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Simple SWIMMING GUIDE

By: Joene Palmer

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About the Author

Joene Palmer was an active amateur swimmer for years.

She met her husband at a swimming meeting.

Joene firmly believes that the exercise helped keep her fit for her demanding job and raising her family.

“Swimming was not the first sport which I was involved in but it is one that I have always kept doing through the years, including two interstate moves and one move overseas for eighteen months.”

“I hope that my book will help people that have never got around to learning how to swim or are coming back to it as a relatively safe exercise later in life.”

“I have explained how average people like me can benefit from swimming and given some basic steps to help with learning the important techniques with minimum effort.”

“I hope that my book will help many people get more enjoyment and better results from the effort and time which they put into their swimming.”

“I want it to help them as so many of the swimmers I have swam and socialized with through the years have helped me.”

Introduction

Good technique is the basis of enjoyable and safe swimming.

If you have just started to swim or have not swam for some time, read and practice the methods I have written in this book.

None of the time you put into making the basic procedures second nature is ever wasted.

But, learning the basics thoroughly is not only important for your enjoyment and progress with your swimming; it could save you from injury or worse at some time in the future.

Before You Start

Whether you are currently fairly fit or someone that has not done any sort of exercise consistently for an extended period, please consult your doctor before starting to swim or do any other form of exercise on a regular basis.

How Swimming Benefits You

Swimming is recognized as a low cost, highly enjoyable activity which can benefit almost anyone.

It is a low-risk form of exercise which has advantages for people with limited mobility or other physical problems.

Many people that are trying to lose weight are advised to exercise by walking or even running. But, their weight, the risk of damage to their bones and other potential physical damage often rules out those options.

Many of these people find that they are able to exercise more in a pool where the water can support some of their weight.

My understanding of the current thinking about swimming and losing weight is that swimming is not definitely a way to lose weight. But, swimming makes it easier for people with weight problems to exercise more regularly and to a higher level than they might be able to otherwise. This can help them to lose weight.

But, if someone just swims rather than including some periods of more intense activity in their sessions, there is not likely to be a noticeable improvement in the amount or rate of weight loss which they achieve.

I have read that the humid atmosphere around pools as well as the swimming itself can be beneficial to some people with certain types of asthma.

Like all medical information, it won't apply equally to everyone and you should always consult your doctor or specialist before undertaking any form of exercise.

Another important reason that everyone should learn to swim is that this skill could help to save your life or help you to save someone else in a dangerous situation in water.

It is particularly good for people that have not been using any form of regular exercise or who are unable to tackle more strenuous forms of exercise because of their current state of health.

You can; of course, progress to more strenuous forms of swimming but this book is focused mainly on helping readers that are starting to use swimming for exercise rather than for serious competition.

However, I recommend that you join a local swim club or look for a branch of the international Masters Clubs in your area.

The Masters Clubs welcome all swimmers over the age of twenty, whether they swim for fun or exercise, and they also organize competitive swimming for people with all levels of swimming ability.



Water can be very helpful to people that are recovering from some form of physical injury because it can help to support the body during their activities in the water. That includes athletes as well as people like me.

The pressure on the heart during mild exercise in water is likely to be less than when similar levels of exercise are done on dry land.

For all its benefits, I don't suggest that swimming should be your only form of regular exercise. Swimming should be just one type of exercise which you do.

Use other types of exercise as well to ensure that all parts of your body get some benefit.

There are a few sports which involve swimming and they can be used to add variety to your exercise program.

Getting Started

Like any other activity, the way that we think about what we are doing has a great effect on how well we perform.

I recommend that you always have someone with you when you swim. That is particularly important when you are inexperienced.

If you have some concerns about lying in the water, try to think about it as lying on a couch. The water will support most of your weight.

Try to relax your body because this will be a great help to achieving the proper position in the water and you will actually float better. If you are tense, you are likely to settle lower in the water and have less control over your own movements. This, of course, will make you more worried and take most of the enjoyment from the experience.

There are many devices which people can use for support and confidence building when they are starting to learn to swim. I think that these only have limited usefulness for most adults. After they start to gain the confidence and have some understanding of the fundamental techniques of swimming, they should only use devices such as pull buoys and kickboards when they want to increase the amount of exercise they give to certain areas rather as a general swimming aid.

I believe that extended use of flotation devices can hold back adults because many become focused on using the device for support and have some difficulty making the transition to using proper techniques without the device.

Swim with friends

You might have a friend that is also interested in swimming. Having your swimming sessions together can have great benefits for both of you. You can encourage and support each other in the early stages of your program or when you reach a certain level and cannot seem to progress beyond it.

In the early stages, you can help each other by taking turns to watch the other person and helping them to correct any part of their technique which may be holding them back.

Get a few lessons

Although it is an extra expense, you should consider taking a few lessons when you start your swimming program. This will help you to avoid developing bad posture or

movements which could prevent you from achieving the best results from your swimming and continue to hamper your efforts for years.

