

Foothills Area YMCA

Team Handbook

Revised: September 2026

The YMCA

YMCA Mission Statement: The FOOTHILLS AREA YMCA is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all.

Youth Sports Philosophy:

- Every child plays equally
- Promote the benefits of fitness and healthy lifestyles
- Develop sports skills
- Promote teamwork
- Value education
- Encourage family involvement
- Provide a safe environment
- Improve self-esteem and social development
- Promote character development: Caring, Respect, Honesty, and Responsibility.

Registration

You can register [online](#), by phone, or in person at the membership desk. The \$60 registration fee is due at the time of your registration, monthly swim team dues will be charged to accounts on the first of the month. Financial assistance is available for families who qualify. If interested, please pick up a financial assistance application from the Member Services desk or online at [Financial Assistance – FOOTHILLS AREA YMCA \(faymca.org\)](http://faymca.org). Please allow 7-10 business days for financial assistance approval.

Refunds/Cancellations/Pro-rating

Once accounts have been charged for swim team dues/meet fees/program registrations, refunds will only be issued for unexpected circumstances, such as an injury or a family relocation. Documentation must be provided to consider refund.

Refunds will not be assessed for the following reasons: unhappy with team selection/assignment, requests not honored, registering with the incorrect group or at the incorrect location, among others.

In order to cancel your swim team membership, you will need to contact the YMCA via phone or in person at the front desk. You must contact them before the 1st of the month in order to avoid being charged for the next month. No refunds or credits will be given if you failed to contact the YMCA or head swim coach before your account has been charged.

Pro-rating of swim team dues will not be done under any circumstances. Swimmers must pay for the entire month in order to swim with the team.

Which Group Should You Register Your Child In

New Swimmer Evaluations

All swimmers new to the team or those who have not been on the team for more than one year must do a new swimmer evaluation with one of our coaches. These evaluations will take around 15 minutes to complete. Coaches will go over all four strokes and place swimmers in groups according to skill and age.

Returning Swimmer Registration

Swimmers should be registered in the group they swam in the previous season unless they receive a move-up notification from the head coach.

Group Move-Ups

Group moves will typically happen before the long course season (August) or after the short course season (April). Emails will be sent out to families who are affected by group moves. All group moves are at the discretion of the head coach with the input of group coaches.

Team Structure

The Foothills Area Swim Team is divided into training groups based primarily on age and ability level. Swimmers aged 12 and under are encouraged to participate in other activities outside of swimming while they develop the technique, endurance and competitiveness that are the foundation for successful swimmers. Swimmers aged 13 and older are asked to make a greater commitment to swimming and to the team by participating in more practices and competitions. Senior level swimmers are expected to attend championship meets at the highest level they achieve.

Bronze Group: Ages 5-10, less experienced and first-year swimmers

This group will heavily focus on stroke technique, with the goal being four legal strokes; freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, and butterfly. Lots of teaching, drills, and fundamental work to the sport of swimming will be covered.

Minimum requirements: Swimmers must be able to swim 25y of freestyle or backstroke unassisted without stopping. This introductory group practices three times a week; Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, with emphasis on learning proper stroke technique in a fun, low pressure environment. Participation in at least two regular swim meets is encouraged.

Silver Group: Ages 9-12, less experienced 13 & over swimmers

This group focuses on proper technique and details as well as a strong emphasis on strengthening fundamentals such as kick, pace clock management, sets with intervals, and basic training skills to help swimmers' growth will be covered. The goal of this group is to mold swimmers into well-rounded athletes.

Minimum requirements: Swimmers must be able to swim a 100 IM, 50 fly, and 50 breast legally in order to swim in this group. Participation in at least 2 YMCA meets and the YMCA championship meet is encouraged.

Gold Group: Ages 11-16, less experienced 16 & overs swimmers

The goal of the swimmers in this group will be to continue to build strong stroke technique, gain endurance, and learn race strategy. The Gold Group is a stepping stone to our highest group with the goal of making times to compete in top level meets. Goal setting and using test sets throughout the season to track progress at practice will be used.

Minimum requirements: Swimmers must be able to legally swim 200 IM, 100 fly, and 100 breast. Swimmers are expected to attend a minimum of five practices a week, which includes dryland training. Swimmers in this group are encouraged to attend all local swim meets and championship meets. They are also encouraged to join USA Swimming.

Platinum Group: Ages 13 & overs

This group is for those athletes who have made the commitment to swimming as their sport and activity. The goal is to refine stroke technique to maximum efficiency and blend in speed and conditioning to allow for high performance at competitions. Rigorous training every day and wide use of equipment and conditioning methods to supplement the swimming portion of training. Morning and afternoon training sessions are offered and strongly encouraged for best results. This group helps to show young people the skills and abilities for personal growth and development in AND out of the pool.

This group is expected to compete at the highest level possible. Swimmers should have the intention of competing at USA Swimming and YMCA national meets at the end of each season.

Minimum requirements: Swimmers in this group are required to have achieved at least one SC Swimming State Championship time.

