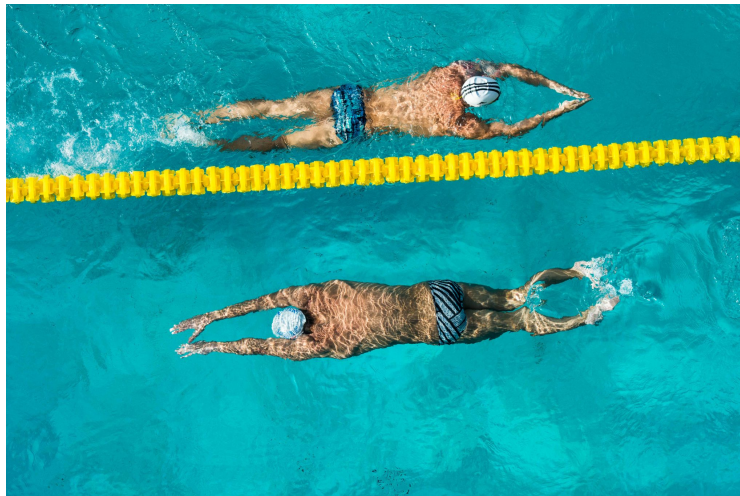


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35 TIPS FROM 35 SWIM COACHES

[Comments: 39](#)

Get more from your swimming with 35 tips from 35 swim coaches from across North America. Train smarter and faster at the pool starting today. Stock photo via Mike

Lewis/Ola Vista Photography

BY OLIVIER POIRIER-LEROY**39**

April 21st, 2016

Coach's Log, Olivier Leroy, Training...

*Olivier Poirier-Leroy is a former national level swimmer based out of Victoria, BC. In feeding his passion for swimming, he has developed **YourSwimBook**, a powerful log book and goal setting guide made*



YourSwimBook newsletter (free) and get weekly motivational tips by [clicking here](#).

The following tips range from technique, to motivational, to different ways to spice up your training. There is a little something in here for everyone, so enjoy the favorite swimming and coaching tips submitted by 35 different coaches from across North America:

1. Don Heidary — Head Coach, Orinda Aquatics

Challenge/support each swimmer to be better technically and personally *every day*. Address a technical issue and focus intently on it, and also talk to kids individually or as a group about concepts like leadership, work ethic, reaching out to a teammate, or helping in some way. This combined approach moves the team forward in terms of performance *and* culture, and connect coach to swimmer and swimmer to team.

2. Murray Drudge – Head Coach, North York Aquatic Club

Swimming is no different from school or the workplace, the most studious student doesn't always get the best grades just like the hardest worker doesn't always get the promotion. Success is talent & hard work, but first you have to enjoy the ride.

3. Matthew Donovan — Director of Swimming, Somerset Valley YMCA

One philosophy that we have here is we ALWAYS warm up with **swim fins** (not zoomers) – I truly feel that this is a major reason why we do not have shoulder issues on our team. Not one major shoulder injury in the 13 years that I have been at SVY. We warm up 800-1000 meters each day (13 and up) with fins (500 or so younger age groups).

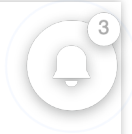
The general philosophy is that there is a lot of muscle

THE DRYLAND COMBO THAT TURNS STRENGTH INTO SPEED

HOW TO IMPROVE SPRINT FREESTYLE SPEED

5 DRYLAND EXERCISES FOR FASTER DOLPHIN KICKING

6 WAYS THIS BOOK WILL HELP YOU BUILD EXPLOSIVE UNDERWATERS THIS SEASON



take the stress off the shoulders because (I feel) the shoulders take longer to warm up. We do some pretty high volume sets here at SVY and I think giving the shoulders a break early on in practice is the key to our success and lack of injuries.

See Also: [Swim Goggles: Everything You Ever Wanted to Know](#)

4. Phil Parker — Head Coach, Laurentian University Voyageurs

I coach university aged swimmers (17 and over) so a big thing with us is training for their specific race. Throughout each workout I try and recreate some aspect of their race. One of our most popular sets is a 25 meter underwater swim immediately followed by a push 25 or push 50 where they are expected to be at their 100 or 200 race pace respectively. By doing the 25 meter underwater swim, we are setting them up physiologically to mimic the first quarter or first half of their race.

They then need to focus and hit their pace 25 or pace 50 under these conditions....over and over again. We will likely do 4 repeats of these push 25/50 sprints with a small swim down after the 4 repeats. The 4 repeats are then done 3 or 4 times through. At this level of swimming, the vast majority of swimmers already have the technical aspects down pat. They spend 4 or 5 years with me learning how to train specifically for their race and how to [properly recover from workout to workout](#). That is where the major focus of our training lies.