Making changes to your self-taught style can take much longer and cost more than a couple of lessons would have earlier.

You could get individual coaching but, if that is unavailable or too expensive, there are coaches and organizations which hold group sessions in most areas from time to time.

Supervision by a professional instructor will help you to get started with the right techniques and avoid the need to adjust your self-taught style radically to the correct procedure.

You could ask a friend who is an experienced swimmer to give you some tips but not everyone is good at passing on knowledge. The coach has the advantage of having helped many people like you through those early steps. They give you knowledge and patience which often makes it easier to absorb the information.

There are some benefits to swimming with other people, especially when you have just started to learn or have not swum regularly for a long time.

Etiquette

Rules will vary between different pools.

If you are not sure about the rules for using lanes occupied by other swimmers at a particular pool, check with the attendant before getting into the lane.

The examples I give here are fairly common but always check at each venue you start to swim at.

Sharing a Lane: When you share a lane, try to choose one where the other swimmers are doing a speed you are comfortable with.

Don't swim in the same lane as people that you know usually swim faster than you.

Don't worry about someone improving their rate faster than you. That will just destroy your concentration and cause you to slow even more or make mistakes.

Wait until a swimmer has completed a swim or exercise before asking if you may share the lane with them.

Don't try to chat with other swimmers in the water. Wait until you meet on dry land. You are all there to enjoy your swimming and talking is distracting, especially if they are trying to improve their technique.

Two swimmers sharing a lane will split it down the middle. You must keep to your own side. If you don't have that level of control yet, stick to swimming in a lane by yourself for now.

When more than two swimmers share a lane, they must swim a circular pattern.

Equipment: If you use any equipment provided at the pool, be sure to return it to where it is normally stored when you no longer need it.

Some people will leave it at the pool edge and say that they do that so it is handy when someone else wants to use it. But, that's just an excuse for not taking it back where it should be left. It can also be a hazard and cause an injury to another pool user.

Joining a Swimming Club

Everyone that swims will get some benefit from joining a swimming club in their area. Don't wait until you are able to swim well. You will find that everyone in a club has been through the same learning process and you will be encouraged, not embarrassed.

The club's other members will share their knowledge and experience of swimming and often be willing to advise you on the most appropriate equipment and where the best prices are offered.

You may also be able to save money on equipment and services which the club may arrange a discount for its members.

Your local swimming club is a good place to find someone of similar ability to yourself who is willing and enthusiastic about helping each other to improve your techniques and offer each other support when it is needed. This can be especially valuable if your family is not interested in swimming or if you do not know many people in the area.

Most clubs have an active social program which you can be part of. Some clubs organize trips to swim meets in other areas and have contact details of other swimming clubs which will welcome you and often provide their facilities at low cost when you visit their area.

The Masters Clubs

Adult swimmers who are aged from twenty years upward, who are not only focused on competitive swimming, will find the network of Masters Swimming Clubs in their country a great way to improve their technique in a supportive and friendly atmosphere.

The bottom line is that good swimmers have learned good techniques. Unless you learn the techniques, you won't get the best experience and enjoyment that you could with your swimming.

You will be graded on your current swimming ability so that you swim with people at the same level.

You will also be able to compete against members of your club and others of similar ability in well-organized meets from time to time if that is what you want to do.

United States Masters Swimming <http://www.usms.org/>



“USMS is the governing body for adult swimming in the US.

We welcome all adult swimmers.”

Gearing Up

You will probably have a swimming costume in your cupboard but it may need replacing or updating because you like a new style or to get the advantages that are claimed for the newer fabrics in some costumes.

In this section, I will give some suggestions about traditional and some fairly new items which you might find useful and fun.

Costume

There are a wide variety of costumes available to suit all tastes.

Your first consideration should be the type of swimming which you will be doing.

You can pay hundreds of dollars for a costume from a major supplier that is designed for getting the most speed through the water. The price of these suits cannot usually be justified for the casual or club swimmer.

Some people will want to buy a brand which has given them good service in the past or has been recommended by people they trust.

But, most of us will consider anything within our price range that appears to have the following qualities:

Appearance and fit: Trunks are usually board shorts, briefs or traditional swimming trunks. There are many variations within each type and manufacturers will introduce new styles regularly to encourage us to add extra costumes to our supply.

The brief styles are most popular with younger swimmers and anyone that is interested in any sort of competitive swimming.

Women need to remember that suits will tend to stretch out when they are wet.

They also need to check that straps won't cut into or irritate their skin. You can apply Vaseline to reduce the irritation of tight straps but it's obviously better to check the fit of the suit thoroughly before you buy it and spend a little extra if necessary to get a durable and comfortable suit.

You can't usually return a suit to the store after you've taken it home. So, take your time and check a few suits out thoroughly when you are in the store. Try to imitate your usual swimming actions while you are trying on a suit.

