# **How to Use: Stroke Count and Stroke Rate**

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***If a swimmer can increase their stroke rate, without shortening their stroke length, they will inevitably swim faster.***

In this article, we’ll provide advice, hacks, tips and hindsight on how to best use stroke count and stroke rate, and why using them in combination can improve swimming performance.

## **What is stroke count?**

Stroke count is the number of strokes it takes for a swimmer to complete a given number of lengths/laps. Stroke count is largely influenced by a swimmer’s technique.

* The more technically efficient the swimmer, the longer their distance per stroke and therefore, the fewer strokes they will take to complete a length/lap.

## **What is stroke rate**

Stroke rate measures a swimmer’s speed, by measuring the number of strokes a swimmer takes per minute.

* Stroke rate is largely influenced by a swimmer’s fitness. The fitter the swimmer, the quicker and more powerfully they can move their arms through the water.

## **The relationship between stroke count and stroke rate**

There is a direct relationship between stroke count and stroke rate.

* If a swimmer can increase their stroke rate, without shortening their stroke length, they will inevitably swim faster.
* There is another important relationship between a swimmer’s stroke count and a swimmer’s stroke rate. A swimmer’s stroke rate will increase as their technique improves, and a swimmer’s stroke count will decrease as the swimmer becomes fitter and stronger.
* Therefore, many of the world’s top coaches regularly record a swimmer’s stroke count in combination with their stroke rate to measure their performance.

## **Stroke count in training**

It’s important that a swimmer is introduced to stroke counting as an early part of their swimming development.

* A swimmer needs to regularly practice and develop their stroke counting technique as a part of their ongoing training routine.
* Stroke counting can be practiced during different training sets, at varying intensities, including warm-ups and using different strokes.

#### **Related article on stroke count and stroke rate drills**

We have produced a related article, on stroke rate and stroke rate drills. You can view it by clicking this link: [Stroke rate and stroke rate drills](https://eatsleepswimcoach.com/scount-srate-drills/)

## **The benefits of stroke count**

Establishing a consistent stroke count in training has many benefits, these include:

#### **Focus**

Stroke count makes the swimmer focus on their swimming technique.

#### **Efficiency**

Stroke count enables the swimmer to monitor how efficiently they are swimming.

#### **Consistency**

Stroke count enables the swimmer to swim at a high level of consistency.

#### **Confidence**

Once a swimmer knows that they are swimming at their optimum stroke count it can give the swimmer enormous confidence.

***There is no one correct stroke count total, as swimmers are all shapes, sizes, abilities and strengths.***

## **How to measure stroke count**

**Please note**: There is no one correct stroke count total, as swimmers are all shapes, sizes, abilities and strengths.

* Therefore, the number of strokes it takes to complete a certain distance is unique to each individual swimmer.

### **Establishing a stroke count**

Swimming a given number of lengths/laps of the pool at a steady pace, with an emphasis on great technique.

* Swimmers must count the number of strokes (each time the hand or hands enters the water) they take to complete this distance.
* It is very important to ensure that swimmers allow the swimmers swimming behind them to complete the required distance of the pool.
* This allows them to record an accurate and unhurried stroke count.

## **Stroke rate during training**

As with stroke counting, it’s important that a swimmer is introduced to stroke rate training as an early part of their swimming development.

* A swimmer needs to practice their stroke rate as a part of their ongoing training routine.
* However, as recording a swimmer’s stroke rate requires someone on the poolside/deck with a stopwatch, it requires specific stroke rate sets to be introduced into a swimmer’s training programme.
* These include resistance and assisted swimming sets.

## **Recording stroke rate**

Most good swimming stopwatches have a function for recording a swimmer’s stroke rate.

* A swimmer’s stroke rate is usually recorded in the middle of each length/lap.
* This helps to ensure the consistency of recording and that the stroke rate is not adversely affected by the increase in speed of the swimmer coming out of or going into a turn.

#### **How to measure the stroke rate for freestyle and backstroke**

Start the stopwatch as the swimmer’s left-hand fingertips enter the water.

* Once the swimmer has completed three complete stroke cycles (a left-arm stroke and a right-arm stroke = an arm cycle) stop the stopwatch as the left-hand fingertips enter the water for the 4th time.
* The stopwatch displays the number of strokes the swimmer would complete in one minute if they continued to swim at the same stroke rate.

#### **How to measure the stroke rate for butterfly**

Start the stopwatch as the fingertips enter the water as it recovers from the previous stroke.

