

SAMPLE



SWIMMING

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About the card sort

- The cards describe competencies, behaviours and qualities of swimming.
- The sort should be completed in a conversation with a coach, parent or mentor.
- The cards should be used to identify competencies to grow into super strengths or areas to work on.
- On the back of the cards are ideas for actions to support development planning.
- Use the cards at the beginning and end of the season, and following key milestones.

Categories of generic competencies include:

- mental skills
- self
- athlete life
- health
- physical
- technical skills
- tactics

Turn over to see the full list of competencies.

Mental Skills	Self	Athlete Life	Health	Physical	Technical Skills	Tactics
Performance Focus	Team Values and Culture	Managing Time and Energy	Health	Body Awareness	Start	Strategy and Pacing
Resilience	Leadership	Circle of Support	Women's Health	Motor Control	Underwater Phase	
Motivation and Passion	Communication	Financial Skills, Facilities and Equip.	Robustness	Strength and Power	Breakout	
Self-Belief and Confidence	Programme Ownership	Future, Change, and Career Planning	Injury Recovery	Mobility and Flexibility	Stroke Technique for Breaststroke	
Performance Preparation	Drive and Ambition	Relationships	Mental Health and Wellbeing	Speed	Stroke Technique for Backstroke	
Performance Review	Competitiveness	Sponsorship and Athlete Brand	Sleep	Speed Endurance	Stroke Technique for Freestyle	
Practicing Pressure	Identity, Purpose and Self-Awareness		Nutrition	Recovery	Stroke Technique for Butterfly	
Mastery	Work Ethic			Aerobic Fitness	Turns	
Deep Practice	Continuous Growth				Relay Change Overs	
Composure					Medleys	
					Finishing	

2

How to use the cards

ATHLETE

1

SORT FOR STRENGTHS

Sort the cards into roughly three even piles with the following black cards forming the top of each set:

- high/strength
- middle/average
- low/work-on; and
- not applicable.

Sort based on your highest level of competition.

2

EXPLAIN/RECORD

Explain reasons for placement, focusing on strengths and areas to work on. Take a photo or fill in the worksheets to record placement to refer back to on review.

3

PRIORITISE

Once completed, pick up the cards sorted as areas to work on. You may also wish to select some strengths to include in your development plan that could become super strengths. Flip over the header cards and sort again for priorities for the next season or training block using the black cards (high, medium, low). Aim to narrow down to not more than two development priorities per category.

Once you have identified your priorities, turn over the cards. The back of the cards have development planning ideas.

Please Turn Over

2

How to use the cards

COACH/ MENTOR

1

INTRODUCTION

Explain the purpose of the process.

Explain the process (see website for more detail) and discuss confidentiality.

Check for comfort and questions.

2

GUIDE

Guide the process.

Question, clarify and summarise to help the athlete identify the critical priorities.

Listen with an open mind, avoid making judgements.

3

PLAN

Record placement of cards with notes. Select priorities emerging from the second sort and identify development actions (see ideas on the back of cards) in collaboration with the athlete.

TIP: You can complete a separate card sort for comparative discussion.

STRENGTH



COMPETENCIES ASSESSED AS A STRENGTH AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL
OF COMPETITION, IN RELATION TO OTHER COMPETENCIES

HIGH PRIORITY



COMPETENCIES ASSESSED AS A HIGH PRIORITY FOR
THE NEXT COMPETITION AND TRAINING BLOCK

MIDDLE/AVERAGE



COMPETENCIES ASSESSED AS MIDDLE AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL
OF COMPETITION, IN RELATION TO OTHER COMPETENCIES

MEDIUM PRIORITY



COMPETENCIES ASSESSED AS A MEDIUM PRIORITY FOR
THE NEXT COMPETITION AND TRAINING BLOCK

WORK-ON



COMPETENCIES ASSESSED AS AN AREA TO WORK-ON AT THE HIGHEST
LEVEL OF COMPETITION, IN RELATION TO OTHER COMPETENCIES

LOW PRIORITY



COMPETENCIES ASSESSED AS A LOW PRIORITY FOR
THE NEXT COMPETITION AND TRAINING BLOCK

NOT APPLICABLE



THESE ARE EITHER NOT APPLICABLE OR TO BE SORTED AT A LATER DATE



MENTAL SKILLS[©]

— SORT CARDS —



Performance Focus

- I am able to maintain my focus on doing what I need to do, regardless of the level of competition.
- In adversity, under pressure or following unexpected events, I will:
 - Acknowledge my thoughts and feelings in the moment.
 - Use strategies to actively manage my emotions and reactions (e.g., self-talk, imagery, affirmations).
 - Focus on the process, not the outcome.
 - Continue to communicate (through words and actions) positively and effectively.
 - Maintain my confidence.
 - Make rational decisions.