Manufacturers use a variety of materials for their various costumes. You will have to balance such factors as cost, time required for drying (nylon or polyester and some other synthetics are probably best), color fastness, fit, appearance and durability.

The synthetic materials are usually less likely to sag when they absorb water.

Although some costumes have sealable pockets for carrying valuables, don't put much in them to avoid drag when you are swimming and strain on the costume.

Board shorts were developed as the popularity of surfing grew. They are durable and most have one or more pockets. They are very practical for all types of swimming and related activities, including beach sports.

The traditional swimming trunks are still very popular. Some types absorb and hold water more than others.

For people that take their swimming very seriously, modern materials such as lycra may be worth the investment.

Some manufacturers are now offering suits which are chlorine resistant. Chlorine in pools is one of the major factors which reduce the durability of a swim suit.

Caring for Your Suit

To get the best value from your suit, look after it.

When you rinse your suit out after each session, squeeze the water out of the suit. If you wring it to save time, you will damage the fibers which make up the suit and have to buy your next suit much sooner. This is the real reason for complaints about the durability of some suits in my opinion.

Another means of reducing the wear you get from your suit is to put it in a clothes dryer – the heat will damage your suit.

Lay your suit flat on a towel to let it finish drying off rather than putting it on your clothes line.

You can use a special cleaning product designed for cleaning swim suits after, say, every five sessions. But, you can also get good results by applying a non-abrasive soap by hand.

Suits wear out in months rather than years. Don't keep wearing a suit because it's your favorite. Replace it when it is less comfortable or starting to deteriorate.

Caps

Some people don't like wearing a cap while others won't swim without one.

I don't think they can be rated as essential for everybody but they are some times when it is a good idea to wear a cap:

1. A cap will prevent long or thick hair causing any drag when you are swimming.
2. A cap is good protection against the effects of chlorine and other materials which are sometimes present in pools and other swimming areas.
3. A cap will stop your hair getting in your eyes when you swim.

Latex caps grip the head better and are popular with people that race. But, they are a bit harder to put on and can develop tears more easily than other types of caps.

Silicon caps are easier to put on and get off. They are more expensive but last much longer than latex caps given reasonable care.

Dry the cap inside and out after each use. Put some talcum powder inside the cap when you have dried it.

Fins

Fins, or “flippers”, give you a larger surface to push through the water. They will give any swimmer a boost in their speed without requiring the extra effort which some other aids, like paddles, do.

Most fins are either small and flexible which is most suitable for less experienced or younger swimmers, or larger, firmer fins which are for swimmers that have the strength in their legs to use them well.

If you haven't worn fins before or not for some time, start with the smaller, more flexible type until you build the strength into your calf muscles from the larger fins.

Don't wear fins that are too tight because that can be bad for your feet.

Fins with enclosed heels can be more comfortable than those which have a strap around the heel. The latter need to be carefully fitted or the strap might irritate your heels.

If good fit is a problem for you, get fins that are slightly larger and wear socks inside them to prevent the strap moving around and rubbing on your heel.

Be careful if you are out of shape and using fins. Over-exertion can put pressure on your ankles and your Achilles tendons.

When you are confident about swimming with your flippers, you could add a bit more zest by doing some “just for fun” swims during your session where you wear fins and a kickboard or paddles. Don't be tempted to overdo this but it is a fun thing to do occasionally when you have some experience.

Pull Buoy

This device, which consists of either two foam cylinders connected by a cord inserted near each end of the tubes or a single, shaped piece of foam, is used as a balance aid for some swimmers with heavy legs.

But, it is mainly intended as a means to restrict leg movement so that extra pressure is put on the arms to strengthen them.

The device is gripped between the upper parts of the swimmer’s legs.

Some coaches don’t approve of their use because they say that the device may upset the swimmer’s natural balance and they regard them as more of a toy than a useful aid. But, the devices are very popular and work if properly and consistently used, judging by the comments I’ve heard and the number of models which are on sale from various companies.

Some swimmers wrap an ankle band, which is like a large rubber band or small inner tube, around their ankles when they use a pull buoy, to reduce kicking almost completely so that their arms get the maximum workout.

The name of the device is sometimes confused with the pool buoy which is a type of floating line which is used to mark the division between lanes in a pool.

Kickboard



Kickboards have three main functions:

1. They will help a child or an inexperienced swimmer float better when they are just learning to control their movement through the water.
2. A kickboard can be useful when you are learning the backstroke. You lay on your back with your kickboard on your chest and your arms wrapped around it. It provides some flotation which can be reassuring when you start to learn this stroke. The board also helps to keep your arms out of action while you concentrate on learning the correct kicking technique for backstroke.
3. They assist a swimmer to exercise their legs while the arms just hold the board.

The best size of kickboard for you should reach about half-way between your elbow and your shoulder when you have your fingers wrapped around the other end of the board.

You should be able to put one hand at a top corner of the board while keeping your arms fairly straight.

