



Tri Swim Coach Newsletter

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Swimming as a Metaphor

Dear Confirmed,



Nothing in life that's good comes easy or without some kind of adversity.

All sports require hard work, sacrifice, time, and concentration.

Swimming is a sport that combines the necessary physical conditioning, like what is required for running and cycling, with the technique, form, and focus of golf.

I don't think I need to tell you that swimming is a challenge. And as humans we *need* challenges in our lives, otherwise we lose our purpose!

So think of swimming as a metaphor for life, and enjoy each challenge that it brings you, no matter how impossible it may seem at first.

Today I'm going to revisit breathing, and an article from last year that you may have seen already, but is definitely worth reviewing. This is the topic I get the most questions on, and seems to be the biggest challenge in the triathlon swimming world.

Enjoy,
Kevin

"Only those who have the patience to do simple things perfectly will acquire the skill to do difficult things easily."
-Johann Friedrich von Schiller

[For help with the swim, click here!](#)

How to Master the Top 5 Challenges to Breathing in Freestyle

The most common question I hear in the triathlete world about the mysteries of swimming efficiently usually involves something with breathing. In freestyle, it is the first step to get your body position right. Then, for many, you throw in breathing and everything goes haywire! This has to do with lack of balance, using your head instead of your core to breath, and a few other factors.



Here are the top 5 challenges in learning how to breathe in freestyle, along with the remedies on how to get over these:

1. Not Getting Enough Air. There are a couple of reasons this typically happens in freestyle. First, make sure you breathe out all of your air before you rotate to take a breath. When learning, some people try to exhale and inhale while they are rolling to the side for air. There simply is not enough time for this! Your exhalations should only be in the water in the form of bubbles. At first the timing may seem difficult, but eventually you will get used to it. Second, you may be sinking as you breathe. Make sure you are rolling to the side to breathe, and not rotating your head and looking straight up. Practicing the side kicking and shark fin drills, as discussed in The Complete Guide and in the introductory 4-session online clinic you get by signing up for the Tri Swim Coach newsletter will also help you with this challenge.

2. Extended Arm Sinks While Taking a Breath. This is mainly a balance issue. While you breathe to one side, your other arm should be extending. For many swimmers, this extended arm pushes down into the water (elbow drops) and they are sinking while trying to inhale. The side kicking and shark fin drills will also help to improve this. Another drill also discussed in the materials that will help with this challenge is the fist drill, which forces you to not use your hands, therefore improves your balance in the water.

3. Speed is Sacrificed because of a “Pause” While Breathing. A typical scenario is that you feel like you’re cruising along just fine and then you take a breath and it feels like you’ve just lost all your momentum. To remedy this, when you breathe, concentrate first on breathing to the side (as in #1), then on having your mouth parallel to the water, instead of over the water. The latter will take a while to master, but once you do, it will take care of the pause, and improve your speed overall.

4. Difficulty breathing while navigating in a race. You need to look up to see where you are going, and at the same time grab a breath. How can you do both? Start with bilateral breathing (breathing on both sides every 3 strokes). This will help you to see about where you are without lifting your head up as much. When you need to lift your head up to sight, try not to look straight ahead- this will make your hips sink and throw you off balance. Instead, take a quick peek at your target, roll to the side to breath, and bring your head right back down into position.

5. Sucking In Water While Taking a Breath. In practice, this will sometimes occur because of #1 and #2 above. In a race, the waves may cause the inhalation of water instead of air (bilateral breathing will help here as well). The drills to practice to improve balance and avoid this unpleasant occurrence are the side kicking and shark fin drills, as well as the one-arm drill. To perform the one-arm drill, swim a full stroke with one arm while your other arm rests at your side. Breathe on the opposite side of the stroking arm. This is a difficult drill and takes some practice, but it will pay off! For more and to view this and other drills, see the [Full Package](#) from Tri Swim Coach.

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