

CHANGING TECHNIQUES

Amy daughter's Coach has been changing her strokes and now all of her times are slow. Does the coach know what he is talking about?"

Answered by: Mitch Ivy, a member of the 1984 Olympic Coaching Staff.

It is not unusual to experience slower swimming while adjusting to different stroke techniques. Often times, new stroke techniques feel awkward and uncomfortable to the swimmer. It is important for the parents to encourage and support their young swimmer when he or she is going through this period.

Often times the swimmer will become frustrated with his slower times and he will become discouraged. The parents need to reinforce the benefits and the positive effects that the stroke changes will bring. Once he adapts to the changes, he will be much better off in the long run. The coach's job is to make the transition as smooth as possible, "educating" the swim family along the way.

The importance of proper stroke technique cannot be stressed enough. Given two well-trained and physically comparable athletes, the race will ultimately be determined by technique and efficiency such as strokes, starts, and turns. Fundamental stroke work should be the base for all 10 and under swimmers. We (Concord Pleasant Hill Swim Team) introduce training formats to swimmers 11 years and older and do not apply full double workouts and/or strength training until roughly high school age, although this is dependent upon individual maturity, physically and mentally.

Stroke work is not a seasonal or a special day even! Instead, it is an everyday part of our program. A stroke error left unattended will eventually prohibit proper racing form, and can even lead to injury. I consider each workout a "stroke workout" and constant care and attention are demanded from swimmer and coach alike.

You might not see results right away, but the coach is trying to lay the groundwork for your swimmer to reach his/her fullest future potential in our great sport.

Also, be aware that as the age grouper matures, his strokes will change. As the swimmer develops physically and mentally, he becomes technically more polished. Expect changes. It is very rare for a swimmer to go through age group swimming and senior swimming with the "best" stroke. Trust the coach. Don't be afraid to ask questions of the coach so that you may have better understanding of his teaching methods.