

# Total Immersion

by Terry Laughlin

The position of the body, not the pull of the arms, is the key to swimming. “Fitness is something that happens to you while you’re practicing good technique.” Champion swimmers attribute 70% to good technique and 30% to training. The fastest swimmers typically take the fewest strokes. **Learning to glide as far as possible after each stroke is the single most powerful skill to know.** The most efficient swimmers cut through the water on their sides, rolling from one side to another. It becomes a series of long glides linked by quick rolls as you stroke and change sides.

Let your hips set your stroke rhythm with purposeful rotation. When you want to swim more powerfully, put more snap in your hip rhythm. When you want to swim faster, put more speed in your hip rhythm. Compare my current stroke count at a slow length to a fast length. Most increase, but it shouldn’t. Get an average stroke count for 25 yards, then learn to stretch and glide longer until we reach 20 strokes for 25 yards. The only way to become a consistently efficient swimmer is to refuse to practice inefficient swimming.

The body rolls to breathe and the head just comes along for the ride. **Your body in the water glides best on its side, roll directly from one side to the other.** Using the hip and back muscles to snap the torso onto its side adds far more power. Drag increases exponentially as you speed up. The more efficient your stroke, the longer you can hold onto that aerobic state of grace. Bodyweight exercises are the best: push-ups, pull-ups, sit-ups, steps-ups, dips, squats, lunges, burpees...

Wetsuits allow you to swim 5% faster without working any harder.