5. Patti Rothwell – Head Coach, Tempo Aquatics

"You've got to slow down to go fast."

This references the value of a long, powerful stroke, even in sprinting...[especially in sprinting...as evidenced by the star sprinter, Alex Popov](#).

8 TIPS FOR MORE EXPLOSIVE FLIP TURNS (AND FASTER TIMES)

DOLPHIN KICK VS FREESTYLE KICK: WHAT SWIMMERS SHOULD KNOW

5 REASONS SWIMMERS SHOULD WRITE DOWN THEIR GOALS

HOW TO CONQUER FEAR OF FAILURE AND SWIM FAST WHEN IT COUNTS



You will never see a successful athlete who does not have great technique. The development of proper skills will lead to great technique. Simply put, anyone can train central movements, the big ones, but great success lies in the mastery of the peripheral, the fine details and edges.

7. Alan Swanston – Head Coach, Newmarket Stingrays

I am just an Assistant Coach... the real coach is inside each swimmer.

8. Steve Pickell — Head Coach, SoCal Aquatics Association

"Don't be late to the dance." Meaning make sure you're not out of the race before it starts. This is especially useful for a swimmer that tends to go out to slow in races.

9. DeAnne Preyer — Head Coach, Zenith Aquatic Program

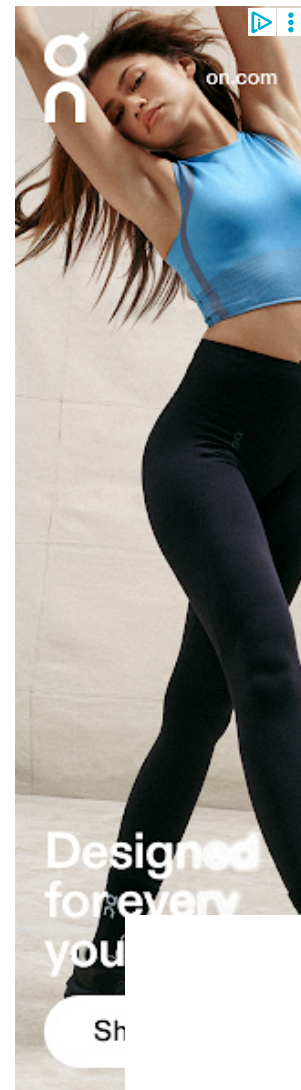
For budding swimmers who struggle to do legal **breaststroke kick**, put flip flop sandals on their feet and have them kick. When they flex their feet correctly the shoe stays on; If the shoe comes off, the kid has instant feedback to re-position their foot/feet.

10. Nicolas Chevalier — Head Coach, WEST Coast Aquatics

I believe honesty is crucial to the athletes success, both in the pool and later in life. As coaches, we strive for perfection from our athletes but must keep in mind that it is an unobtainable goal. Consequently, we must **teach the athletes how to cope with failure** and embrace the never-ending path to constant improvement and growth.

11. Andreas Roestenberg — Head Coach, New Jersey Race Club

ADVERTISEMENT



At our club we try to get the swimmers “comfortable being uncomfortable” we train 9 times a week and most of our training is race based training to get the swimmers used to training at high speeds and that definitely makes them uncomfortable most of the time. So it’s important to get “comfortable being uncomfortable.”

See Also: [The 6 Best Gift Ideas for Swimming Coaches](#)

12. Cynthia Bandaruk – Head Coach, Splash Aquatics

When working on **backstroke** technique we do a series of drills: Robot Drill, 6 kick drill, wave drill. During the drill set each swimmer will place a quarter on their forehead. The quarter helps with 2 things. (1) keeping the eyes looking up and seeing their arms during the recovery, (2) keeps the head still. If the kids don’t drop their quarter we let them keep it!

13. Jennifer Beech — Head Coach, Temecula Swim Club

Know the difference between good pain and bad pain. Good pain is usually the soreness you feel after hard training sets. Embrace the good pain because its your body telling you that it will become stronger and faster.

14. Joe Bublitz — Head Coach, Livonia Community Swim Club

Allow yourself to be great, by taking advantage of every opportunity to pursue excellence. By advancing yourself and learning through every experience, and every moment. Advance every skill in practice, develop weaknesses, and grow your strengths.

