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SINGAPORE
TRAINING GUIDE - SWIMMING

To Santa

**RACHAEL'S TOP
TIPS FOR
SWIMMING**

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& Former GB swimmer





TIP 1 - BREATHING

Even the most efficient swimmer won't go very far if they haven't got their breathing under control. I see so many people trying to breathe in and out through their mouth as quickly as possible when taking a breath to the side or holding it in until the very last minute.

The key is to take a breath in through the mouth when your head is turned to the side and slightly out of the water. And then when your head is looking down in the water, trickle breathes out through your nose.

This shouldn't be an aggressive expulsion of air, it should be long and slow, therefore when you are going to take your next breath in a few strokes time, you can control your intake rather than gasping for air. You want breathing in the water to be effortless, just like it is on land.

Practices:

- **Find your rhythm** - Know how many strokes you are going to do before your next breath. That could be every other stroke or every three if you can breathe bilaterally. Get into this rhythm.
- **Wear a snorkel** - this will help while practicing this technique because you won't have to think about your breathing as much and it forces you to breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.

TIP 2 - LEG KICK

They say the leg kick is the fifth stroke as it is a crucial part of swimming. If you don't have a constant leg kick your legs will sink, which causes a lot of drag and resistance in the water. Ultimately the aim of swimming is to create as little resistance and drag in the water to move faster through it. Keeping your body on the surface of the water with as little effort as possible is essential to swimming faster and more efficiently.

You commonly see people trying to kick their legs as hard as they can, but obviously this doesn't last long. Keep a constant flutter kick throughout your whole stroke. You should feel your feet splashing on the surface of the water.

Practices:

- **Leg kick** - get a kick board and practice doing lengths by just kicking. If you get a sore neck doing this you can put your snorkel on. This position will also mirror your normal swimming position.
- **Use flippers/fins** - this can help build strength in your legs and keep your body high in the water.
- **Wear proper swimmers** - this is mainly for men. Trying to swim in board shorts isn't the most ideal outfit for swimming. Not only is the extra weight dragging your hips and legs down and making your life a lot harder, but it's also causing extra resistance in the water. It's time to invest in some speedos if you want to swim fast!



TIP 3 - ARM POSITION

A lot of recreational swimmers' arm position is a big area to fix, both above water and underwater. In the recovery phase (when your arm is out of the water), your arm shouldn't swing to the side. It should stay as close to your body as it can. Your elbow should be pointing towards the sky and your hand should be near your armpit as you go through the stroke.

The underwater phase is crucial as this is where you get most of your propulsion. Your 'catch' is where you first start pulling the water. Again, we want to be as efficient as possible, so it is ideal to start your stroke near the surface of the water. I see a lot of swimmers hand enter the water and dig down towards the floor and they have missed half of their catch.

As a child, you were probably taught to make the figure S as you pull through the water. This is mainly because children's bodies aren't strong or developed enough to take all the force through their shoulders especially when they are still growing. As an adult, it is much more efficient to pull straight back to your hip and push the water backwards instead of to the sides.

Practices:

- **Zip up drill** (a favourite of mine!) - when your arm is in the recovery phase, have your thumb brush up against your body from your hip to your armpit (as if you were doing up a zip)
- **Catch up drill** (ideally with fins on) - have your left arm extended out in front while the right does a stroke, when your right arm touches the left it then does a stroke while the right is extended out in front.

TIP 4 - MAKE TIME FOR SHOULDER MOBILITY & ACTIVATION

The vast majority of adults have a sit down job where they tend to have poor body posture pretty much all day. Treat a swim training session the same as a gym session. You wouldn't go straight into lifting weights without a warm up. The same goes for after a session, spend some time stretching/foam rolling and your body will thank you when you next get in the water.

Practices:

- Use an exercise band for:
 - Shoulder dislocations
 - Theraband external rotation
 - Band pull apart
- Foam rolling / release ball
- Arm swings

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