

## **How to Swim Better - Become a Better Swimmer**

If you already know how to swim, becoming a better swimmer is the next step in the process. Doing so means increase in your speed, efficiency and relaxation in the water.

So, you want to improve your swimming ability or swim competitively, but aren't sure about the next step to swimming - or you have taken time off and want to get back into the swimming pool? How should you start swimming if you are a beginner, newbie, or novice (or starting swimming again), and once you do, what next? Here are a few things for swimmers to keep in mind as you splash through the swim pool.

- **Establish a few swimming goals.**

Set realistic, challenging steps to help you meet your objectives. What do you want to accomplish? Improved fitness? Racing ability? Alternate workout opportunities for cross training? A faster (or easier) first leg for your triathlon? Set goals for each workout; what do you want to get done today?

- **If possible, find a local swim team.**

It may be a USA Swimming, United States Masters, FVF Swim Team, or other type of team. Finding one that works for you can be a big plus for getting into the swimming routine. Besides the help that a little peer pressure provides, it can give you other sources of input as you develop and some social interaction to avoid monotony.

- **If you don't find a swim team that fits your needs, at least find a swimming pool.**

You can easily succeed on your own - stay focused on your goals and pack your workout gear the night before - this really helps the "I forgot it" self-excuse. If you have a choice, find both an indoor and outdoor pool to prevent interruptions in your routine due to inclement weather.

- **Determine a weekly swim training schedule.**

You will need to plan three to five 30 to 60 minute swim workouts each week (not including the time you spend changing into your suit or talking with the lifeguards). Do you want to work out at the same time each day, or vary your schedule? You might schedule longer workouts as you improve or if required by your goals.

- **Gather swimming gear.**

You will want comfortable goggles, several competitive style suits (baggy trunks are good for the beach, but are like wearing hiking boots for a run), a waterproof wristwatch, and a swim cap (to keep your hair off of your face or to keep warm). Often, workout gear, such as kick boards, pull buoys, flippers, and

hand paddles are available at the pool. Eventually, you may want to purchase these items for yourself, after you try several different styles to find what "suits" you best!

- **Write a swim workout.**

If you are on a team, this may be done for you by your coach). You can design your own workout or borrow ideas from someone else. You will usually accomplish more if you write down a specific workout and follow it. You may even make a season or yearly plan, and base your daily workouts on those guidelines. Your first workouts should be easy, as you build base mileage and work on your technique through the use of stroke drills. Include at least an adequate warm-up, main work set, and cool down. There will always be days when you want to get in and "just swim a few laps." This is fine - just be sure to get in the pool regularly.

- **Get started swimming**

Remember, as with any exercise routine, make sure that you are in an adequate state of health to start swimming. If in doubt, check with your physician. As you progress, keep track of your accomplishments in a training diary. Also remember to follow some simple rules of etiquette - swim counterclockwise in your lane (if that is the way it is done in your area), stay off of the person's feet in front of you, and if you need to spit, use the gutter!

- Now that you are in swimming shape, you may want to compete.

There are many possibilities. A few are Masters, Age Group, Park and Recreation, Open water, and Postal competitions. Find meets and choose races based on the goals you have set. They should present a slight challenge at first. As you gain experience and confidence, move up to increasingly more challenging events. This will keep you moving forward as you develop your swimming fitness.

## **Swim On!**

### **Your friends at FVF Aquatics Department**