If you are unsure of the best size of board for you, choose a larger one rather than a small one. You can get a smaller board after you have some experience using a board.

Do not keep your arms rigid and fully extended if you suffer from any soreness or other symptoms in your shoulders. That could cause extra stress to your shoulder area.

When you get in the water, wrap your fingers on the end of the board and lay it on the water.

Your arms will be on top of the board.

Lay your head on the water between your outstretched arms.

Push off with your feet and then start kicking steadily.

Turn your mouth to one side when you want to breathe.

You can use fins in combination with the kickboard to vary your workout.

Goggles

Some people think that using goggles is a sign of weakness but it really is essential to protect your eyes from the chemicals and other material which may be encountered in pools, especially public ones and in open water.

The cost and hassle of wearing your goggles each time you swim is much less than the cost and discomfort of treating eye infections or injuries.

You may want to get more than one pair of goggles; one with UV protection or dark lenses for swimming where glare might be a problem and a clear pair which will make it easier for you to see in dimly lit pools or early morning or evening swimming sessions.

The most important consideration when you select your new goggles is that they fit well.

If they are not comfortable, you will probably tend not to use them every time that you swim and that can increase the risks of damage to your eyes.

The most common problem with goggles is when they do not properly seal around your nose and eyes. If they don't fit, don't buy them.

Some goggles have adjustable nose-pieces and others are supplied with interchangeable nose pieces. Sometimes, adjusting the strap on the goggles will make the nose piece fit better.

With good quality goggles, you should not have to adjust the strap again after you have fitted it to your head the first time unless you change your hair style significantly.

You should also check that the lenses are good quality because your vision in and especially under the water depends on them.

You should not need to use an anti-fogging solution to keep the lenses from clouding over when you use them. Some people just lick the inside of the lenses before putting them on if they have a problem with their goggles fogging up.

Look for goggles with lenses that have UV protection. They are now about the same price as goggles of similar quality which don't have it.



Always try on the goggles which you are considering buying. Don't just buy the most popular or expensive brands or latest styles.

Adjust the strap which secures the goggles to your head carefully so that it is secure without being so tight that it irritates your skin.

When you are buying new goggles, give yourself enough time to check various types carefully.

You need to find goggles which fit you and suit your appearance.

Manufacturers change their styles frequently so you might want to buy a couple of pairs if you find a type of goggle which you particularly like.

Nose Clips

Nose clips are the most effective way for inexperienced swimmers to deal with the discomfort they feel over getting water in their nose.

Although many swimmers use them all the time, I suggest that you taper off your use and get accustomed to swimming without a nose clip.

Constant use of a nose clip will stop you learning proper breath control which includes expelling air from your nose while it is underwater.

This will also give you more confidence when you go swimming and don't have a nose clip with you.



Bags: There are plenty of swimmers bags with compartments to separate your wet gear from the other essentials, but the best idea is to use a separate bag for your wet gear to the one which you put your clothes and valuables in. That should be locked up or left with a trusted friend, not taken to the edge of the pool and left unattended.

Hand Paddles

Another accessory which can increase your options for exercise and enjoyment are hand paddles.

Most are made of plastic and are used to increase the power you have to pull yourself through the water.

You may find that some paddles make your shoulders sore.

Some swimmers have developed injuries through using paddles.

I have some suggestions but try to find someone in your area that has used various kinds of paddles and get some advice from them before you think about buying your own.

You may think that larger paddles will give you more pull in the water but you are at higher risk of injuring your shoulders and wrists with them in the early stages because you probably don't have enough strength in your arms to handle the paddles well.

Paddles which are just slightly larger than your hands may be a good choice.

You can also get paddles with holes in them. They are intended for people that want to use paddles to get more power but have not developed enough strength in their shoulders to comfortably manage the paddles without holes.

Paddles are helpful with some phases of your training but keep the following points in mind.

1. You should limit your use of paddles or they could cause problems with your technique as well as possibly putting strain on your shoulders.
2. Don't use paddles which are too large for you and avoid trying to go too fast when wearing them because that also increases the chance of problems with your shoulders.
3. For best results, try to get some advice from a local who is an experienced paddle user or coach.

Simple Steps for New Swimmers

These simple exercises are like building blocks – it is essential to learn to do them properly as they are the foundation for everything more advanced which you learn later on.

Don't be concerned if it takes you longer than someone else to become comfortable with a particular sequence. Don't push yourself too hard.

If something won't work for you, don't let frustration take hold. Read the notes again and then start from the previous step.

Build up to Your First Swim

If you are not comfortable at first to start swimming, get used to the strange environment by walking the length of the pool, or as far as you can before it gets too deep.

You can also do squats near the edge of the pool, just lowering yourself as far as you feel comfortable about.

Learn to Float

For some people, the next step is to learn how to float. This can give very nervous people a small dash of confidence which will help them to go to the next step where they put their face in the water.



Take a deep breath and hold it.

Lay on your back in the water.

