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# SMARTER SWIMMING....by Emmett Hines

Adapted from my response to a question in the [www.H2OustonSwims.org](http://www.H2OustonSwims.org) discussion forum about the relationship between distance per stroke and stroke tempo.

You likely have a range of stroke counts (number of strokes per length of the pool, or SPL) which you can execute in a smooth swimming rhythm, with either a two-beat or six-beat kick, without reverting to drilling. You likely also work to expand that range, seeking to increase distance per stroke (DPS) in order to be able to complete a length in fewer strokes.

But if speed is an issue, DPS is only half of the equation. The other half is tempo (how often you take a stroke). Speed equals DPS x tempo. Most swimmers tend to use one tempo for each of the stroke counts in their range. But really good swimmers develop a range of tempos for each of the stroke counts they use in training and competition. For each different stroke count they work on developing the skill of executing it at faster and faster tempos.

Striving for ever lower stroke counts is about learning, refining and ingraining proper posture, motion and timing skills. These skills can then be incorporated at higher stroke counts and at faster tempos. If you learn a new skill that makes a stroke more propulsive (say, learning a high-elbow catch) and helps to take your lowest achievable stroke count from, say, 13 to 12 SPL at a slow tempo, chances are that same skill will be more propulsive and serve you well at, say, 17 SPL at a faster tempo.

There are a few key things to remember about the relationship of DPS and tempo:

- Your lowest stroke count will only be available to you at a single, slow tempo (i.e. you can competently and confidently repeat the skill at that tempo only).
- At every higher stroke count there is a range of tempos that are possible for you.
- The further you get from your lowest stroke count, the wider that range of possible tempos is (like a wake expanding behind a moving boat).
- Every time you learn new or refine existing skills that help you establish a new lowest stroke count, the possible tempo ranges at each of your higher stroke counts expands.
- That these tempos are possible, however, doesn't mean they are immediately available for your use. For each stroke count you use, you must develop the tempo range for it to be truly available to you when needed.



And that's where a minutely adjustable metronome/beeper worn under your cap or goggle strap can be invaluable (one such is the Tempo Trainer from Finis [www.finisinc.com](http://www.finisinc.com)). Matching your stroke to small, precise increases of beeper tempo (while you focus on maintaining DPS) allows

you to increase stroke tempo in smaller increments than you can discern on your own. Such "baby steps" are important because a discernable tempo increase is generally too large a step to take when you are exploring the outer edge of your tempo range at any given stroke count – large enough to cause stroke execution to deteriorate (resulting in less DPS and more SPL). Regular use of a beeper will shorten and flatten your learning path to higher stroke tempos without adding strokes – and thus, faster speeds.

*Emmett Hines, Director and Head Coach of H2Ouston Swims, has been coaching competitive adult swimming in Houston since 1981. The second edition of his popular book "Fitness Swimming," has just been released and can be ordered through [www.H2OustonSwims.org](http://www.H2OustonSwims.org). Reach Coach Hines for questions or comments at (713) 748-SWIM or [emmett@usms.org](mailto:emmett@usms.org).*

if you have questions, please contact Look Cycle USA at (866) 430-5665 x4 or [keoup-grade@lookcycle-usa.com](mailto:keoup-grade@lookcycle-usa.com).

## ITU ANNOUNCES NEW TRIATHLON WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES

Less than 24 hours after the completion of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games triathlon, the International Triathlon Union announced an innovative new platform for the sport by establishing a pioneering new series that will take triathlon to new heights.

"This is a great step forward for triathlon and it is exciting for triathlon to be moving in this direction," said recent gold medalist Emma Snowsill of Australia. "For us athletes, this is phenomenal. The benefit of live TV is it creates a proper season. People will know when to watch and when to tune into triathlon."

The new format will consist of six World Championship events plus a Grand Final every year, extending the current single

World Championships event into a series. A major feature is the world's best athletes will now consistently race head-to-head. World class venues in internationally renowned cities will be selected to host each World Championship event with guaranteed live international high-definition television offered.

"This is fantastic for triathlon," added Germany's newly crowned Olympic champion Jan Frodeno. "It is similar to F1 racing where the top athletes are battling head-to-head. Using the Hamburg (World Cup) model is ideal as having 100,000 spectators and TV makes it easier for us to market ourselves and as it snowballs the top athletes will want to come."

For the first three years, the events program will be scheduled on a monthly basis from March to September. In an Olympic year, the Grand Final will move to October or November. This provides the athletes, coaches, national federations, sponsors and television broadcasters with a well-planned

stable schedule of high quality events.

"This new series will provide our athletes with a stage to showcase triathlon to the world," said ITU executive director Loreen Barnett. "With the success of the Beijing

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