

How to Pace a Mid-distance Freestyle Event



Pacing for a mid-distance event can be one of the hardest parts of the race. It can feel awkward: You can't quite sprint it, yet you can't really treat it as an endurance event either. It's somewhere in-between. This guide is filled with great suggestions to help with pace a mid-

distance event.

What Events are Mid-distance

The 400m freestyle, the 200m freestyle, the 200y freestyle, the 500y freestyle are all considered mid-distance events. Although some other events are considered mid-distance, these are the core events for this category. As a rule: All events below 200 yards (yds) are considered sprints, while anything above 500 is considered a distance event.

Different for Everyone

Everyone swims slightly differently. This makes sense! Think about it: Swimmers are not all built the same. Some people will be able to start the race fast, and hold onto that pace. Others will get exhausted quickly, and start to slow down. Find out what type of swimmer you are by testing different pacing techniques.

Common Pacing Methods

There are a few common ways to pace a mid-distance event. Listed in order of popularity, here are some methods to try for your next race:

Negative Split

The most common way to swim a mid-distance event is to start off at a solid pace, and build up to a faster speed throughout the race. [Negative split](#) pacing saves your energy just enough to leave you with a quick burst of speed near the end of the race.

Hot Tip: Get Your Splits

When figuring out correct pacing, you'll need to know your [split](#). Have someone time you and get your split at each 50, so that you know if you're actually gaining or decreasing speed.

When you dive in for the race, it's hard to hold back. You have a ton of adrenaline running through your body. The last thing you want to do is restrain yourself. Still, holding back *is* important. It's common for mid-distance rookies start out the race by sprinting. If you do this, you'll have no energy halfway through the race. All of your energy will have been depleted in the beginning.

Make sure you don't start off the race too slow, either. You want to hold back just enough to reserve some energy for the end of the race. If you get out of the pool at the end of the race and you don't feel completely exhausted: You back too much.

Think about your speed as a percentage. Sprinting as fast as you can is swimming at 100 percent. Using this scale, you should start the race at about 80 percent. If you're swimming the 200y freestyle, swim the first 50 yds at about this pace. After 50 yds, build your speed to 90 percent. Hold that speed for the next

100 yds. When you get to the last 50, you should go all out and sprint at 100 percent. Give that last 50 yds everything you've got.

Stay Consistent

Hot Tip: Practice before the Meet

Don't wait until the race-day to test out different pacing methods! Make sure you practice these strategies *before* race-day. Otherwise, you will be setting yourself up for disaster when it comes time for the actual race.

Some swimmers perform better by maintaining their speed. If you have trouble building your speed, this is good way to pace the event. As you dive in, try to hold back a little bit. Try to pace your swim at about 90 percent for the entire race. If you have enough energy left as you reach the last 50 yds, give one last final push of 100 percent effort.

Make sure that you don't slow down on your last 50 yds, though. If your split on your last 50 is slower than your others, this pacing method is not for you.

Go out Strong

Some swimmers *feel* like they build throughout their race. However, when they talk to their coaches and get their splits, they discover they actually split slower. If you feel that you simply cannot build throughout a mid-distance race, try a new strategy.

Start out the race as fast as you can, and try to hold onto that speed. You can surprise yourself. You might even discover that you can maintain your speed enough to get a lead, and hold onto it for the rest of the race.

Keep in mind that this strategy is a bit risky. You can end up exhausting yourself to the point that you don't know if you'll be able to finish the race. This type of pacing does not work for most swimmers. Make sure you test it out!

Try Them All

Before your meet, spend some time in the pool to test your pacing. Have a teammate or coach time you while practicing each of these strategies. This way, you'll learn which method is best for you. With some practice, you'll know exactly which pacing method to use!