

## Super Swim Technique

Fall is the time to revamp your swim technique. Constantly wrestling with “going fast” during the season can cause dramatic flaws in your biomechanics. Having your athletes practice a few key drills that are universal for all levels will greatly enhance their early season development.

Selecting drills out of a hat is not going to help all of your athletes’ progression. However, there are a select set of drills that cross-over between the developing and competitive athletes. The off-season is a golden time to incorporate one drill/workout. The drills can be rotated and introduced over a one to two week period – then repeated. Following is a sequential drill set that will teach the athlete the proper entry including the catch and setting the elbow on the front end of the freestyle.

1. Practice an entry spot that is in line with the shoulder. This “wider” entry prevents crossing over to midline which causes a dropped elbow and a lateral wag with the hips. If the athlete has difficulty feeling this spot, have them raise their head for several strokes and visually site the correct spot.
2. Start with an entry halfway between a fully outstretched arm and the top of your shoulder. Elbow flexion should be about 140°.
3. Pitch the hand so all 4 fingers and thumb enter at the same time.
4. Keep the entry depth shallow! Don’t drive your hand downward. Maintain a slight trajectory downward – holding a slightly higher position with the elbow. This is a key step for setting up the front end. Start by teaching your athletes to stop the front end arm extension at 150° simultaneously adding zero rotation from the hips. This is an extremely “flat” stroke but again will provide the necessary step to feel and understand this phase. The analogy is to visualize a swimmer on a stiff surfboard with a shallow catch and high elbow position.
5. Incorporate a slight lengthening of the stroke on the entry to 170° extension – again with no hip roll, but rotate the torso (from lower ribs). This will teach the athlete to use the abdominals and lats during this phase.
6. A slight wrist flexion and simultaneous high “set” with the elbow will ensure that the swimmer grabs hold of the H<sub>2</sub>O on the front end.
7. Always, always, always reinforce a head position that keeps the head neutral or looking downward. H<sub>2</sub>O level is mid head – not hairline.
8. The entry hand should be 3-6” deep when you initiate the catch and once the pressure is felt on the forearm increase the tempo or pull from this position to slightly under the shoulder line. Saying the word “quick” will enforce this faster catch and elbow set phase.

9. Putting it all together – practice a slight pause as the arm extends on the entry and until the recovery arm is opposite your shoulder before implementing step #8. This creates a slight hitch in the stroke – not a steady windmill turnover.

10. You can emphasize the entire phase by having your swimmer put one paddle on and concentrating on the steps mentioned above. A set of 3 to 5X50, then switch hands is a great start. Good luck.