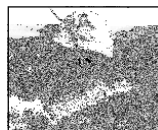


# Choose your event – before the event chooses you!!

By Wayne Goldsmith

- 100 fly?
- 200 back?
- 1500 free?
- 400 medley?
- 50 breast?



Which is the right event for you?

How do you know which stroke and distance is the best for you?

There are three golden rules to consider when you are making this decision:

1. Which event do you really love to swim?
2. Which event do you really love to swim?
3. Which event do you really love to swim?

It's not how fast?

It's .. **how well?**

Regardless of your **PHYSICAL** talent, successful swimmers are inevitably those who have a **MENTAL** and **EMOTIONAL** love of their favourite event and a real **PASSION** to succeed in that event.

To a large extent, most deficiencies you may have in physical talent can be overcome by training, commitment, determination and hard work.....and all of these things are driven by passion: **passion drives progress.**

And ..... if you happen to have physical talent and the passion to succeed, nothing can stop you!

How do you choose the right event?

1. **You are not your event – don't allow who you are to be defined by what you do.**

You are **not** a 100 flyer – you are a person who happens to swim 100 fly. There is a real danger – particularly for young swimmers – to associate themselves (who they are) with their best swimming event (what they do). The problem is that if your ability to swim that stroke well diminishes due to factors outside your control, e.g. injury, changes to your body through growth and development, ... you can start to feel low and lacking in confidence.

2. **Be prepared to change your event**

Chances are, you will not be swimming your current favorite event forever. 10 year olds can be freestylers this season, next season they will be breaststrokers, and the following year they may be better at backstroke or medley or freestyle again.

Accept that as your mind and body change, so too will your ability to swim certain events.

3. **Be prepared to change your preparation for your event – last year's program = last's year's times.**

There is no one way to prepare for any event that is guaranteed to work for all swimmers or all ages and all levels of competition.

As you get older, as you change, as you grow and mature, the optimal method for you to prepare for your event will change.

4. **Become a student of your event – learn about the past and present**

If you decide on an event, learn as much as you can about it. Read about the event, learn who are the current world record holders, who have been the Olympic champions, who holds the national and state records, what club did they belong to, what type of training did they do, who were their coaches, did they have any special physical or mental attributes that made them successful? Learn and understand everything there is to know about your event.

5. **Be a bit creative about the future of your event**

Once you know where the event is now, where it has been, you can start to think about where it might be in the future. The best swimmers and coaches are those who “dared to be different” and looked to move forward in a different direction to others.

Who says you can't negative split sprints? Who says you can't do strength training to improve endurance performance? Who says you can't rate slowly in backstroke and still win? There is always a new way, a different way and a better way of doing things.

Every time someone comes up with an "absolute rule" in swimming – some innovative, creative, hard working people break that rule and set new standards of performance.

**6. Try other events to improve your favourite event**

Some events can make a real impact on others. For example, the ability to kick fly kick powerfully and effectively underwater is a critical skill not only in fly, but also in freestyle and backstroke starts. Swimming backstroke can teach an early catch and deep pull position which may assist freestyle and butterfly performance.

**7. Don't be afraid to be a "multi eventer".**

Modern swimming is full of multi eventers – Coughlin, Phelps, Thorpe, De Bruin, Lenton.....all have experienced success at the highest level of swimming across several events. Multi eventers also enjoy the challenge of preparing physically, mentally, technically and tactically for different strokes and distances.

**8. Target "weak" events – one person's weakness is another person's opportunity.**

If you were looking to start a business in Detroit, you probably would not start your own car company: the competition is too great.

In swimming, you can adopt the same principle to identify an event which is not strong in your school, state or even nation.

Look for events where the state or national record may have stood for ten years. or, go out for "tough" events like distance freestyle, 400IM, 200 Fly and 200B/R where the depth of competition is not a great as the blue ribbon sprint events.

Sometimes this provides opportunity to achieve a breakthrough in your swimming career – perhaps your first title or first selection in a representative team and from there the opportunities are endless.

