

Being mindful of these best-fit list suggestions can keep your pursuit of collegiate swimming on track.

The process of assembling a best-fit list of schools is crucial for a prospective student-athlete who aspires to swim collegiately. Developing a list of colleges and universities that matches academic and swimming credentials, as well as other selection criteria, establishes the roadmap for finding collegiate swimming opportunities. However, if a swimmer's list directs him/her toward the wrong schools, he/ she can potentially miss an opportunity because of this incorrect judgment.

So what makes an incorrect best-fit list of schools? With access to school websites, as well as useful online tools like the [NCAA](#) and [SwimSwam](#), families have a lot of helpful information available to put together a proper list. And yet something is still getting in the way. In my work with age group swimming families, I often find they tend to overlook a variety of key points while attempting to assemble their best-fit list. To make sure your list is on track, be mindful of the following suggestions:

- **Assess talent level accurately and establish realistic expectations.** Overestimating a young swimmer's capabilities, academic ability, and the improvement that can be achieved during the recruiting process can all result in the pursuit of too many "reach" programs. Consequently, more appropriate college swimming opportunities may be missed as precious time is lost focusing on unrealistic options.
- **Coaches recruit contributors.** College swim coaches are interested in signing athletes who can contribute as college freshman. Coaches are looking for swimmers to fill the void left behind from graduating athletes. They are also searching for individuals who would contribute on relays (the more relays the better!). This dynamic in the recruiting marketplace emphasizes the need for age group swimmers to build a list of schools with a strong core of programs that match their swimming abilities.
- **The "Academics and Swimming- Fit" component is crucial.** You should attempt to find programs where you can race competitively as a freshman and achieve your academic goals simultaneously. Focusing on the academic-athletic objective as you select schools will accelerate your personal development, both in and out of the pool.
- **Age Group Swimming does not equal Collegiate Swimming.** To more effectively pinpoint reasonable "target" schools from a swimming standpoint, seek swim programs where your best times from tapered competitions and in-season races fall within the times of the college travel rosters. This is a great principle to start your selection of teams that align with your swimming abilities.
- **Maintain an open mind.** The college landscape is full of quality schools (Divisions I, II, III, NAIA, and NJCAA) that offer great coaching, facilities, academics, and campus settings. Some of these schools may be lesser known, but they can offer great environments for academic and athletic achievement. Do not write a school off if you have never heard of it; it could be a really great fit academically and athletically!
- **Your best-fit list may differ from your friends' lists.** Each age group has unique talents, abilities, interests, and preferences. As a result, your school selections (and recruiting plan) will likely be different than those of your peers. This is normal! Sticking to the school list and plan that is best suited for your wants, needs, and abilities (academic and athletic) will maximize the effectiveness of your recruiting efforts.

Admittedly, the task of creating a best-fit list of schools can be difficult when facing such a large pool of college options. Taking a realistic and informed approach in selecting schools that are true matches will position you for a much more streamlined recruiting process. I feel confident the insights I share can be instrumental in creating the best-fit list of schools for you. If you need assistance in the process please visit my website, www.streamline-swimming.com, for more information.

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