

Off-Season Swimming – A time to learn efficiency and strengthen your “core” skills

At ***One with the Water***[®], we teach freestyle that is efficient as well as strong, fluid and fast. It can take anywhere from six months to a year to change your old swimming habits into a more efficient stroke. It will feel very strange to your body and muscles.

The power in swimming and particularly freestyle comes from your core and your hips. For correct hip rotation, think about rotating from your thighs.

1. Using your core
 - (a) provides forward movement
 - (b) gives you momentum for the over-water arm recovery, and
 - (c) allows for the rotation of your body through/around the pivot point of your down stroking arm.

Using the above, it is imperative that one arm remain ahead of you reaching with hard hands to the other side of the pool, with slightly downward fingers. This is important because it guides you and supports you on the “barrel” as it is most often called.

The arm doing the pulling (as you breath to the opposite side), gets its strength from your *latissimus dorsi* muscles. This should feel like you are climbing out of the pool with arms wide, like a pull-up with your forearms flat on the pool deck. This is tricky to get at first, but it is much more powerful than moving the arm with small muscles of the shoulders. There is a lot of power that comes from the hand sweeping in toward the centre line. We can teach you some sculling drills to help you find this powerful sweep.

Your core muscles are the largest group of muscles in your body and should be used the most so that you can save your arms and legs for the cycling and marathon run.

For the open-water swimming events, we recommend only occasionally lifting the head for sighting, and in conjunction with a breath. The rest of the time one should be swimming and breathing by rolling onto your side, maintaining the barrel hold.

Kenneth Rippetoe
Ben Odell