Relax. I know that it's harder to do than for me to say but it is an essential step in your progress with swimming.

A relaxed fish floats and swims much better than a stiff fish!

While your lungs are full of air,

your body will try to hold a floating position. This will vary between individuals.

Women will usually float a little higher than most men.

Float Face Down

Try to have someone with you if this is your first time doing these exercises.

Don't try to do too much at each step too soon. If you feel uncomfortable about anything, slow down the rate you move to the next stage.

Safety is the most important thing when learning swimming or any other new activity. Wear goggles to protect your eyes from pool chemicals or other foreign and possibly harmful matter you might come in contact with.

Introduce your body to the water in stages if that is needed because of some deep concern about your safety.

Stand in the water at the edge of the pool, facing the wall rather than the water.

Hold the wall or the rail at the edge of the pool and lower yourself into the water until your chin touches it.

When you are ready, take a breath and lower your head as far into the water as you are comfortable with.

Take this stage slowly and don't just quickly bob up. Keep your face beneath the water for at least a few seconds and then raise yourself smoothly so that your head is back above the water.

Do the same action but stay under the water a little longer this time and look around for a few seconds. The strange angle will reveal some unusual sights and help to take your mind off your own situation (being underwater).

We're now going to do the next step; letting go some of our precious air while we are under the water.

Take a breath and then lower your head under the water again.

Now, open your lips slightly and blow a small, steady stream of air from your mouth into the water.

Do this a few times, but make the time you are blowing out the air slightly longer each time.

Now, you are ready to get into the proper swimming position.

Stand just a little more than your body away from the wall of the pool.

Lay on the water with your arms above your head, pointing toward the wall. Your hands are flat with the palms facing the floor of the pool.

Take a breath, close your mouth and turn your head so that your face is in the water.

Draw both of your arms down toward the bottom of the pool and back towards your midriff in a smooth semi-circular motion while you draw your knees up to your stomach.

The power of your arm movement will push your head up and back out of the water.

Then, you can push your feet towards the bottom of the pool.

When they contact the bottom, you can stand up.

Don't worry if it takes you a few attempts to do this smoothly.

If you don't complete the sequence, go back to the first position, laying face down in the water with your arms extended above your head. Don't try to pick up the sequence of moves where you finished part-way through. It is important to learn the whole sequence and starting again at the beginning does not require more than a few extra seconds.

That way, you learn the whole sequence correctly.

Starting to Swim

When you have learned the basic techniques and gained confidence enough to start swimming, do short swims of no more than a couple of minutes and take a few seconds rest between them.

Start to do some faster swims as your confidence and balance improve but don't overdo the speed or duration too soon.

Your body and your mind need time to adjust to the new sequences and sensations.

Do it right is much more important than doing it fast at this stage.

Learning to swim with good technique and giving yourself time to adjust to the new experience will help you swim much better and also faster if that's what you want to do.

Switch between different styles and adjust the length of your swims to add some variety to your sessions.

You can get some idea of your progress by counting your laps and checking the pool clock or your own waterproof wristwatch.

But, realize that your progress from week to week is not so important. There will be inevitable dips and highs in your performance.

Don't worry if you sometimes are unable to swim the same times as you had in a previous session or if you find that you reach a certain level of performance and cannot progress for a few weeks no matter how much effort and examination of your technique you do.

That's common in all levels of swimming and other sports too.

If you allow yourself to become stressed about this sort of setback, it will take much longer for you to get past it.

I have found it more productive to swim a little slower at my next session and get someone to check my technique.

For me, slowing down and letting my body more time to adjust to the demands I am putting on it has worked well.

Don't try to impress yourself or anyone else by swimming faster than your body is comfortable with.

Pushing yourself too hard is likely to harm your performance and could also lead to injury.

A good rule of thumb is to keep any increase in speed or distance in one week you try for at less than ten percent higher than you did the previous week.

Swimming Styles

Breaststroke



The breaststroke is a good choice for recreational swimming.

Start your practice of this technique while holding on to the side of the pool.

Start by lying in the water with your hips just below the surface.

Bend at the knees and draw your feet up to your body.

Turn the soles of your feet outward and push your legs away from your body at an angle.

Draw your legs back together until your knees touch.

Both legs must do each movement at the same time.

Your arms are pointed ahead of you with the palms outward.

Squeeze your ears with your elbows and keep your feet together to ensure that your whole body is as streamlined as possible

Draw your hands apart and downward in a circular motion, and then draw them under your body until the fingers almost touch under your chest.

You scoop the water with your hands as they travel back to your sides.

You make your leg movement very quickly as you shoot your arms forward to the starting position.

Keep your hands in view all through the sequence and this will help you perfect your action.

The breathing sequence can take a little practice. Start learning the arm and leg actions while your face stays out of the water.



