

Tri Swim Coach



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Issue #4 – August 21st, 2003

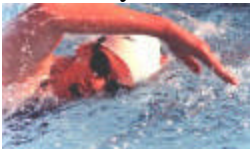
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Learning to Swim on your Side

By Kevin Koskella, Tri Swim Coach



When we learned to swim freestyle as children, most of us swim flat in the water, with little or no hip rotation as our arms are doing the majority of the work. Many triathletes and open water swimmers have found it necessary to change their stroke and swim more on their sides in order to conserve energy, swim faster, and get through potential rough water conditions with greater ease.

Rotating from side to side as you swim is a method that has been around for over 30 years. When Mark Spitz was gaining national recognition in the early 70's, many critics said his only problem is that he does this side-to-side action as he swims! Little did they realize just how revolutionary that stroke was. Science has now backed up this style of swimming, and great swim coaches like Howard Furby and Ernie Maglischo have popularized swimming on your side with many successful swimmers over the years.

Good swimming is about using the core of your body- hips, stomach, lower back, and chest. Top swimmers rotate the core of the body from one side to the other, while keeping the head fixed. When you rotate in this way, you move through the water more like a fish, or a boat, reaching further forward on each stroke, and maximizing your efficiency.

Here is a drill to begin practicing (you may use Zoomers or fins if you have them): Kick on your side with your left hand extended out and your right hand by your side. Keep your head down and locked to your shoulder. On the second length, switch sides and extend your right hand, with your left hand by your side. When looking down, you should be at about a 90-degree angle in the water. When you need air, roll all the way up into more of a 45-degree angle, take a few breaths, and repeat. Continue to practice this kicking drill and add in arm strokes as your side balance improves.

Swimming freestyle on your side may seem like a foreign concept at first. But with consistent practice, you will be able to swim more efficiently, resulting in faster swim times and greater energy conservation.

For fast, personal help on changing your stroke, [email me](#) to set up an appointment, or see our [Find a Coach](#) section if you are outside the Bay Area.

Training Tips

STROKE TIP #4: Try minimizing your kick as you train for swimming. Most people will kick extra hard to make up for lack of balance in the water. Minimizing your kick will allow you to improve your balance, as well as conserve energy.

For more stroke tips and articles, please visit <http://www.triswimcoach.com/>.

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Stay tuned for more swim training articles and tips in 3 more weeks!

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