Developing Performance Focus

Experiment with ways to stay calm, manage focus and eliminate distractions

Feeling stressed or anxious affects your focus. Set up situations in training where you could get distracted (e.g., under fatigue, situational pressure).

In these situations, practice different strategies to stay present, e.g., breathing control, imagery or visualisation, cue or focus words, and/or thought dumping/stopping.

Reflect on the consequences

Discuss with someone (a mentor or coach) what the outcomes and impacts of losing your composure are. Discuss high profile examples.

Identify your triggers

Consider what triggers you away from focusing on the present. Build a plan to manage these, testing out how quickly you can refocus.

Key moment planning

Focus is having less in your mind. Use a journal to identify and plan your focus for key moments that may arise. Quiz the consistent performers in swimming on their strategies. Evaluate your focus at training as well.

Focus on what you can control

Draw a circle. Inside the circle write down everything about your performance that is within your control. Next, write down everything that is outside of your control outside of the circle. Observe and review how much time you spend thinking and worrying about things outside of your control.

Become actively aware

Keep a journal/daily training diary in which you rate yourself every time you train or play. Simple daily evaluations are critical to improving your focus because you are building a habit of being consciously aware.



Composure

- Cool under pressure.
- Does not become defensive or irritated when times are tough.
- Can be counted on to hold things together during tough times.
- Can handle stress.
- Is not knocked off balance by the unexpected.
- Doesn't show frustration when resisted or blocked.
- Continues to communicate positively and effectively under pressure.
- Maintains confidence.

Developing Composure

Reflect on the consequences

Discuss with someone (a mentor or coach) the outcomes and impacts of losing your composure. Discuss high profile examples.

Experiment with ways to stay calm, manage focus and eliminate distractions

Feeling stressed or anxious affects your focus. Ask other athletes what they do to manage their mood and focus and stay calm in high-pressure situations. Experiment with different strategies, e.g., breathing control, routines, music, mental imagery or visualisation, cue or focus words, perceptual positioning (NLP) and/or thought dumping/thought stopping.

'Key moment' planning

Performance preparation is key to maintaining composure (*see performance preparation card*).

Write down key moments that might arise and plan what you need to focus on at this time. Assess key moments where you have been super composed or times you have lacked composure, and reflect on what you were thinking. Discuss these moments and the outcomes with a training partner or coach.

'What if' planning

Brainstorm some 'what if' scenarios with a mentor or coach and plan what reaction(s) you will have to each scenario so that you have pre-planned your responses.

Focus on what you can control

Draw a circle. Inside the circle write down everything about your performance that is within your control/sphere of influence (e.g., your actions and attitudes). Next, write down everything that is outside of your control, outside of the circle. Observe and review how much time you spend thinking about and worrying about things on the outside. Practice focus activities.

Also, see performance focus card.



SELF Raise My Game[®]

— SORT CARDS —



Team Values and Culture

- Aware of self and impact on others.
- Is a guardian (has kaitiaki) of team values (during both good times and bad times) and encourages others to do the same.
- Is widely trusted. Contributes to team feedback and is seen as a direct, truthful and humble individual.
- Respects and trusts the coaches/leaders, and shows confidence in others.
- Understands role in the team, is selfless, and willing to support the development of others.
- Doesn't misrepresent him/herself for personal gain.
- Can quickly sense what will help or hinder the team.
- Can see the bigger picture (i.e., not just where I am headed, but also where I come from).
- Has considered the whakapapa of the group (i.e., the story of the group, land, or water that we perform on).

Developing Team Values and Culture

Understanding our culture

- Has your team discussed how they are seen from the outside, and how they want to be seen?
- Has your team discussed what moments or events have created those perceptions and how you might go about changing them?
- Is everyone absolutely clear on what behaviours are expected within the 'desired' culture and which are not?
- Have you discussed scenarios and what you would be expected to do?
- Have you discussed consequences of falling short of expectations with the team?