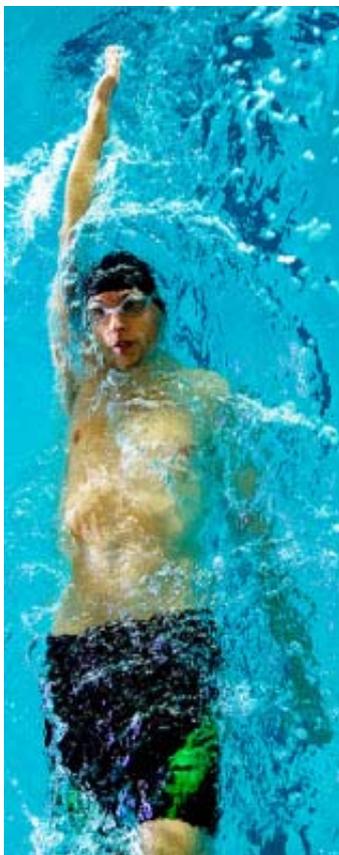
Then, lower your face into the water and time your inward breath when your are pushing your arms out and downward.

Keep your hips flat, not raised, for best results.

Backstroke

One advantage of this technique is that your face stays out of the water.

The main downside is that you cannot see where you are going.



You need to spend some time getting the technique smooth.

Lay on your back in the water.

Have your legs stretched out and your arms at your sides.

Always keep your body flat in the water, just like you were lying in bed.

If you bend at the waist, even a little bit, your upper body will create resistance to your forward movement.

At first, you may need to consciously keep your midriff slightly raised but this will become automatic as you get some experience with backstroke.

Start by moving one arm above your head to its full length.

Drop that hand beneath the water and turn it outward.

Drag that arm down through the water, so that the hand scoops through the water. The little finger enters the water first. It is kept as close as possible to be in line with the

shoulder.

If the back of the hand hits the water first, it will slap the water instead of entering smoothly. You will not draw water with that hand movement and some drag will be created.

Don't stretch the arm too far forward or the hips will move out of alignment and drag against the forward motion of the body will be created.

The elbow is pointed at the bottom of the pool during that semi-circular movement.

When the hand reaches the side of your body, rotate your palm outward.

The thumb or the little finger will rise above the water before the rest of the hand.

The arm goes forward in a semi-circle as the other arm is pulled down and through the water to power your body forward in its turn.

The legs use an initial dolphin kick at the start of the backstroke. Then, you start to make small fluttering kicks which help to drive the body forward.

Keep the toes pointed for maximum effect.

The legs are also important for keeping the body stable as it is pulled through the water by your arms.

Keep your head still. Your ears will be just above the water and your chin tucked toward your chest.

You roll your body to the side where the arm is going through its power pulling phase.

Avoid sideways motion so that the body moves forward.

Take a breath as one arm starts its recovery movement, and then exhale when the other arm starts its recovery movement.

Butterfly



This is an advanced technique which is mostly suitable for those who take their swimming seriously.

You should have good technique for the other standard swimming

strokes and have built your strength to a reasonable level before starting to learn to swim the butterfly.

Butterfly puts more demands on your body than the other strokes.

A coach's help when you start butterfly is particularly important. Although it is possible to learn the technique without one, it really is much harder.

The legs are kept together and they kick with a smooth mermaid-like flip. There are two stages to the butterfly kicking motion; a normal kick and then a more powerful one which pushes your body upward and forward.

When the kick pushes your head out of the water, take a breath and then lower your head toward your chest again.

Your arms are raised from the water with every stroke.

If you keep them in the water as they move forward above your head, they will create resistance which will slow you down and affect your endurance.

Your arms enter the water in front of your shoulders.

Then, you push them backward to your feet.

When they are near your sides, push them out of the water and smoothly forward to start the next stroke.

Keep your head in the water except when you raise it enough to take another breath. Time your inward breath when your hands are near your sides.

Raise your chin to bring your mouth above the water, breathe and then drop your jaw below the water again.

Make your downward kicks at the same time as your hands enter and leave the water.

Although the parts of the butterfly stroke are simple, coordinating them takes time and study.

A good coach is invaluable for getting the sequence right. If you don't do that, you will not achieve your potential with the butterfly.

The Dog Paddle

This simple swimming technique is one way that people with a fear of water can use to propel themselves through the water without putting their head under the water.

When they learn dog paddling, their confidence will increase and they are more likely to be able to learn and use more advanced strokes which require them to put their face under water.

Start by standing in water that is no more than chest-deep. This is especially important if you have any residual fear of water. You will stay calm because you know that you can stop paddling and just stand up at any time while you are learning the technique.

Kick gently with your feet to lift your body off the bottom and start to reach forward with each arm, one at a time.

Cup your hand and then draw it back to your body before doing the same with the other arm.

