

Get a Feel for the Water

Developing a solid “feel” for the water can enhance your technique and in turn help you become a faster swimmer. Improving your technique is not possible unless you can feel the subtle changes in water pressure on your body, arms, hands, legs and feet as you move through the water. Piling on the yards, just grinding out the laps, is not necessarily the quickest and most effective way to improve your swimming. However, developing solid technique through improving your feel for the water is a great step you can take to improve your swim time.

Developing a better feel for the water takes time, patience and practice. One of the easiest ways to accomplish this is to include various **sculling drills** in your swim sessions. Below are some of my favorites:

Front Scull—Float face down with your hands and arms extended in front of your body (streamline position). Press your arms outward with the pinky fingers elevated and then inward with the thumbs elevated—this is one full sweep. Keep the sweeps shoulder width and raise your head after 4-5 sweeps to breathe, and then repeat.

Mid Scull—Start in the same position as with the front scull, but drop your forearms so that the tips of your fingers are facing the bottom of the pool, elbows up. While keeping your elbows high, press your hands outward with the pinky fingers elevated and then inward with your thumbs elevated—this is one full sweep. Keep the sweeps under your body and raise your head after 4-5 sweeps to breathe, and then repeat.

Dog-Paddle Scull—Start in the same position as the front scull, and keeping your elbows high press your forearm/hand downward (as if you were doing the dog paddle), recover underwater and repeat with the other arm.

Sculling tips:

- Use a pull buoy so you can concentrate entirely on your arm movements to propel you through the water.
- Focus on “feeling” the water on both the inward and outward sweep.
- Keep constant pressure on the water by quickly changing the angle of your palm when moving from the inward to outward sweep.
- Emphasize controlled, deliberate movements—“you first need to slow-down, in order to speed-up.”

Once you take the time to incorporate sculling into your upcoming swim sessions, you will begin to get a better feel for the water and thus become a more efficient and, in turn, a faster swimmer.