15. Matt Gianiodis — Head Coach, Michigan State University

Before your event visualize your **walls: how many**



how far each pullout will go. Plan your walls ahead and train your plan every day.

16. Eric Kramer — Head Coach, NORAC Swimming

Here at NORAC we are big supporters of the book "The Talent Code" by Daniel Coyle. Efficient swimming is the key to future high performance swimming. All sections of our program have one major goal – to continually improve their skills until they leave for post-secondary studies.

17. Ken Sygit — Head Coach Blue Water Swim Club & St. Clair High School

What I Tell my Athletes:

"Everyone wants to swim fast, but very few will take the time and learn how to do it, stroke technique is EVERYTHING."

What I Tell My Coaching Staff:

"Good Swim: Good Swimmer..... Bad Swim; Bad Coach."

18. Sarah Eubanks — Head Coach, Tecumseh Tigersharks

One of my favorite things to tell swimmers is "don't worry about things you can't control." The water temperature, size of blocks, who you are competing against... **Concentrate on the things you do have control over...** Your start, streamline, kicks off the wall, breathing pattern. Your race is the only thing you have the power to control.

19. Pierre Simard — Head Coach, CT-33 North Bay Thunderbirds Swim Club

Swimmers and coaches should take nutrition for athletes as serious as the quality and quantity of their training sets. Nutritionally packed foods such as some raw cashews, pecans, hazelnuts, fresh cut veggies and fruit give the swimmers body the fuel it needs to



fructose, and glucose is key to a healthy athlete's diet. What is crucial to a swimmer is fueling the body as fast as possible after final, rather than waiting at a restaurant for a full meal. Swimmers ideally should have good, nutritional snack immediately after their last event and 30 minutes after their last event giving the body the maximum time to digest before going to bed. Water is key during the weekend, not some artificial coloured commercial drinks. Lots of water (minimum 8 glasses a day) will flush the waste that needs to be clear from the athletes bodies for optimum health and performance.

20. Kelton Graham — Head Coach, Club Wolverine

One of most complicated strokes to teach is breaststroke. With so many variations of the stroke it's hard to figure out what is the best way to teach it. One thing that I've noticed that just about all really good breaststrokers do is called the "line." And what that means is that while you are breathing, you should try to drive your upper body forward and place your head between your arms, lock your elbows, touch your thumbs together and become about as streamlined as you can possibly be (without putting your hands on top of each other.)

If you can get into this position, this will eliminate about 85% of most breast stroke errors and the cool thing about this is that this applies to the 50,100, and 200 breast strokes. The only difference is how long you hold the line.

21. Mark Sulger — Head Coach, Sahuarita Aquatics

Here is my top thing that has changed our team dramatically: the Finis snorkel and fins!

We have trained 1/2 our daily workouts with the snorkel for the past two years. Strokes have improved exponentially for us. We doubled the amount of swimmers qualifying for state. Had 4 swimmers qualify for Junior Olympics and are sold on the benefits of



22. Nick Castillo — Head Coach, HHSC

I would have to say my best tip I always tell my kids before they swim is,

"Swim your Race! Think like a Bumble Bee, Race like a Race horse! "

I love saying this to my swimmers, its very important to understand you have to think about your races. In some swimmers if they see another swimmer next to them, or around them racing in a meet, they tend to start swimming that swimmers race. I try to teach my swimmers to race the clock and swim your race.

Bumble Bees think and they are humble. They fly when others don't think they can.

And we train like race horses, so come meet time, we race like them!

23. William Dillon — Head Coach, Jennings County Swim Club

Swimming is **all about underwater dolphin kicks**. Force yourself on fly, back, free to do a minimal number of kicks off every wall and try to continually increase that number. If it helps put a cone underwater and force yourself to kick past it on every wall.

24. Larry Zoller — Head Coach, Mount Vernon Swim Club

I swam in the 60's and coached since 1971 and still going strong at 66. The one thing that I always try to do is learn what the latest trends, coaching approaches and technological assets are. But I put a little skeptical twist to actually incorporating it into my program. I think a lot of the popular scientific coaching trends are poorly researched and don't stand up to the "test of time".