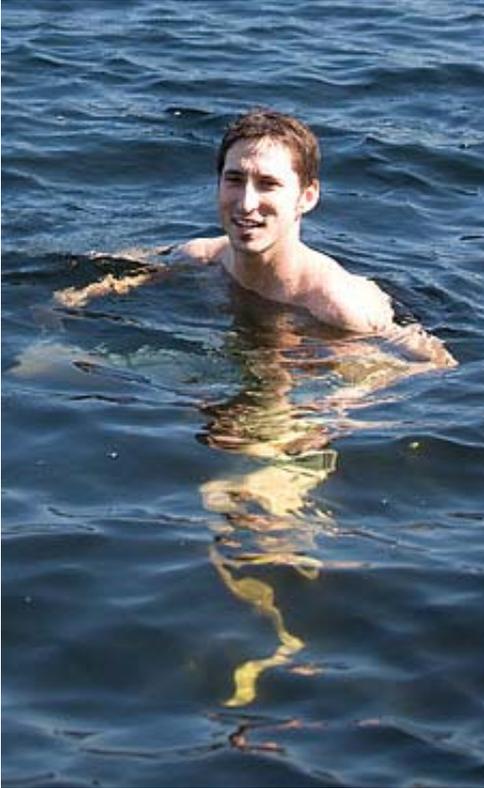
This action is like a dog using its front legs to draw itself through the water. That's what gave this stroke its name.

At the same time, you kick with your legs. Some people will kick straight back while others will kick their legs slightly too each side, similar to the action of some frogs. Either method is effective or you should try each, and then use the one which is more comfortable and effective for you.

This is a great stroke to start children learning to swim as the actions are normal and they will probably get a good result almost immediately.

As the swimmer gets more comfortable with this technique, they will start to be less concerned about putting their face under water and then they will find learning and using the more advanced and faster strokes much easier.

Treading Water



This is the most basic water safety technique.

It is valuable to all swimmers and especially those who have some residual fear about being in water.

But, it is also used by experienced water polo players.

Start this technique in water that reaches at least to the top of your head.

The depth of the water is necessary to let you do the whole action.

Keep your body as relaxed as possible with your arms pointing downward and slightly away from your sides.

Start to rotate your arms while keeping them near your body.

Don't raise your hands as you make the circular motions.

Keep your hands loosely closed.

Some people will kick their feet while others will make a circular motion with them similar to the way they are moving their hands. Do one or the other. There's no advantage to mixing the two actions.

If you make the circular motions, keep your legs stiff and avoid pointing your toes.

If you kick your feet, point your toes and make quick, short kicking motions.

You can use buoyancy aids, but most adults won't need them unless they have a strong fear of water. If you need them when you start to learn, don't hesitate to use them.

The most important thing is to be comfortable in the water and these aids can help some people.

Dump them when you are ready to.

I know that it is easier for me to say, "Try to stay as relaxed as possible" than it is to do.

But, staying relaxed will help you conserve energy so that you can tread water for much longer and that could help you survive in a real emergency.

Avoid splashing the water. It wastes energy, reduces the length of time which you can tread water and could attract sharks in a real emergency.

Freestyle Stroke



Freestyle (or front crawl) is acknowledged as the fastest swimming stroke because the swimmer is applying constant thrust. But, just as I said with each of the other styles, the results which you actually achieve will

depend greatly on how well you learn the parts of the basic technique and how well you combine them.

Each part of the technique is important. If you are not smooth and powerful with each movement, you will never get the best results you are capable of and you will waste energy.

Take breaths at regular intervals when you have your face turned to one side and your mouth is above the water.

Freestyle involves moving your body through the water in an almost straight line with one arm at your side when your other arm has reached fully forward.

As you move through the water, let your trunk twist so that your forward arm, which pulls you through the water, is down and your face is higher than the water level, allowing you to take a breath about every three strokes.

Your legs should be straight and slightly flexible. You keep kicking fast through the whole stroke.

You point your toes and keep their ankles flexible while you kick up with one leg and then the other. This is called a flutter kick.

The legs provide a small part of the propulsion, they are mainly used to keep your body stabilized.

Try to make only a small splash with each kick.

You should keep your eyes focused on the bottom of the pool except when you are taking a breath.

If you raise your upper body or your legs more than is required to make the stroke, you will reduce the efficiency of your movement through the water and put your body under more stress.

Your arms will be at the opposite ends of their cycle at all times. When your left arm is back alongside your trunk, your right arm will be extended forward.

As your left arm comes forward and out of the water, turn your head to that side and take a breath.

Your fingers should be cupped with the ability to separate only slightly.

Slice into the water with the thumb of your forward hand to minimize resistance.



Stretch your hand

forward with each stroke so that you keep your body in a straight line and you don't waver from side to side. Any sideward motion will reduce your speed and produce some drag.

When you have mastered the basic arm movement, try bending your elbow and push your hand more firmly down toward your knees.

Get the power stroke as smooth as possible. Don't lose power when you get toward the end of your stroke.

Focus on keeping your body and your arms in a line. Some people try to imagine that they are swimming through a tube which is only a little wider than their body. This may help you to produce the best results.