- Does your team integrate team values into review and reflection of team performance? e.g., if courage is a team value, do the team use courage as a way to reflect on performances, or look for moments of courage on the field.

Supporting the leaders

What feedback loops have been set up? How does the coach best receive your feedback? Discuss your ideas and observations with your coach, and work together to build the culture you desire. If you are a junior member of the group speak to someone you trust, who has the influence to take action.

Reflecting on the past

Reflect on the times when you have known a behaviour was outside of what is expected. Reflect on what action you took and what your motivations were. Reflect on any barriers to taking action and how you would approach the situation in hindsight.

Knowing why it's important

Have you drawn a clear line of sight between the impacts/consequences of not respecting team agreements and the success of individuals within the group?

Using humble enquiry

If you see or hear something that doesn't sit right, try asking a humble question to check others' perceptions.



Leadership

- A role-model in all things within the team/group, sport and community.
- Supports other individuals, especially young athletes to perform at a higher level.
- Communicates well, inspires through actions and words.
- Supports the coach(es) to build a team/group culture and vision; encouraging commitment to any team goals.
- Is a guardian of team values and contributes to team spirit.
- Is committed to what needs to be done.

Developing Leadership

Self-leadership

First and foremost, you are a leader of self. You have a responsibility to lead through your actions. Ask others how they perceive you and reflect on whether you are a role model to others. Are you committed and dedicated? Do you use initiative? Do you consistently demand excellence of yourself and others?

Is leadership for you?

Do you see yourself as a leader? Just because you are a senior athlete, this doesn't mean that you have to take on a leadership role.

Be conscious of your influence on others

If you are respected by others, you are a leader whether you are formally called a leader or not. Is your influence on others positive? Do you openly support the other leaders in the group, the coaches and management? Do you hold yourself accountable to the team/group/club's standards?

Building connections

Build knowledge of others to form a deeper connection to them outside of sport. Seek to understand what they bring into the environment and where they come from. Think about how you are cultivating their sense of belonging and connectedness. Show you care.

First steps

Talk with your coach about what opportunities there might be for you to take a leadership role. Start with small leadership responsibilities.

Find role models

Identify some leaders that you know and respect. Research them or ask to meet with them to find out about their experiences as a leader.

Encourage others to lead

Good leaders delegate and create space for others to show leadership too (sometimes all others need to show leadership is an invitation).



ATHLETE LIFE

SORT CARDS



Managing Time and Energy

- Concentrates on the most important priorities.
- Has structure within each day.
- Manages device/screen time.
- Uses a diary and/or calendar.
- Uses down time wisely to recharge my energy.
- Knows that priorities change at different times.
- Life is mostly stable and well balanced.
- Has friends and interests outside of sport that allow some variety, challenge and stimulation.
- Is OK with things outside of control.

Managing my Time and Energy

Noticing when things are out of balance

When things get out of balance, you may start to feel stressed or anxious. Do you know what behaviours others would see that reflect a healthy or unhealthy balance?

Reflect on your life balance weekly, and if you notice a series of low scores or downward trend over weeks, talk to someone trusted in your inner circle of support about what changes are needed.

Plan your down time

Look at your schedule, and plan when you have spare time that you could use. Think about how best you can use this time to refresh mentally and physically.

Set aside time to plan

Set aside time on a Sunday night to plan your week and then take 10 mins each morning to plan your priorities for the day.

Examine how you spend your time

Is your life one-dimensional? Do you spend all of your time on swimming and only hang out with people related to swimming? Having another way to engage the brain, e.g., study, a job or interest, can help you stay fresh, continue to enjoy swimming, work towards a career after you retire, and provide perspective.

Device time

Set limits for your device time and avoid screen time in the 30mins before sleep.

Planning in and using breaks effectively

Look at whether you can plan a complete break in your annual programme. Use this time wisely to refresh; e.g., try something new, do something outside your comfort zone, meet new people. TIP: keep your fitness up during your break through cross training.

Managing priorities

Write a list of everything you have to do in priority order. Look down your list and draw a line between the things you 'have to do' and the things that you can delete, defer, or delegate. Now set about 'managing' the things below the line to move them off your short term 'to-do' list.