I never got into the "stretching trend" that started in the



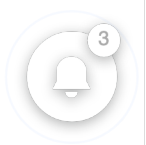
observed is that many of the hyper flexible swimmers were the better swimmers but they had an inherited tendency to that flexible. If a person who was less flexible worked on their flexibility it didn't make them a better swimmer in correlation to improved flexibility. But yet so many programs spend hours on stretching every week. They wasted a lot of time on something that had no correlation to their improvement. I think the latest trend of dryland training is headed in the same direction. I think some of the extremely weak or unfit swimmers do benefit but most swimmers are wasting their time. No one has yet to prove the increased measurable muscle strength in the weight room actually makes every or even most swimmers faster. Yet as coaches we are "brainwashed" in clinics that hours should be spent doing dryland because the college coaches do it. I've actually seen many swimmers not maintain their improvement curve or get slower as they get stronger in the weight room or become obsessed with their "out of water" fitness routines.

I think the time we spend in the pool training should not be compromised by time spent out of the pool. Training hard in the water is what makes a swimmer fast. The now debunked concept of hyper stretching and the present trend of dryland just dilute and mislead many coaches/swimmers to think there is another way to achieve success other than doing hard training in the pool.

25. Pam Araujo — Head Age Group Coach Brentwood SeaWolves

Have your age group swimmers wear socks when they are learning backstroke kick. they should try to kick their socks off (proper kicking technique).

26. Harmilee Cousin III — Co-Head Age Group Coach, Schroeder North Division at Walter Schroeder Aquatic Center / Schroeder YMCA Swim Team



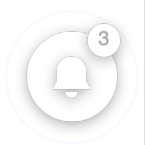
how he uses that time. Because time is a finite construct, it is foolish to go through life wasting time and doing things for the fun of it. As an athlete, your time is so precious to be experimenting with your training. So discovering the purpose for what you are doing becomes imperative; no, detrimental to your athletic existence. I define purpose as the original intent for the creation of a thing, that was in the mind of the creator of the thing. So then, purpose is the reason for the creation of a thing. Purpose is the "why" for a thing.

"Why" is the most important question in life. It is possible to know where you are going, when you have to go, what you are going to do and who you are going with; but not know why you are going? The same thing can be said about your training. Until you discover the purpose for what you are doing in practice, you will never experience complete fulfillment in both training and racing. This is something I start to teach to my 11-12 year olds and really start to hammer home with my 13-14 year olds. I encourage them to know and attempt to understand why they are doing what they are doing everyday in practice.

27. Mike Milliman – Head Coach, Oakwood Athletic Club

I think it is most important to focus on good streamline and an upward emphasis of the kick with the toes just breaking the surface.

From experience over the years (50 or so), I feel the cause is the swimmer thinking directional. That is on the freestyle the kick emphasis is on the down beat or the top of the foot. Frequently you can see the emphasis in backstroke with novice swimmers emphasizing the downbeat on the bottom of their foot. Two quick fixes that have worked fairly well for me over the years. For the 8-UN, I get in the water with them, have them in the face down streamline position, hold them at the hips. Then I tell them that I want them to kick as fast as they can (freestyle), and that I am going to quickly turn them over while they continue with the



(in my opinion) a good fast back kick. I praise them and emphasize that this is the way they should always kick on the back. My post verbal key is to "kick up".

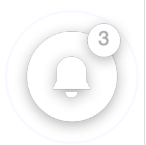
For older swimmers, something quite similar. Have the swimmer push off of the wall, fast kick freestyle, and before they get to the back flags rotate quickly to their back and keep kicking. Most often the swimmer gets the feel of the kick with a couple of tries.

28. Eric Laitinen — Head Coach, Canby Swim Club

Many years ago there were a lot of different rules. In backstroke you could stand on the gutter when you started. It was easy to really launch yourself into the air and still get into streamline before you entered the water. I was looking at my 11-12 group and notice they never go their hips up and didn't really dive into the water on their starts. Now these are A/B swimmers that have some experience I would not try this with inexperienced or 8 and under swimmers. I thought what would happen if they started by standing on the gutter. We tried just diving off the gutter backwards until they got it. It takes several attempts before they get comfortable. Then you move to standing on the gutter start. Do that a few times and then move it back into normal position. Not everyone gets this right away, but I got some great results getting them to get their hips up and actually dive into the water.

29. Mandi Smith — Head Coach, Red Deer Catalina Swim Club

The best advice I've ever received or can give to new coaches is "pick something and be great at it". When you first start working with a group of kids or a program it can seem incredibly overwhelming and hard to decide where to start and how to have everyone be successful. In picking a skill, stroke, or race component to excel at, you're able to gain some focus and move the group as a whole toward a common goal. You as the coach get to become an expert in that area and you and your team gains confidence in their skills



complex as a specific race strategy execution. Decide as the coach what you excel at instructing and what you believe is key to fast racing and help your kids be as passionate about that component of their sport as you are. As you grow with your program be prepared to grow your focus, before you know it, you'll be an expert in lots of components of this sport and you'll have some phenomenal results!!