Kick strongly to reduce the tendency of your legs to sink down in the water as you move forward.

Avoid splashing through the water with your hands as it is wasted effort.

Getting the Best from each Session

There are many simple ways to improve the results which you get from your swimming sessions.

Start a swimming log book or diary: Record your progress and also your impressions and experiences as you learn to swim better and interact with other swimmers. Reading about your previous successes, however small, can help you to stay motivated when you have a less successful day. Don't worry – they happen to all of us.

Pack your swimming gear the night before rather than rushing to get it together just before you head for the pool.

Make a list of all the items you take when you go swimming and attach it inside the bag you carry your gear in.

Write your name indelibly on all your gear.

If another swimmer helps you with advice or in other ways, the best way that you can repay them is by taking the next opportunity you get to help someone else.

Remember how you were helped when you joined the club and help other new members when you can.

Don't just join a Club and drift along: Become an active member. If you don't have time to join the committee, at least take on some voluntary duties to help the meetings go more smoothly.

Always move your goals upward. When you become satisfied with your fitness and swimming ability, you start to go backwards.

Vary Your Workout.

In each session that you do, vary the intensity of effort which you use.

If you just jump in the water and push yourself to your maximum for the session, you will end up very tired and stressed.

You will get better results from starting with a period of fairly slow swimming to let your body adjust to the demands you will put on it.

Then, start the most intense part of your session with some faster periods or laps.

Always give yourself at least half a minute to rest between every couple of laps or their equivalent.

Finish your session with some slower swimming to help your body make the transition back from the faster pace.

You may do certain strokes better than others and like to use them for most of your swimming. But, you will get a better workout overall if you do some of the other strokes in each session. The breaststroke, freestyle and backstroke make different demands on your muscles and you need to ensure that all of them get sufficient exercise.

Swimming Safety Tips

Never swim alone: Swim with friends, join a club or use community pools. Many swimming tragedies occur when someone ignores this basic piece of advice.

Don't jump into natural waterways: You will often read reports of swimmers who have permanent or life-threatening injuries because they struck rocks or became entangled in weeds or debris which they could not see before they jumped into the water.



Take your swimming a step at a time: Don't rush. Don't move on to the next stage until you have successfully done the previous one a few times on different days.

Get the basics right and you will have less risk of injury through the rest of your swimming life.

People, especially children, can drown in a couple of inches of water.

Drowning is a major cause of death for children with children under five most at risk. Teach your children to do at least the dog paddle and to float in the water.



That will help to lessen the risk of them panicking when they are in water.

If possible, get some professional assistance to show you how to teach and encourage their swimming. Some swimming pools run courses where (usually) their mothers are shown how to teach their very young children and enrich their bond with the children at the same time. Don't leave any child alone even for a minute near any water – even a couple of inches can be dangerous.

Alcohol is a factor in a large number of water-related deaths and injuries of adults. Save the drinks until you’re back on your natural element – dry land.

Learning CPR (cardio pulmonary resuscitation) is part of being a responsible member of the community. Remember, it might help you save your child or your spouse’s life or a stranger. It doesn’t matter who, it’s worth the effort.

Before you swim at a beach or river, check for warning signs of contamination or unseen hazards.

Swim On!



I hope that you have found the information and suggestions useful.

I wrote the book to help people that were at an early stage with their swimming because I remember how I felt then and the tremendous help that I got through the following years.

I wish you well.

Swim on and keep smiling.

Joene Palmer.

Links and other Resources

USA Swimming

<http://www.usaswimming.org/usasweb/DesktopDefault.aspx>



“The National Governing Body for swimming in the United States with 300,000 members. It promotes the culture of swimming by creating opportunities for swimmers and coaches of all ages, skill levels and backgrounds to participate and advance in the sport through clubs, events and education.

USA Swimming is responsible for selecting and training teams for international competition including the Olympic Games”

United States Masters Swimming <http://www.usms.org/>



“USMS is the governing body for adult swimming in the US.

We welcome all adult swimmers.”

Austswim <http://www.austswim.com.au/>



“AUSTSWIM is the Australian Council for the Teaching of Swimming and Water Safety. It has Course Providers in each state and territory of Australia. AUSTSWIM is a not-for-profit organisation”. It has links to similar organizations in several countries.

Go Swim <http://www.swimming.org.au/> and <http://goswim.org.au/>



Go Swim is focused on encouraging children to learn to swim. It provides information about joining a swimming club and also about healthy foods and other related subjects.

Swimming / Natation Canada <http://www.swimming.ca>



The Canadian national governing body of swimming. Aim is to provide opportunities for all Canadians to reach their own maximum potential in the sport of swimming.

LEN - Ligue Europeene de Natation <http://len.eu/>



“The governing body of 50 national European Swimming Federations, overseen by an elected Bureau composed of Members, representing 13 different Federations in Europe”

Japanese Amateur Swimmng Federation <http://www.swim.or.jp/>



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