* Once the swimmer has completed three complete strokes, stop the stopwatch as the fingertips enter on the 4th stroke.
* The stopwatch displays the number of strokes the swimmer would complete in one minute if they continued to swim at the same stroke rate.

#### **How to measure the stroke rate for breaststroke**

Start the stopwatch as the arms become fully extended and the hands come together at the end of the previous stroke.

* Stop the stopwatch as the arms become fully extended and the hands come together at the beginning of the 4th stroke.
* The stopwatch displays the number of strokes the swimmer would complete in one minute if they continued to swim at the same stroke rate.

#### **Related article on how to best use a swimming stopwatch**

We have produced a related article on how to best use a swimming stopwatch, during training and competition. You can view it by clicking this link: [swimming stopwatch](https://eatsleepswimcoach.com/swimming-stopwatch/).

***Many swimmers have their own separate stroke counts and stroke rates monitoring sheets, which they include in their swimming logs.***

## **Monitoring stroke count and stroke rate**

It’s important that both coaches and swimmers regularly record, monitor and review a swimmer’s stroke counts and stroke rates, as these can be used to determine a swimmer’s future training schedule and race tactics.

* Many swimmers have their own separate stroke counts and stroke rates monitoring sheets, which they include in their swimming logs.

#### **Related article on the importance of a swimming log**

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## **Recording stroke count and stroke rate during competition**

Recording an individual swimmer during competition is often more than just recording their race time. That’s the job of the timekeeper.

* Coaches should use their stopwatches to record the individual swimmer’s lap/length splits, cumulative splits and stroke rate.
* If the coach is lucky enough to have an assistant who can record a swimmer’s stroke count then all the better.
* Otherwise, it’s down to the swimmer to record their own stroke count as they have practiced in training.
* A swimmer’s stroke rate is usually recorded in the middle of each length/lap.
* This help to ensure the consistency of recording and that the stroke rate is not adversely affected by the increase in speed of the swimmer, coming out of or going into a turn.

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## **Takeaways**

In this article, we’ll provide advice, hacks, tips and hindsight on the importance of stroke count and stroke rate, and why using them in combination can improve swimming performance.

* Stroke count is the number of strokes it takes for a swimmer to complete a given number of lengths/laps.
* Stroke count is largely influenced by a swimmer’s technique.
* The more technically efficient the swimmer, the longer their distance per stroke and therefore, the fewer strokes they will take to complete a length/lap.

Stroke rate measures a swimmer’s speed, by measuring the number of strokes a swimmer takes per minute.

* It is largely influenced by a swimmer’s fitness.
* The fitter the swimmer, the quicker and more powerfully they can move their arms through the water.
* If a swimmer can increase their stroke rate, without shortening their stroke length, they will inevitably swim faster.

#### **Related article on The Finis Tempo Trainer Pro: Users Guide**

We have produced a related article on The Finis Tempo Trainer Pro: Users Guide. Which you can view by clicking this link: [The Finis Tempo Trainer Pro: Users Guide](https://eatsleepswimcoach.com/tempo-trainer/)

#### **Swimming resource library**

We have produced a **swimming resource library**.

* This contains links to our ever-expanding portfolio of blog posts.
* These are subdivided by swimming category

Categories include: Swimmer Development | Swimmers Health | Swimming Coaching | Swimming Competition | Swimming Drills | Swimming Dryland/Land Training | Swimming Equipment | Swimming Psychology | Swimming Training

* To access our library simply click on the attached page link:  [Swimming resource library](https://eatsleepswimcoach.com/resource-library/)

#### **The Competitive Swimming Exchange – Facebook Group**

The Competitive Swimming Exchange is a Facebook group to help exchange ideas and information to collectively improve the sport we love.

* It’s an international group for all swimmers, coaches, teachers, masters, triathletes and swimming parents.
* In fact, it’s for all those who are interested in competitive swimming, either in the pool or in open water.

For more information about joining this group please use the following link: [The Competitive Swimming Exchange](https://www.facebook.com/groups/thecompetitiveswimmingexchange/)

#### **Swimming Publications**

We produce a growing range of publications on a wide range of swimming subjects.

* These include competitive swimming drill publications for Backstroke, Breastroke, Butterfly and Freestyle.
* For information regarding our portfolio please follow our link: [Swimming publications](https://eatsleepswimcoach.com/publications/)