

Coach Blythe's Swim Workouts are appropriate for the self-coached swimmer and triathlete, as well as for coaches looking for workout content for the athletes they train.

THE BOOK

This is the first book in a 3-book-series called "Coach Blythe's Swim Workouts". It contains 100 workouts that focus on improving general swimming efficiency, with specific workouts for each of the competitive swimming strokes. The workouts in this book blend swimming drills and conditioning sets that total up to 2,000 yards/meters. Each workout is accompanied by a "Focus Point" to help swimmers zero in on stroke improvements by eliminating drag, improving feel for the water, and swimming in a core-centered manner.

THE AUTHOR

Blythe Lucero has been coaching swimming for more than 25 years. She currently oversees two teams, Berkeley Aquatic Masters and Berkeley Barracudas, where she brings her passion for swimming to the development and training of swimmers of all ages and abilities, from novice to world class. Blythe grew up in Berkeley, California in a large athletic family. She swam competitively in her youth, achieving All-American status in college. In addition to coaching swimming, she trains Water Safety Instructors for the Red Cross. She also works as a professional graphic designer. The 3-book-series "Coach Blythe's Swim Workouts" follows the successful book "The 100 Best Swimming Drills" published in 2007, and "Masters Swimming - A Manual" published in 2006.



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COACH BLYTHE'S SWIM WORKOUTS

Technique Swim Workouts

BLYTHE LUCERO

Technique Swim Workouts

BLYTHE LUCERO

- Contains 100 workouts
- Practice sessions up to 2000 yards/meters
- Learn technique focus points



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TECHNIQUE SWIM WORKOUTS

DEDICATION

To all those amazing Barracudas

TECHNIQUE SWIM WORKOUTS

Blythe Lucero



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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

I have always been of the opinion that it is best for a swimmer to workout with a coach present. I have developed this conclusion over many years, first as a swimmer, then as a swimming teacher and coach. This opinion has been reinforced frequently, both during my own experience in the water, as an athlete in training, and then from the deck, while observing the development of swimmers.

When a coach is part of the equation, there to design training content and routines, guide the progression of development, and provide motivation and challenge when needed, a swimmer can concentrate on swimming! Of all the things a coach does, one of the primary benefits lies in his or her ability to observe stroke technique in terms of swimming efficiency. This is an important part of a swimmer's progress at all stages of development. For beginning and intermediate swimmers, the coach's observation is critical to identifying technique errors, doing it early, and giving corrective feedback long before those errors become habit. For advanced swimmers, the coach's observation takes the form of refining stroke technique, and providing reminders so the swimmer remains focused on maintaining the most efficient style even during the most strenuous training phase. I believe a coach's observation and feedback facilitates the most direct path for a swimmer's improvement.

There is an unspoken partnership between athlete and coach. In the most successful of these relationships, both are engaged in all aspects of the pursuit. A positive outcome comes from a situation where both athlete and coach are dedicated to the training program, committed to pursue improvement through specific and frequent practice, and focused on the goal. I feel that it is really too much to expect the athlete to do both jobs. Training can be extremely demanding, and as if that is not enough, life is full of distractions and responsibilities. Some days it is just easier for the swimmer to say, "I'm sleeping in today," "I'm getting out early," or "I'm going to skip that set," if not for the fact that the he or she knows that the

INTRODUCTION

coach is there on deck, holding up his or her end of the bargain. I believe that a strong swimmer/coach relationship provides the strongest foundation for good results from a training program.

Having made these points, there is something to be said for self-guided discovery. If an athlete is successful in maintaining motivation, taking on challenge and remaining focused on the goal, the process of working on stroke technique can be a very valuable experience. It takes a great deal of concentration and analysis to isolate and identify stroke problems, and to refine stroke technique. A swimmer who is able to do this well, and consistently, can find the experience of working out on their own to be quite satisfactory.