Sponsorship and Athlete Brand

- Pro-actively creates visibility/profile as a role model through contributing back to sport and community.
- Regularly shares information and images on social media thoughtfully, receiving positive responses.
- Has built a positive personal brand that is a genuine reflection of beliefs, values and what I stand for.
- Actions reflect positively on sport.
- Can form and maintain relationships with sponsors with mutual value to both parties.
- Has support in place to deal with any potential negative public reactions.
- Prepares key messages, practices and seeks feedback from trusted advisors for any media appearances.

Managing Sponsorship and Athlete Brand

Importance of brand

Sponsors want to align with athletes that will reflect positively on their brand. Reflect on how you are seen in the eyes of the public and develop a plan to generate positive visibility of you as a role-model.

Sponsorship

When forming a partnership with a sponsor, make sure their values align with your values. Think about how you can add value to their business as a brand ambassador.

Media training

Team up with a mentor or someone in your circle of support to develop and practice key messages in preparation for media interviews. Analyse yourself and ask for feedback. Identify the 'worst case scenarios' and prepare responses for these situations.

Research

Identify some high profile athletes that have a positive public profile. Scroll through their social media posts and media coverage and think about how their personal brand has been built.

Crisis management

In the event of a crisis, make sure you have someone in your circle of support that can coach you in public relations, and someone that can provide emotional support.

Also, see mental skills card.



HEALTH

SORT CARDS



Health

- Is consistently able to turn up to training and competitions healthy and ready to go (no ongoing sickness or health challenges).
- Has self-care routines to maintain health.
- Will proactively see the GP with any health concerns.
- Has a positive body image and healthy eating habits.
- Is able to manage health during travel, including adjusting to time zones and new sleep routines.
- Is able to train and compete at altitude and in heat within normal adaption expectations.
- No addictions (i.e., drugs, alcohol, gambling).

Tips for Good Health

General health, body image, addictions or mental health

If you have concerns, talk to someone in your trusted circle to support you to seek help from a GP, counsellor, or clinical psychologist.

Sleep

If you are struggling with sleep, look at your sleep habits:

- Does your bedroom environment promote consistent, uninterrupted sleep?
- Do you have a stable sleep schedule?
- Is your bedroom comfortable and free of disruptions?
- Do you follow a relaxing pre-bed routine?
- Do you have healthy daily routines and habits that contribute to supporting your sleep?
- Do you know how much sleep you need?

Seek professional help if you are struggling with getting the right amount or quality of sleep.

Build your knowledge

Identify someone in your circle of support that will have access to research and specialist knowledge on athlete-specific approaches to subjects such as travel, altitude, and heat.

Also, see women's health, sleep and nutrition cards.



Women's Health

- Understands the importance of menstrual cycles and the role hormones play in recovery, bone, and overall health.
- Is knowledgeable about menstruation and what is normal.
- Knows when to ask for help in relation to pain, bleeding, or other menstruation symptoms. Feels confident to be able to manage symptoms well.
- Can identify the key markers for menstrual health and knows who to contact if she notices any problems.
- Understands that contraception is a choice and is well-informed about the full range of choices available. Knows where to seek help, and has the information and support to make contraception decisions.
- Is aware of common female health issues such as premenstrual syndrome, dysmenorrhea (very painful menstruation), menorrhagia (very frequent or heavy menstruation, amenorrhea (not starting periods until after age 16 or missing more than three periods in a swim), endometriosis, and polycystic ovarian syndrome.
- Has positive support from coach/sport to talk about and manage women's health issues.

Tips for Women's Health

See your GP

Ask your GP or sports doctor for information on women's health issues related to sport. Did you know that endometriosis and polycystic ovarian syndrome affect around 10% of all women? Recent research has highlighted the prevalence of girl's and women's health concerns but also that they are under-recognised and under-reported. This means they are diagnosed late and the side effects and outcomes made worse. Don't put up with any negative symptoms which impact what you choose to do or how well you perform. Ask and seek support and help.

Support from your coach/sport

If you have concerns about managing women's health issues in relation to performance or training expectations, identify someone within swimming or circle of support that can help you to get understanding and alignment with your health needs.

Managing your whole health is key to menstrual health

Wellbeing is a balance of social, emotional, physical and mental health and together they are key to your performance as an athlete. Your menstrual cycle is sensitive to imbalances in your health. Keeping a 'balance' is critical to your cycle and hormones.