**9. Bored – bored –bored**

Let's face it. Going up and down the one lane is tough enough – going up and down the one lane AND doing it using predominantly one stroke is a bit boring. **Enjoy the experience of learning and mastering all strokes** to keep life interesting and who knows ..... you might surprise yourself with how much you improve in all events.

**10. Mind and body**

Remember that your mind is in the pool right along with your body! Choose an event that suits who you are as a person – physically AND mentally.

If you like solitude, long slow relaxed endurance sets and training by yourself, maybe your brain is telling you "let's go out for 800 free. If your brain likes to think "fast" and you have a need for speed to keep you happy, your brain could be whispering "50 Fly".

You can never be better than your best



**Swimming Faster**  
*Having developed and applied correct form*

**More force on the water, and/or Same force for longer**

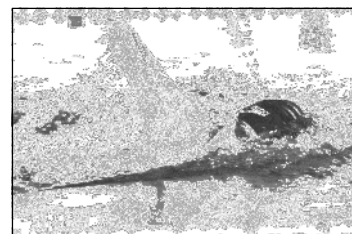
North West Athletics: [www.nwaswimaths.com](http://www.nwaswimaths.com)

**Junior Swimmers:** get as far as you can, on as little as you can .. *technique is everything.*  
 Training hard is easy .. the challenge is **training smart**  
 There is plenty of time train hard(er)

The **CHOOSE YOUR EVENT QUIZ** – three Steps to choosing the right stroke for you.

**STEP ONE: The stroke I really enjoy swimming is: (Circle one)**

Butterfly      Backstroke      Breaststroke      Freestyle      Medley



**STEP TWO: The distance I most enjoy racing is: (Circle one)**

50      100      200      400      800      1500

**STEP THREE: The type of training I most enjoy doing is (Circle one)**

Sprint / Speed Training      Sustained Speed Work – 50’s, 100’s and 200’s      Long distance

By working through these three questions, you can come up with an event that suits you mind and body.

Then look over the **EVENT SELECTION CHECK LIST** and find out what it takes to be successful in your special event.

Event Selection Check list

Event	Event Characteristics	Physical Factors	Mental Factors
50 Sprints	Short, fast, explosive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strength</li> <li>• Power</li> <li>• Explosiveness</li> <li>• Speed</li> <li>• Flexibility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to stay relaxed at high speed / maximum effort</li> <li>• Ability to think “fast”, ie brain capable of triggering explosive efforts.</li> </ul>
100 – 200 Metre events	Sustained speed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speed</li> <li>• Power</li> <li>• Aerobic capacity</li> <li>• Lactate management potential</li> <li>• Flexibility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to stay relaxed at high speed / maximum effort</li> <li>• Ability to deal with high levels of pain</li> <li>• Ability to think “fast”, ie brain capable of triggering explosive efforts.</li> </ul>
Middle Distance Freestyle	Sustained near maximal speed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speed</li> <li>• Aerobic capacity</li> <li>• Lactate management potential</li> <li>• Flexibility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to relax</li> <li>• Ability to manage sustained fatigue, pain and pressure</li> <li>• Mental toughness and emotional control</li> </ul>
Long Distance	Sustained rhythm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aerobic capacity</li> <li>• Sense of rhythm</li> <li>• Co-ordination</li> <li>• Flexibility</li> <li>• Balance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to relax</li> <li>• Ability to manage sustained fatigue, pain and pressure</li> <li>• Ability to “feel” rhythm</li> <li>• Mental toughness and emotional control</li> </ul>
Medley	50 / 100 of each stroke in the sequence Fly / Back / Breast / Free	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strength</li> <li>• Aerobic capacity</li> <li>• Balance</li> <li>• Co-ordination</li> <li>• Flexibility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to relax</li> <li>• Ability to switch rhythm and pace</li> <li>• Mental toughness and emotional control</li> </ul>

So which event is right for you ..... it’s up to you. Choose an event you enjoy doing, then work hard to become the best you can be at doing it!

**Wayne Goldsmith**