Over the last 20 years, I have encountered quite a few requests for workouts that swimmers can do on their own. I have provided workouts to swimmers, on a temporary basis, to do on vacation, or on work assignment out of town. Each time I have done so, I have carefully prefaced the set of workouts with specific guidelines to the swimmer.

I will do the same here:

In addition to conditioning, workout is your chance to practice swimming right. It is of the utmost importance to pay close attention to your stroke mechanics, and be very in tune with what makes swimming more and less efficient. Without your coach there to observe, it is now your job to identify and correct stroke problems and continually refine your technique. You must use your own senses to give you feedback. Above all, you must promise not to lose sight of the fact that everyday you swim you can learn more.

This is the first in a three book series, called “Coach Blythe’s Swim Workouts.” This book contains technique-based workouts, designed to help swimmers focus on the mechanics of swimming. The second book in the series contains conditioning workouts, designed to help swimmers build swimming capacity, strength and endurance. The third book in the series contains challenging workouts, designed for

Technique Swim Workouts

advanced level training. Swimmers may use the material in these books to practice and train on their own, when the swimmer's coach is not present, or to create their own training routine, with the guidelines above. Also, these books can be useful to coaches looking for workout content to use in the training programs they design for their teams.

The 100 workouts in this book focus on increasing general swimming efficiency by improving swimming technique. The workouts blend stroke drills and drill/swim bridging sets, in a format that will help build better technique, and build the endurance required to perform that technique over time. Workouts in this collection total up to 2,000 yards/meters. Specific workouts are included for each of the competitive swimming strokes. Each workout is designed as a balanced practice session unto itself, with warm up, progressions of technique work, progressions of effort and a cool down.

Without the intent of discouraging anyone taking up the wonderful sport of swimming, this book is not a Learn to Swim manual. Users of the book are expected to have basic water skills, including the ability to be able to completely submerge and recover to a standing position, float, tread water, and more forward with arms and legs. As well as advanced beginner and intermediate level swimmers, this book is also appropriate for advanced swimmers seeking a “technique tune up,” in the journey toward more efficient swimming.





GETTING THE MOST OUT OF THIS BOOK

Working Out with a Purpose

Swimmers workout to achieve better swimming. Whether you define better swimming as more swimming capacity, endurance or more speed, better swimming is more efficient swimming. The workouts in this book are designed with one purpose: to help the swimmer increase swimming efficiency by making technique improvements. A more efficient swimmer is able to expend less energy, and therefore swim longer and farther with less fatigue. Swimming can then become a more rewarding activity. A swimmer who can swim longer without getting tired can then apply his or her attention and energy to building a good base of endurance. With increased swimming capacity, the swimmer may choose to train for faster swimming.

So, this collection of workouts is part of the process of becoming a better swimmer overall. This process does not happen immediately. It takes time, focus and practice. Patience and dedication are important qualities to bring with you in this process. If attention and time are given to swimming right, endurance, capacity for yardage and speed will happen.

The basic formula to keep in mind is this:

SWIMMING WELL + SWIMMING OFTEN = BETTER SWIMMING

Swimming Well

The first element in the formula for better swimming is swimming well. Swimming is mechanically complex, and it is easy to get distracted with the effort that is initially required to get from point A to point B. Remember that it is more important to be focused on perfecting the mechanical aspects of swimming before turning your focus to swimming more and more yards.

CORRECT PRACTICE

A respected swim coach once said, “Doing a drill 99 % correctly is 100 % wrong.” That seems harsh, but it is true. If a swimmer practices incorrectly, they are reinforcing poor technique. It is therefore a top priority to practice each drill, each stroke, each set as mechanically perfect as possible. At first it may seem very robot-like, even unnatural. Give it a chance. Remember that every skill improves with practice. Driving, typing and dancing are good examples of skills that improve with practice. We start by practicing them slowly, step-by-step. Then, gradually, they become comfortable, even automatic. There comes a time when we realize that we are performing a complex skill well, without thinking about it.