Improve your menstrual health knowledge

Did you know that menstrual cycle hormones can affect metabolism, bone density, hydration, immune response, pain tolerance, body temperature, weight, muscle recovery, injury risk, mental health and many other aspects of health and performance? Get informed, and regain choice and power over your body.

Check out:

- HPSNZ website, WHISPA.
- Sport NZ balanced female health handbook and infographic, sportnz.org.nz/balanced-female-health.
- Australian Institute of Sport, female performance initiative.



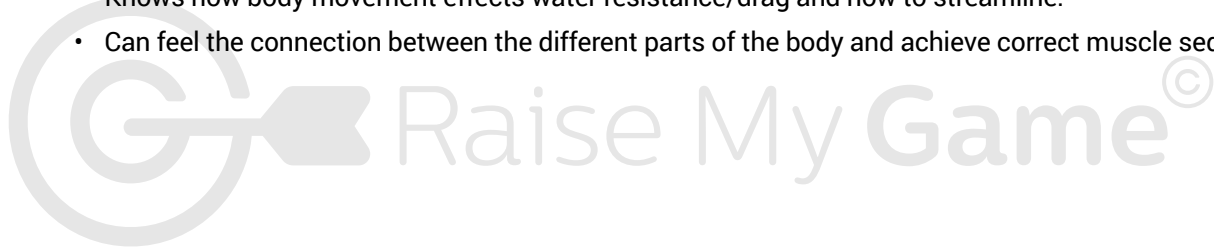
PHYSICAL SKILLS[©]

— SORT CARDS —



Body Awareness

- Has good body awareness, i.e., knows where body is and how it moves in the water.
- Knows how body movement effects water resistance/drag and how to streamline.
- Can feel the connection between the different parts of the body and achieve correct muscle sequencing.



Developing Body Awareness

Technique drills

Start with body awareness drills on land and then progress into the water. Use video, self-analysis, peer, or coach analysis to identify areas for improvement. Drills should isolate parts of the stroke to work on, before bringing it all together.

Body awareness in the gym

Find your balance while sitting on a physio ball with feet off the floor.

X-training

Other sports like gymnastics or calisthenics will assist with developing body awareness.





Motor Control

- Is able to control movements (including the finer movements of a stroke), with excellent sequencing/timing.
- Excellent swimming technique is an ingrained/automatic and 'permanent' motor control pattern.
- Can sense when losing shape and/or timing and is able to identify which parts of the stroke need to be practiced and refined.
- Motor patterns are maintained under fatigue or distraction.

Developing Motor Control

Breaking it down

Break down the swimming stroke, and go through the movements using video, peer, or coach feedback to review your co-ordination and timing. Review whether you are able to maintain consistent motor control under fatigue or distraction and identify any adjustments needed

Developing your stroke rate

Set up drills so that you can intuitively achieve targets for the no. of stroke cycles per minute.

Adjusting for turns and finishing

Practice adjusting stroke length 4–10 metres out from the wall. Analyse your success at maximising the speed and power of your lunge/approach into the wall.

Repetition of technique drills

Plan your training week, adding in technique drills to work on different parts of your stroke.

Game[©]



TECHNICAL SKILLS[®]

— SORT CARDS —



Start

- Has a clear understanding of most effective set-up for your body.
- Has a consistent set-up on the blocks.
- Has a powerful and streamlined start off the blocks.
- Has quick reaction times, rarely false starts.
- Has an explosive push off.
- Has an efficient streamlined entry into the water.

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Developing Start

Video analysis

Use video to analyse and refine. Watch footage in slow motion from different angles (underwater, end on, above), or freeze frames, and compare yourself to the best in the world. Make notes on what you learnt and think about what learnings and actions you need to take into your growth plan and training sessions.

Coach feedback

Ask your coach for feedback following sets in training and after races.

Peer feedback

Ask one of your swim squad to analyse your starts, this may include video analysis or watching underwater.

Start drills

Break down elements of the start (e.g., 1 legged, cactus) and complete start drills as part of each session or in a specific session each week.

Developing explosive power

Work with a strength and conditioning specialist to include dynamic exercises that develop explosive leg power (e.g., cleans, box jumps, plyometrics, medicine ball work).

Also, see strength and power card.

Developing flexibility

Include stretching in your daily routine. Once you are warmed up use dynamic stretching prior to your competition, and static stretching after a competition. Target areas of your body that most need it. Make sure the muscle overload is progressive.

Repetitions

Increase the number of start repetitions you are completing each week.



