

The Top Ten Technique Tips for Every Swimmer

By Wayne Goldsmith

1. Effective propulsive movements are slow to fast

In swimming, effective propulsive movements are **slow to fast**.

In Fly, you reach long, feel the water, catch then accelerate through the stroke to recovery.

Same in B/K. Same in B/R (arms and legs). Same in F/S.

It starts with an effective feel on entry and a strong catch, then, throughout the stroke it is acceleration that makes all the difference.

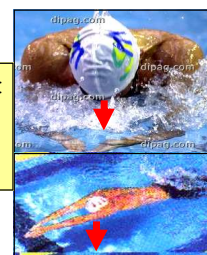


2. The relationship between hips and head is critical

There is a critical relationship between the **hips** and the **head** in swimming. Simply, **when the head is up, the hips go down**, and, if the **hips are down three important things happen**:

- Hips down means you kick down – instead of back.
- Hips down means your body is in an **inefficient position**.
- Hips down means that your body is not streamlined.

So, **head down:**
= hips up.
= improved
streamline.



Be aware of this relationship and keep your head and hips in the right positions.

3. Soft Hands and Feel!

If someone gave you a rose and said, “feel this – it is so soft” – what would you do with your hands? Cup them tightly? Clench them into a fist? Force your fingers wide apart with lots of tension? or ... would you relax your fingers and hands and wrist and gently feel the rose?

You can't feel anything with tight, tense hands. **To improve your feel of the water, relax and think soft hands.**

4. Think tall, think long

There is no doubt that objects that are long, tall, thin and streamlined move better through water than things that aren't!

Streamline off every turn.

Streamline on entry at each dive and start.

Streamlining off walls is important, but *think* tall and think long all the time!



Believe it or not, an awareness of being tall and long in the water is important. For example in breaststroke recovery, think tall and long as you stretch and reach forward – reach *long*.....then kick *strong*.

It is the combination of *long and strong* that produces the most efficient swimming movements.

This “tall” thinking and awareness really helps your body move and flow through the water.

5. The faster you want to go, the more relaxed you have to be

Watch a little kid running.

Now tell him to run as fast as he can...what happens?

He clenches his fists. He gets red in the face. He holds his breath. And he lasts about twenty yards!

The faster you want to go, the more relaxed you have to be.

Speed is about relaxation,

not grunting, not fist clenching, not tightening up, not breath holding ... **relaxation.**



If you want to go fast, focus on staying calm, relaxed and moving easily.

6. The Power Circle: Power On - Power Off

Swimming has two primary phases – the “**propulsive**” phase and the “**recovery**” phase. For many swimmers, the recovery phase is actually an extension of the propulsive phase in that they don’t actually **recover**. The recovery phase is a time to relax and allow muscles to switch off in preparation for the next propulsive pull. Learning to do this can make a big difference to a swimmer’s ability to maintain a strong powerful stroke throughout a race.

Think **Power Circle: Power on / Power off**.

When the hands and arms are under the water and pulling, it is power **on**.

As the hands leave the water to recover, it is power **off**.

The ability to turn the power **off** and **relax during recovery** is an important skill for all swimmers to develop.

7. Finishes: Head Forward, Hips High, Full Kick, Full Stroke

Good finishes in all strokes have four common elements: **Head—Hips—Kick—Stroke**

Head: leaning forward towards the wall – as opposed to turning and looking at the opposition or the results.

Hips: high and in a strong position – to keep the body in a streamlined position and moving towards the wall.

Kick: still working and driving the body forward at the wall. In fly finishing with a strong down kick and in breast finishing with the feet accelerating all the way to a toes touch position.

Stroke: finishing in a long, strong, tall position at the end of recovery so that the body is streamlined and capable of reaching and stretching towards the finish.

Every finish in training is a race finish and should include these four elements.

8. Starts Key Words: Focused Thinking

There are many distractions at the start of a race – noise, crowd, media, other swimmers, etc. The world is not going to shut down for you. You need to “shut” the world down.

To do this, try the simple “key word” technique. Find a word that means “start” to you, something like:

Power - Explode - Drive - Strong - Relax

Take a long, deep breath and if you can, take 3-5 seconds to inhale fully. Then on the exhale, say your key word quietly to yourself, taking 3-5 seconds to exhale fully. Repeat this for about a minute, continuing to breath deeply and slowly (about 6-8 breaths per minute), focusing on the key word every exhale.

This does three things:

1. It gives you confidence and control over the pre-race environment
2. The slow deep breathing keeps you relaxed
3. The focus word allows you to eliminate external distractions and *focus* on a good start.

9. Turns: Tight

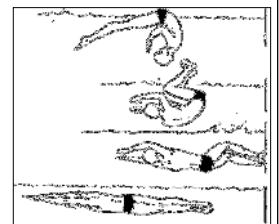
Turns are an important part of swimming and invariably *great swimmers* are *great turners*.

Turns need to be **tight**.

Heels up close to the buttocks - Legs tucked up and under the body - Arms in close and held near the centre of the body. Being tight keeps the body in an efficient minimum resistance position but it also allows the swimmer to adopt the “coiled spring” position.

Muscles can contract with greater power after being stretched and put under tension. By pulling the limbs in close to the centre of the body, the large, powerful muscles of the legs, shoulders and back are placed on stretch.

Then coming out of the turn, the body can open up with power and explosiveness and use this elastic energy to drive off the wall and get back into fast swimming!



10. Consistency is the Key

We are what we repeatedly do; let excellence become your habit

The key to it all is to take the first nine tips and practice them consistently – every session – every day – every week.

Consistency provides **opportunity** – opportunity provides the talented swimmer with the chance to achieve anything.

We are creatures of habit. **What we do repeatedly and what becomes habit, is what we do instinctively in times of fatigue and pressure**, i.e. racing. If you practice doing things consistently well in training and doing things well becomes your “habit” under the pressure and pain of racing you will always come out on top.