

TOP TIP #8

Swimming is a sport where you train hard for six months to be great for three days.

Swimming is a sport where performance improvements when measured in time become smaller as you age. Indeed, competitive swimming training consists of various focus areas, and it is not uncommon to add time in a meet that takes place after a hard training cycle. Physical changes in the body due to growth and maturation, or injury and illness are also likely to influence performance.

When approaching championship meets, competitive swimmers typically start to taper, where they combine the “art and science” of swimming. The goal of taper is to prepare the body and mind to produce peak performance when it matters the most.

As children and youth grow, it can be hard to stay motivated when time improvements become less frequent. This is particularly difficult when teammates appear not to be affected the same way at the same time. Parents have an important role in helping their children and youth when the “grind” of swimming gets hard.

HELPFUL DEFINITION:

Taper is defined as “a progressive nonlinear reduction of the training load during a variable period of time, in an attempt to reduce the physiological and psychological stress of daily training and optimize sports performance (Mujika & Padilla, 2000)



SCIENCE FACT:

Using a total of 9956 swimming years' worth of backstroke data, researchers have concluded that swimming performance improves rapidly between ages 8 and 13 and diminishes as the swimmers approached their top performance potential around the age of 18. ([Alsdokhi et al., 2020](#))



Critical Questions:

Swimming is a sport where you train hard for six months to be great for three days. To help your athlete best prepare for the sport of swimming, ask yourself:

- How do I, as a parent talk about performance improvements with my child/youth?
- What is the ratio between outcome-focused (time improvement, medals) and performance focused (you looked strong/relaxed/having fun) performance improvements?
- If I have outcome expectations for my child/youth, are they consistent with athlete/coach expectations? Are they realistic?
- How do I feel when my child adds time? Are my behaviors (verbal, physical, facial expressions) saying the same thing?
- How do I talk about my child's swim performances to others?
- How do I talk about other children's swim performances to others/my child?
- Are any of my behaviors such that could be interpreted as overinvolvement? (see Top Tip 3)
- Do I, as a parent have a role in taper? If so, what is it? (HINT: usually relates to food, laundry, and transportation)