Stroke Technique for Breaststroke

- Pull phase consistently creates height and power.
- Kick consistently creates powerful propulsion.
- The kick originates from the hips and doesn't break streamlining (i.e., doesn't go too far outside of the body line).
- Can utilise and understand the glide phase of the stroke, appropriate for the distance of the race.
- The underwater pullout is legal and creates maximal speed and distance, appropriate for the race (i.e., no second fly kick or undulations).
- Coordinates the pull and kick phase to create maximum propulsion through the water in the glide phase.

Developing Breaststroke Technique

Video analysis

Use video to analyse and refine. Watch footage in slow motion from different angles (underwater, end on, above), or freeze frames, and compare yourself to the best in the world. Make notes on what you learnt and think about what learnings and actions you need to take into your growth plan and training sessions.

Coach feedback

Ask your coach for feedback following sets in training and after races.

Peer feedback

Ask one of your swim squad to analyse your breaststroke technique, this may include video analysis, watching underwater.

Breaststroke drills

Break down elements of the technique (i.e., pull phase, kick, glide phase, timing of underwater pullout) and complete drills specific to the area you need to work on as part of each session or in a specific session each week.

Understanding stroke rate

Analyse and work on controlling your stroke rate (i.e., no. stroke cycles per minute).

Stroke count work

Work on lowering the number of strokes per lap, whilst retaining speed and flow of the stroke.

Training speed

Swim at race pace, or faster than race pace, to increase maximum speed, and increase comfort to hold the length of stroke and maintain skill details at a faster pace.

Strength and conditioning

Work with a strength and conditioning specialist, with a focus on strengthening the chest, quads, groin and adductors.

Also, see strength and power card.



Stroke Technique for Backstroke

- Can sit high in the water, and keep head and body horizontal, to reduce drag/water resistance.
- Has controlled rotation to retain balance, and maximise power in pull, but maintain low drag resistance.
- Has a continuous arm motion that is well timed and co-ordinated, maximising power.
- Rhythm and timing maintains connection through the hips and core.
- Kick creates propulsion and helps stabilise the body.
- Kick rhythm is co-ordinated with arm motion.
- The kick originates from the hips and doesn't break streamlining (i.e., doesn't go too far outside of the body line).
- Breathing is regular and controlled in parallel with stroke timing.
- Has strong bodyline and head stability.



TACTICS

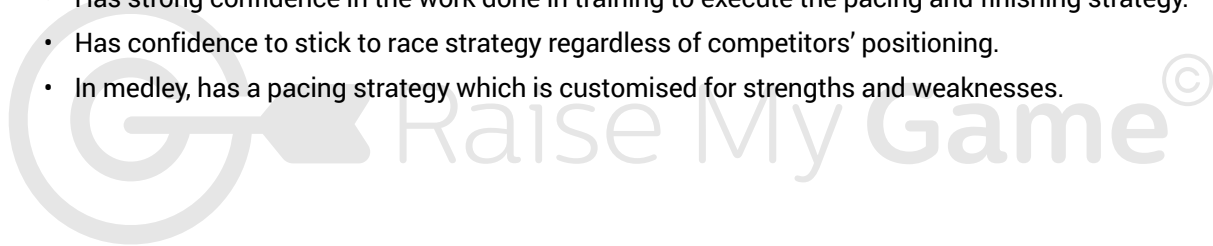
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— SORT CARDS —



Strategy and Pacing

- Understands race strategy and pacing.
- Has strong confidence in the work done in training to execute the pacing and finishing strategy.
- Has confidence to stick to race strategy regardless of competitors' positioning.
- In medley, has a pacing strategy which is customised for strengths and weaknesses.



Developing Strategy and Pacing

Split time analysis

Analyse your split times in training and in races relative to your strategy for your event.

Negative split training

Practice negative split training (i.e., coming back faster in the second half of the split distance). Complete your negative splits at race pace.

Training for endurance events

Complete interval training using the pace clock (especially 400, 800 and 1500 swimmers).

Train at race pace

During training sets, work on your ability to hit race pace regularly. If your times are sub-race pace, reflect on your proficiency, mental preparation, intensity, and recovery between sets, and training sessions.

Scouting

Complete scouting so that you know your opposition for each race and their likely race strategy. Stay confident to stick to your race strategy, especially when a competitor goes out strong early.

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