Recommended Equipment

Bronze Group – kickboard, long fins, goggles, team cap, and a water bottle

Silver Group – kickboard, long fins, goggles, a team cap, and a water bottle

Gold Group – kickboard, fins, snorkel, nose clip, pull buoy, paddles, tempo trainer, goggles, team cap, and a water bottle

Platinum Group - kickboard fins (long and short), snorkel, nose clip, pull buoy, paddles (big and small), tempo trainer, goggles, team cap, and a water bottle

These are the necessities. We recommend that all swimmers carry an extra cap, suit, and pair of goggles in their bag. Coaches do not carry extra items to loan swimmers for practice and the facilities do not regularly have extras to loan.

Seasons and Breaks

The Foothills Area Swim Team is a year-round seasonal competitive program. All groups take a short break in the spring and summer. These are important periods of physical AND mental rest for swimmers. Please respect these breaks as they are important in preventing burnout and keeping swimmers excited about the sport and the team. The Foothills Area Swim Team respects family time together, including vacation time. Parents should be aware, however, that extended time away from practice and competition in the middle of a season will affect a swimmer's performance. The effect becomes greater the older and more competitive a swimmer becomes.

Short Course Season: September-March

During this part of the season, swimmers will all compete in 25 yards (short course yards). USA swimming members will swim at a mid-season championship meet in December and championship meets in February and March; Y swimmers will compete in championship meets in February and March.

Long Course Season: April-July

During this part of the season, Y swimmers will continue competing in 25 yards (short course yards) while USA swimmers will compete in 50 meter pools (long course meters).

Breaks

The short course and long course seasons will be separated by a short one to two week spring break. Swimmers will take the entire month of August off of swimming.

Practices

Practice Schedule

At all levels, practice sessions develop important athletic, personal and social skills. Regular, consistent attendance is necessary to build the abilities of the swimmer, enhance the coach-swimmer relationship, and strengthen the unity of the team. You can find the 2025-2026 practice schedule [here](#).

Some revisions may need to be made throughout the season. Those changes will be communicated with the team through email.

Punctuality

Please try to be on time to all practices. Gold/Platinum groups should be at the pool 15 minutes early to do activation and dynamic warm-up. Being early/on-time is important as announcements will be made and instructions given to groups at the beginning of practice.

Coaches will not act as child care. Please do not arrive more than 15 minutes early and be on time to pick up your swimmers when practice has concluded.

Swimmers should not be in the water before practices start and must exit the pool when practice is over. Swimmers may only stay in the pool if a guardian is present and on deck with them.

Parents at Practice

Parents are welcome in the pool area during practice however there will be no communication between swimmers and parents unless there is an emergency. Parents are asked to sit on the bleachers or they may stay in the lobby during practices. Distractions are expected to be kept to a minimum, so that swimmers are paying attention and making as much of their time in the water as possible.

Inclement Weather

The swim team will have practice even if it is raining. The YMCA closes the pool if there is thunder or lightning in the area. The team will use the OnDeck app through TeamUnify to notify swimmers and families if practice is canceled. Please register with TeamUnify and download the OnDeck app in order to receive these texts and notifications on your phone. You may also call the YMCA front desk and they will let you know if the pool is closed due to inclement weather.

Swim Meets

Swim meets are a useful tool for a competitive swim team. We use swim meets to track progress as well as to break the monotony of training. Our full meet schedule for the current season can be found on the [FAY TeamUnify website](#). All swimmers are encouraged to compete at local Y and USA Swimming meets, but there will be times we ask swimmers to travel to places such as Rock Hill, Charleston, and beyond. There are a mix of YMCA swim meets and USA meets on the schedule.

Entering Swim Meets

Meet information is posted on the [Foothills Area YMCA Swim Team website](#) once it is received from the host team. The information will include the name, location, dates, times, and eligibility requirements of the meet. Updates from the host teams regarding warm-up and start times will be sent out the Wednesday or Thursday prior to the swim meet.

Swimmers must commit to meets at least 10 days in advance of the swim meet. No late entries will be accepted.

When entering a swim meet, swimmers and families may choose their events HOWEVER coaches have the discretion to make any changes they deem necessary.

Some meets will include relays; if relays are entered with names ahead of time, that does not necessarily mean those swimmers will be on the relay. Multiple factors may influence coaches' decisions to change relay order or leave swimmers off entirely. Again, these changes are made at the discretion of the head coach.

What to Bring to Meets: Suits, cap, goggles, towels, team shirt, warm clothes, shoes and socks, water/healthy snacks, and a Sharpie to write events on arms or legs.

Team Apparel

Swimmers are asked to wear FAY Swim Team attire including their team suits, team caps and t-shirts. Wearing team apparel promotes team pride and unity. It also helps coaches, parents and other swimmers locate FAY team members.

