

SWIM PARENTS

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Where Should Fast Age Group Swimmers Train?

"My ten years old son is the fastest swimmer in his group and he can also beat several of the senior swimmers... shouldn't he be training in the senior swimming group?"

Answered by: Rick Klatt, ASCA Level 5 Coach

There are three goals I have for age group swimmers on my team who will eventually make the transition to senior swimming. They are:

1. They love swimming and look forward to practice sessions.
2. They have a sound foundation of correct stroke mechanics.
3. They know how to generate speed over short distances.

I think an age group coach needs to be very flexible and very innovative in designing a training program for age group swimmers that keeps their interest and is considered fun. I encourage my age group coaches to include lots of dry land games to build coordination and aerobic fitness. I also encourage the coaches to provide challenging training sessions that are short and to the point. Every training session must include fundamental stroke work and some emphasis on fast swimming over short distances.

There are dangers associated with having younger swimmers training in the senior group. Although training with the older group may produce rapid improvements, it could harm your child's swimming career in the long run. Training longer and harder produces stress at his age. He could lose interest in the sport. This sometimes is hard to do when he is with swimmers that are mentally and physically more mature. Socially, he may become outcast because of his youth and the training may be more than his body is accustomed to. It is very easy for a swimmer to

lose interest in the sport when he is not enjoying himself. His self-image can deteriorate easily if not given the proper amount of attention.

It is also important to let a swimmer gradually learn and improve. If he starts swimming in the senior group at 10 years old, the program can become very stale for him by the time he reaches high school.

In our program, a swimmer will normally move into the senior group when he or she is 13 or 14 years old. I feel I can be more successful at helping the swimmers if:

1. The swimmer has a positive attitude and has the desire to come practice.
2. The swimmer has a good technical background on stroke techniques so that short reminders to him of his already formulated good habits is generally sufficient.
3. The swimmer knows how to generate speed over a short distance. At this point we can begin the training that will be required to maintain that speed for a longer distance.

Age group swimmers should be allowed to develop slowly and have fun. By training with swimmers his age, he will be able to interact with friends and develop close bonds with his peers. He can contribute to the team by being a role model and will create a strong self-image as well as being a good leader for his group.