

When to Make Your Intervals Longer in Masters Swimming

1. When You Can't Maintain the Target Pace With Good Form

If your **stroke mechanics break down** (shorter strokes, rushed breathing, sloppy turns) or you're finishing sets **more than 2–3 seconds over your interval**, it's time to **lengthen the rest or interval** slightly.

- For example, if you normally hold **1:10/50** but start coming in at **1:13–1:15**, add **5–10 seconds** to the interval until you regain rhythm and control.
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2. When the Goal of the Set Changes

Different types of sets demand different intervals:

- **Technique or aerobic sets:** Should allow enough rest for quality movement and breathing control → slightly *longer intervals* (e.g., +5–10 sec).
 - **Speed or threshold sets:** Shorter rests are okay, but if heart rate isn't dropping between repeats, you're not getting true threshold work — so *lengthen interval* to recover properly.
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3. When Recovery Heart Rate Stays Too High

Use your **6-second pulse check**:

- If it stays **above 18 beats (≈180 bpm)** after 10–15 seconds rest, you're not fully recovering.
 - Add **5–10 seconds per 50 yards** to bring HR recovery down into the **14–16 beat** range for sustainable training.
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4. When You're Returning After a Break or Illness

After **1–2 weeks off**, muscle endurance and cardiovascular recovery both decline.

- Start with **intervals 10–15 seconds longer per 50 or 100** for at least the first 2 weeks.
- Gradually reduce the interval again once you can finish strong and maintain stroke length.

💡 5. When Accumulated Fatigue Sets In

If over several practices you notice:

- Feeling flat early in sets
- Trouble hitting target times
- More joint soreness or poor sleep
→ your body is signaling it needs more recovery.
Widen intervals slightly (e.g., **1:10** → **1:15/50**) for a week or two to let your aerobic system and muscles adapt.

💡 6. When Training for Endurance vs. Speed

Training Goal	Interval Adjustment
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Aerobic / distance	Slightly longer (5–10 sec extra)
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Threshold / tempo	Moderate rest, 5–10 sec per 100
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Sprint / race pace	Shorter rest (minimal), but shorter total distance
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🔄 Rule of Thumb

👉 If your form or pace drops more than 3% for two consecutive sets, or your HR doesn't drop below 120–130 bpm within 20–30 seconds, lengthen your interval.

👍 — here's a clear, **easy-to-use chart** for adjusting **Masters swim intervals** by **age group** and **training goal**.

This table helps you decide when to make intervals longer or shorter so you stay in the right **effort zone** for your goals — without overtraining or losing technique.

Masters Swimming Interval & Rest Guidelines

Training Goal	Effort Level (RPE*)	6-sec Pulse Range	Typical Rest Between Repeats	Recommended Interval Adjustment	Purpose / Notes
Technique / Skill	3–4 (Easy)	10–13 beats (100–130 bpm)	15–25 sec	+10–20 sec per 50	Focus on smooth strokes, drills, balance, and breathing. Prioritize quality.
Aerobic Endurance	4–5 (Comfortable)	13–15 beats (130–150 bpm)	10–20 sec	+5–10 sec per 50	Base training pace; conversational breathing; steady heart rate.
Threshold / Tempo	6–7 (Strong but Controlled)	15–17 beats (150–170 bpm)	5–15 sec	Same or +5 sec per 50	Sustainable pace; builds stamina. Short rests but enough to hold pace.
VO ₂ max / Race Pace	8–9 (Hard)	17–19 beats (170–190 bpm)	10–20 sec	Same interval or slightly shorter	Short, intense efforts; used sparingly in Masters training.
Sprint / Power	9–10 (Max Effort)	19–21 beats (190–210 bpm)	30–60 sec	Longer recovery between efforts	Prioritize full recovery for speed and form.

*RPE = Rate of Perceived Exertion (1–10 scale)

Age-Based Interval Adjustments

Age Group	Suggested Interval Change	Why
Under 45	Standard base (e.g.,	Stronger recovery and muscle endurance.

Age Group	Suggested Interval Change	Why
	1:10/50)	
45–54	+3–5 sec per 50	Slightly slower recovery rate; longer warm-up needed.
55–64	+5–10 sec per 50	Aerobic recovery slower; technique-focused training emphasized.
65+	+10–15 sec per 50	Prioritize comfort, stroke length, and lower heart stress.

♥ Example for a 55+ Swimmer (Base: 1:10/50)

Workout Focus Adjusted Interval Example Set

Technique	1:20–1:25/50	8×50 drill/swim mix
Aerobic	1:15–1:20/50	10×100 steady pace
Threshold	1:10–1:15/50	5×100 moderate-hard
Sprint	1:30–1:40/50	6×50 fast with full rest

🔄 Key Takeaways

- **Form first, pace second.** If stroke shortens, increase rest.
- **Recovery heart rate is your guide:** if above ~130 bpm after 30 sec rest, interval is too tight.
- **Cycle intervals:** every 4–6 weeks, tighten intervals slightly for progression, then back off for recovery week.
- **Technique-focused swims** should make up ~50% of total yardage for swimmers over 55.