Parent Volunteers

Parent volunteers are essential to a successful swim team! Swim meets are completely run by parent volunteers. There are numerous jobs to be filled at meets and volunteering is a great way to stay busy between your child's events. It also gets parents involved in the achievements of all team members and builds relationships with other parents in the swimming community. If your child is swimming in a FAY hosted swim meet, you are required to help run the swim meet. Many jobs must be done, and everyone can find a job that they enjoy doing.

All Meets Need:

Timers - Time each heat in a specific lane using stopwatches that are provided by the host team. This job is very easy and keeps you right next to the action. No prior experience is necessary.

Officials - These include the starter, referee, and stroke and turn judges. They conduct the meet and address rule infractions; training is necessary (through USS and/or YMCA, depending on the meet). There is always a demand for these volunteers. Training is technical but not lengthy or difficult.

Home Meets also Require:

Runners - After each heat, this person takes cards from timers to the computer operator. No prior experience necessary.

Hospitality - These volunteers provide drinks to other meet workers, act as host/hostess in the hospitality room where coaches and officials go to relax and have a snack. No prior experience needed.

Concessions - These people sell snacks and/or supplies which help make up for the cost for hosting swim meets.

Computer Operator - This person inputs data during meets (times, relay names, etc.) and generates results from the system. Training on specific meet manager software is needed.

Clerk of Course - The clerk is responsible for meet checks from visiting teams, check-in for coaches, and scratch sheets for longer events.

Safety Marshals - A male and female safety marshal are asked to monitor the pool deck, especially, but not only, during warm-up periods to make sure that safety rules are being followed. They are also responsible for checking locker rooms to make sure that only swimmers are present.

Communication

Communication with swimmers

The coach/swimmer relationship is one built on trust and communication. Swimmers are expected to communicate with coaches and the other way around. Swimmers need to be able to talk to coaches about missed practice, injuries, goals, etc.

One on one communication through text and email is strictly prohibited with athletes under the age of 18. Please make sure a parent is on any form of electronic communication with coaches.

Communicating with coaches

The Head Coach will communicate with families on a weekly basis with team updates, important dates, and practice schedule changes.

Parents are welcome to reach out to coaches via email with any questions or important information. We ask that parents do not communicate via phone or text with coaches unless it is an emergency.

If you have any questions, please ask before practice or wait until after coaches have left the pool deck. Do not interrupt practice unless there is an immediate emergency.

Swimmer Code of Conduct

As representatives of the Foothills Area YMCA Swim Team swimmers are expected to speak and behave in a manner that is respectful, responsible, honest, and caring. If each swimmer is mindful of these traits, appropriate conduct should never be an issue. These guidelines are to be followed by Foothills Area YMCA swimmers at all practices, meets, and other team functions. Special activities, such as team travel trips, require adherence to additional activity-specific conduct guidelines.

The following behaviors will not be tolerated:

- Unsportsmanlike conduct: taunting, teasing, or speaking negatively about teammates, competitors, officials, or coaches.
- Use of inappropriate, strong, or vulgar language or gestures.

- Lying, deceit, dishonesty.
- Littering, abuse, or misuse of equipment, furniture, or other items of property.
- Verbal or physical abuse toward others.
- Theft of any kind.
- Vandalism or any destruction of property, public or private.
- Use of tobacco products or other illegal substances.
- Consumption of alcoholic beverages or other illegal substances.

The first violation will receive a verbal warning. The second will result in dismissal from the practice, meet, or team function where the violation was made. The third violation will result in suspension from the team for a period of time that will be determined by the Head Swim Coach and Aquatics Director. A fourth violation will cause the removal of the swimmer from the program. Parents will be notified at each step.

Youth Sports Parent Code of Conduct

YMCA Youth Sports Philosophy: YMCA Youth Sports are based on certain beliefs and philosophies: participation and everyone plays. The YMCA encourages having a healthy spirit, mind, and body meaning the development of the whole person. The YMCA also emphasizes fundamentals, teamwork, fair play, cooperation, and respect for the officials, one's self, one's teammates, and the other team. Our philosophy is simple: EVERYONE PLAYS EVERYONE WINS. Every decision you make and every behavior you display is based first on what you think is best for your athletes, and second, on what can be accomplished to have everyone become a winner.

I hereby pledge to provide positive support, care, and encouragement for my child participating in the Youth Sports Program by following this Parent Code of Conduct:

- I will encourage good sportsmanship by demonstrating positive support for all participants, coaches, and officials.
- I will do my best to make this program fun for my child.
- I will keep winning in perspective. A child usually forgets the outcome of the game: it is the adults that have a tendency to stress the win/loss record.
- I will ask my child to treat other participants, coaches, officials, parents, and spectators with respect.
- I will treat officials and coaches with respect. They are there to provide your child with a safe and healthy learning environment. Officials and coaches deserve the same type of environment from the parents and spectators.
- I will strive to be a good role model for my child and the other children in the program. I will encourage my child to learn to lose with dignity and win with grace.
- I will respect my child's coach and do my best to have my child at all practices and games on time.
- I will recognize the importance of volunteer coaches.
- I realize they are important to the development of my child and the program.
- I will communicate with them and support their decisions.