

swimming lots of laps.

* **Balance:** The first principle is maintaining your balance in the water. It is basically the important ability to stay perfectly horizontal in the water. The three key components to staying balanced are:

1. Keep your head straight in front of your body. Don't "look up" toward the far end of the pool. Keep your eyes focused on the bottom of the pool. Gently press your chest into the water and don't be afraid to let a little water flow over the back of your head.

2. Keep your torso and waist tight. Do not bend forward at the waist in order to keep your head down and do not arch your back to keep your legs up. Lots of sit-ups will help.

3. A great balance drill is to go to the deep end of the pool, drop way under water and push off the wall as hard as you can with both feet. (Keep hands together out front). The object is to see how far you can glide under water AND try to float to the surface with your body still horizontal. This teaches you to be streamlined and balanced at the same time

* **Pulling:** The next big key to good technique is to grab the water and pull yourself up to it and not try to push the water behind you. Keep your mind focused on catching a big arm full of water and then throwing your recovery arm and shoulder up and over with a strong powerful "punch". It is critical to reach as far forward as possible. This lets you glide for a split second, keeps you streamlined, and gives you more distance with each stroke. To practice getting that arm full of water try swimming with fists. This gives you instant feedback on whether you are pulling

with your whole arm or just your hand.

The most common mistake I see is people reaching across their body as they reach and pull. Since you swim mostly on your side, think about pulling the water down your side, not across your stomach.

* **Kicking:** Runners have two big problems with their kick. First, running tends to make your ankles tight and locks them in a flexed position. If your feet are flexed 90 degrees to your lower leg, they are just two worthless anchors. To loosen your ankles first sit on the edge of the pool with your feet dangling in the water. Swish them in a kicking motion letting the ankles loosen up. Feel the resistance in the tops and soles of your feet. Imagine your feet are flippers, nice and loose. Second, many runners churn their legs like they are running in the water and they just instantly wear themselves out. Practice a relaxed kick that makes just a little splash. Learning to stay balanced will help you stay flat in the water without having to use your legs. Also, using a pull buoy for a few hundred yards each workout will help you feel the benefit of quiet legs. Many swimmers I know actually go faster with a pull buoy because it helps them tone down their inefficient kick.

* **Breathing:** The most important thing to remember with regards to your breathing technique is, DON'T HOLD YOUR BREATH! You don't hold your breath running or cycling, so why do it swimming?

In freestyle, you should always either be blowing air out with your face underwater or breathing air in with your face turned to the side. You should never be wondering when your next breath will come. Humans take between 27 and 30

Notes on Gear

The only things in my swim bag are a swimsuit, goggles and a towel. You don't NEED anything else. All pools have kick-boards and pull-buoys you can use. Some pools also have paddles. You will see some swimmers using fins but I'm not a big fin-fan. They are hard on your back and they don't promote a "quiet" kick

If you are bothered by water in your ears causing either infections or equilibrium problems, you can try earplugs but I have never found any that work very well. I suggest just drying your ears with a hair dryer after swimming. Nose plugs can be very helpful for people who can't get used to breathing only through their mouth.

I won't say much about wetsuits other than you will be in the market for one fairly soon. Though you never use one in the pool, they are almost required equipment for triathlons with water temperatures below 70 degrees, (almost every race in the Northwest). A wet suit will lower your open water time by about two minutes per mile, and perhaps more important for beginners, a wetsuit adds buoyancy and improves body position in the water. Runners who struggle with the whole

breaths per minute when exercising. If you swim two lengths in a minute you should take about 13 breaths on each of the two lengths.

Most swimmers feel more comfortable breathing to one side or the other. To be an accomplished swimmer you should be comfortable breathing to either side. This skill comes in handy in a triathlon if the sun is shining in your eyes or if waves are approaching from the side on which you normally breathe. It is not important to breathe on alternate sides, but it is nice to be able to breathe to the side that conditions warrant.

Open water swimming,

Open water swimming is far different than pool swimming. Without a line on the bottom of the lake, going in a



Heads up when open water swimming!