FOCUS POINTS

Each workout in this collection begins with a “Focus Point” to help swimmers zero in on specific issues that the workout emphasizes, through specially chosen drills and sets. “Focus Points” address important issues including body position, kick productivity, eliminating drag, improving feel for the water, alignment, swimming in a core-centered manner, stroke coordination and leverage. It is important to think about the particular focus point, or theme throughout the workout, in order to get the full benefit of stroke improvement exercises.

Each workout asks the swimmer to progressively build mechanical skills into a complete swimming stroke. Each step of the way, the swimmer should try to relate what he or she is asked to do to the “Focus Point.” At times, it will be frustrating and confusing. Drills can be awkward and clumsy at first. Again, remember to be patient, and keep trying!

Sometimes the point of a particular drill can be elusive. If a particular drill is continually not making sense to you, ask a coach for feedback. Remember, the first step in becoming a better swimmer is to swim correctly.

As the swimmer improves each aspect of his or her stroke, it positively affects another. One by one the pieces will fall into place.

Swimming Often

The second element in the formula for swimming well is swimming often. It is important to create a good workout routine that you can stick with. In addition to the considerations in this section, use your knowledge of your own experiences with other physical activities, and skill attainment to make a routine that works for you.

YOUR WORKOUT ROUTINE

It is well documented that frequency of practice is a key learning strategy. This means that the more often we are exposed to the skill we are trying to master, the faster the rate of learning. So, in general, a swimmer who swims four or five days a week will improve more quickly than a swimmer who swims once a week. This is something to keep in mind when planning your workout routine. If there is too much time between workouts, you will find yourself having to backtrack and repeat activities in order to refresh your memory and “feel” for the water, to regain the advances you made at your previous workout. A workout routine that keeps practice sessions closer together allows the swimmer’s body and mind to hold on to the forward steps taken at the previous workout, so that valuable repetition will work to reinforce and strengthen the swimmer’s understanding and muscle memory, instead of first having to re-establish it.

Workout frequency, however, must be carefully balanced with recovery time. Swimming well requires the use of almost every muscle in the body. It is a strenuous activity, especially as a swimmer is working on building capacity. Without ample rest between workouts, the swimmer cannot continue to adapt to the workload over time. A swimmer who is constantly fatigued is less motivated and less able to concentrate on the important skills they are practicing. This means that recovery time is an essential ingredient in becoming a better swimmer. So, in general a swimmer who swims four to five days a week will improve, over the long term, more quickly than a swimmer who swims seven days a week.

A workout routine of every other day is a good option for many swimmers. Some swimmers do well with a schedule of swimming two

days in a row, then taking a day off. For some, swimming each weekday, then taking weekends off works well. Developing a workout routine that works for you will take some trial and error. It is also something that will change over time as your skills and capacity for swimming increases.

In general, it is important to take at least two days off a week.

Always consult a doctor before beginning a fitness routine such as this.

WHEN ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

Sometimes, there comes a point where a swimmer has reached the limit of benefit from a workout. These workouts are demanding on two levels, both physically and mentally. It is easy to fall into the trap of thinking that a workout of only about 2,000 yards is easy enough to complete. Remember, completing the workout is only part of the challenge. Benefiting from the content of the workout is more important. To make sure this is happening, regularly ask yourself the following questions during your workout:

- Am I too tired to concentrate on the point of the workout?
- Am I just doing empty yards?

If the answer to either question is “yes,” then, it is time to stop. Start again tomorrow.

Also, if you find yourself struggling to make it through a set, you will not be able to concentrate of the point of the set. So, if the distances called for are overwhelming, cut them in half.

Achieving Better Swimming

By swimming well, and swimming often, a swimmer arrives at better swimming. It is important to remember that achieving better swimming is a process. It doesn't happen all at once, it occurs gradually and continually. It is important to be aware of your progress, and celebrate it along the way.