interfering with another swimmer entering the pool without permission from an official



| SWIMMER CODE OF CONDUCT

I herby pledge to provide positive support and encouragement for all members of the Altavista Area YMCA Swim Team by following this code of conduct:

I agree to:

Caring:

- Recognize the value and importance of teamwork.
- Develop an understanding of basic teamwork through participation in various activities, adapted practice, and meet situations.
- Accept the strengths and weaknesses of fellow teammates and offer support when necessary.

Honesty

- Adhere to YMCA governing rules, policies, regulations, and procedure.
- Report all issues to the coaches if they cannot be resolved acceptably. Hitting, name-calling, fighting, destruction of property, etc., will not be tolerated.

Respect

- Always acts a positive representative of the YMCA with good sportmanship and behavior.
- Treat everyone- fellow swimmers, coaches, officials, YMCA employees, parents, and others- with respect at all times.
- Demonstrate sportmanship-like qualities at swim meets by waiting in the water for races to finish, shaking hands with competitors after each race, and refraining from using inappropriate language and gestures.

Responsibilitiy

- Arrive at practice, ready to participate, at the specified time.
- Bring all necessary equipment to every practice and swim meet.
- Arrive at swim meets at the designatedwarm-up time unless other arrangements have been made with my coach.

I understand that a violation of this code of conduct or any action detrimental to the Altavista Area YMCA Swim Team may result in disciplinary action by the coaches, YMCA staff, or parents. This may result in either suspension or termination as deemed necessary. If a violation occurs at a swim meet, the swimmer may be excused from the meet immediately.

Swimmers Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____



| PARENT CODE OF CONDUCT

As a parent of a YMCA Altavista swimmer, I will abide by the following guidelines:

- Practice teamwork with all parents, swimmers, and coaches by supporting the values of caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility.
- Enjoy involvement in the team by supporting the swimmers, coaches, and other parents through volunteering, positive communication, and actions.
- Provide positive reinforcement to all swimmers in all situations, promoting team spirit and loyalty.
- Demonstrate good sportsmanship by conducting myself in a manner that earns the respect of my child, other swimmers, parents, officials, and coaches at meets and practices.
- Understand that criticizing, name-calling, abusive language, or gestures directed toward the coaches, officials, and/or any participating swimmer will not be permitted or tolerated.
- During competitions, questions or concerns regarding decisions made by meet officials are directed to a coaching staff member. Parents address officials via the coaching staff only.

I understand that should I conduct myself in such a way that brings discredit or discord to the Altavista Area YMCA swim team at practice or meets, it may result in not only my being removed from the swimming area but may also affect my child's ability to continue to participate in the practice/meet/team.

Parents Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____