30. Tony Batis — Head Coach, Palo Alto Stanford Aquatics

We use the term 4dr (dolphin rule) for coming off every freestyle wall as a minimum. This encourages our swimmers to get better on underwater kicking and promotes efficiency. We add dr to their kick counts as they get better.

31. Kyle Messmore — Head Coach, Viper Aquatics

Tips for Developing As A Distance Swimmer—

Two main technique points:

(1) Swim with a bent-elbow recovery. This takes a lot of stress off of your shoulders during high-volume training periods.

(2) Swim in the "front quadrant" style (near full catch-up; we call it "3/4 catch-up"). This promotes a long body line, and allows you to take the fewest strokes per length.

In training:

(1) If you want to become a great distance swimmer, work to become the best kicker on your team. Kick is the foundation for any swimmer, but a powerful kick in the second half of a distance race is a weapon that will separate you very quickly from the pack.

(2) As you challenge yourself to swim both faster and



progressively lower stroke count. If you can master the “stroke count and time” mentality—swimming as fast as you can as efficiently as you can—then you are preparing yourself for great distance efforts!

32. Matthew Crum — Head Coach, Oregon City Swim Team

Based on influences from Milt Nelms, Bill Boomer, Alex Nikitin, and Franz Resseguie I have come to understand the importance of an athlete feeling balanced in the water. Just like running and walking, to efficiently transfer energy from our body to forward motion we need to be balanced. This can probably be seen easiest with the breaststroke. Generally we tell a swimmer to pull, kick, glide and really on the glide we want them to reset so they are not overexerting themselves. So instead of the passive “glide” on the extension I like to encourage my breaststrokers to actively “balance” on the extension. There are multiple ways to work on balance. One of my favorites is to go three cycles and balance for three seconds and then restart.

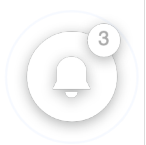
33. Tyler McKee — Head Coach, WaterWorks Swimming

There are hundreds of things that go through the mind of a swimmer during an Individual Medley race, but if they can remember 4 key steps, the pain will be worth the time. Keep butterfly long and smooth, build tempo in backstroke with arms, focus on breaststroke’s efficiency it is the key stroke, and drive home with the legs on freestyle.

34. David Marsh — Head Coach/CEO, SwimMAC

A swimmer should always work on distance per stroke first, and once they have the desired stroke rate, then add in tempo.

35. Kurt Schallitz – Head Coach, Livermore Blue Dolphins



To improve your kick efficiency in Breaststroke by up to 60% make sure your kick width is EXACTLY 1/4 your total body length. Doing so will cause the vortices generated at the feet to sheer off, leading to increased efficiency and propulsion. The effect is so powerful that you will feel yourself surging significantly further with less energy. However, kicking even a little bit too wide or too narrow cancels this effect, so it needs to be practiced until it become habit.

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39

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B *I* U                            

Great article you have here. Full of inspiring tips from great coaches. They have different views and tips. I wonder which of which are best to use?

+ 0 0 - Reply

chris

🕒 9 years ago

I love to swim

+ 2 0 - Reply

Coach Mike M

🕒 9 years ago

What if we just read the above sentiments and thought about each with a focused approach to what may or may not work within our programs? One of the many reasons we're successful as coaches and athletes is that we're able to try new and different ideas that are unique to our programs. All the knowledge and fundamental know how is a wonderful part of the coaching toolbox, however, our presentation of those ideas/ideals is what makes the athletes better. Our sport continues to develop because great coaches have the ability to discover ways to teach and inspire that material; implementing these lessons to each individual on their team. That's what separates the good programs from the great ones!

+ 0 0 - Reply

sabo okaka

🕒 9 years ago

This site is very encouraging

+ 0 -1 - Reply

Henry Blacly

🕒 9 years ago

There is some great material here, thank you. As a coach in Australia, my tip is to start beginners with freestyle for the



strokes. Then bring in the other strokes firstly using the kickboard.



Mohamed

🕒 9 years ago

Fantastic



Load Rest of Comments

ABOUT OLIVIER POIRIER-LEROY

Olivier Poirier-Leroy is a former national-level swimmer, swim coach, and best-selling author. His writing has been featured on USA Swimming, US Masters Swimming, NBC Sports Universal, the Olympic Channel, and much more. He

has been involved in competitive swimming for most of his life. Starting off at the age of 6 ...

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