

## 10 Swim Coaching Principles

The following principles are fundamental to the development of efficient and effective swimming, at all ages and levels. They should underpin the design of training programmes, and they should be properly understood by all coaches and swimmers, alike.

1. Swimming is a technique-driven sport. Differences between elite swimmers are usually the result of differences in skill, rather than of differences in fitness and strength. The acquisition of skill always needs to come first.
2. Great swimmers do not train with poor technique. Neither should other swimmers.
3. The brain will learn both correct and incorrect techniques equally well. Supervision, quality control and constructive feedback are essential, especially in the early stages.
4. For every technique fault there is a drill to correct it. For every drill there is another drill to correct the fault within the drill (i.e. no drill is perfect). If you're looking for a magic cure to every stroke problem, there are none. Constancy of practise is the key.
5. Swimming drills isolate the difference between generating propulsion and overcoming resistance. Propulsive force without proper streamlining is wasted. Great streamlining without propulsion is ineffective. Drills should form a core part of all swim training programmes.
6. A drill done 100% right is 100% right. A drill done 99% right is 100% wrong. Drills must not be rushed.
7. Teaching drills correctly is like teaching completely different strokes. Quality, not quantity or speed, is the hallmark of effective use of drills.
8. New drills should be taught near the beginning of a session, when swimmers' minds and bodies are most receptive to learning. Once learned, drills may be applied throughout the training session, including when swimmers are fatigued.
9. Swimming drills are about performing fewer strokes with precise effort and concentration in each stroke. Drills have nothing to do with easy swimming.
10. Always have a long-term plan of swimmer development. Establish a learning and development progression through drills, which includes (in this order):
  - a) the introduction of a skill, and quality practise (at a slow pace) until mastery.
  - b) practising the skill under a performance criterion (e.g. minimising stroke-count).
  - c) practising the skill within a time limit (e.g. repeating drills on a given set-off time).
  - d) practising the skill with both performance criteria and time limits.