

## Winter Swim Focus—Form, Balance and a Feel for the Water

Swimming is the most technically demanding of the three triathlon disciplines, and the winter months are an ideal time for athletes to improve their swim technique. This means taking the time to focus on form (drill work), balance (kicking) and a feel for the water (sculling). Athletes should ignore the pace-clock and, if swimming with others, resist the temptation to keep up with them. Swimming fast with poor technique will just reinforce old and often harmful habits. Sessions should be shorter and more frequent, if possible—four 30-minute sessions rather than two 60-minute sessions, for example. The shorter sessions allow athletes to hold their form for the entire session, and the more frequent sessions help develop a better feel for the water. Do not worry about losing fitness in the pool, for working on efficiency during the off-season will help maintain your aerobic engine while perfecting form, balance and feel.

For triathletes, swimming is more about efficient technique than levels of fitness or strength. The goal in the pool is to achieve perfect form and, thus, become a more efficient swimmer. In a triathlon competition, a more efficient swimmer emerges from the water well warmed up and ready for the bike—not exhausted and frustrated from having wasted energy due to poor form. Efficiency and the speed that it produces can only come after an athlete has achieved a solid base of good form, balance and feel and then developed these traits into habits. Working on these three aspects of swimming in the winter months will transform the body's efficiency in the water, so that it can perform at a more balanced, smooth, effortless and often faster level.

The included workouts are in the 2,400 to 2,500 yard/meter range. These distances can be adjusted to accommodate various levels of swimmers by increasing or decreasing the individual sets within the main set. For less advanced swimmers, using fins during the side kicking and other drills is always an option. Fins will allow the swimmer to focus on the drill at hand, rather than struggling to maintain a balanced position in the water. Using fins while kicking and swimming also helps develop ankle flexibility—just be sure that the swimmer eases into using the fins (too much too soon can cause strain on the muscles in the ankle area) and that they do not become dependent upon the fins.

### Killer Kick Workout

#### Warm-up:

200 swim, 200 kick with board, 200 pull (600)

#### Main set:

5 x 100 kick by 25's (15" Rest Interval): (500)

Right side kick, left side kick, six-beat kick, three-beat kick (500)

5 x 100 moderate swim (15" Rest Interval): (500)

10 x 50's kick with board, done as 25 hard, 25 easy (10" Rest Interval): (500)

#### Cool down:

100 easy swim, 100 easy kick (streamline on back), 100 easy pull (300)

**Total: 2400**

**Get a Feel for the Water Scull Workout****Warm up:**

100 swim, 50 kick with board 4 times through (600)

**Main set:**

6 x 50 (with pull buoy) done as 25 scull, 25 pull (300)

Front scull, mid scull, dog paddle scull

5 x 100 moderate swim (15" Rest Interval) (500)

6 x 50 (with pull buoy) done as 25 scull, 25 pull (300)

Sculls are front, mid and dog paddle

10 x 50 swim smooth and fast (15" Rest Interval) (500)

**Cool down:**

100 easy swim, 100 easy kick (streamline on back), 100 easy pull (300)

**Total: 2500**

**Drill, Baby Drill Workout****Warm up:**

50 swim, 50 kick, 50 pull two times through (300)

**Main set:**

5 x 100 drill by 25's (15" Rest Interval) (500)

Drill is 25 right-arm, 25 left-arm, 25 catch-up, 25 fast swim

4 x 75 swim, done as 25 fast, 25 easy, 25 fast (10" Rest Interval) (300)

5 x 100 drill by 25's (15" Rest Interval) (500)

Drill is 25 catch-up, 25 finger tip drag, 25 fist, 25 fast swim

4 x 75 swim, done as 25 easy, 25 fast, 25 easy (10" Rest Interval) (300)

4 x 50 drill done as 25 Tarzan, 25 swim (15" Rest Interval) (200)

10 x 25 swim fast (10" Rest Interval) (250)

**Cool down:**

200 easy swim, done as 25 double arm back stroke, 25 breast, 50 pull (200)

**Total: 2550**

The drills mentioned in this article are just a few; to view videos of these and more, go to <http://www.goswim.tv/> For written explanations of the free-style drills go to <http://www.coachbuxton.com/Drills-FreestyleSwim.pdf> and for the sculling drills, <http://www.coachbuxton.com/Article-GetAFeelForTheWater.pdf>

Remember, form work is not just for the winter months. As the season approaches, be sure to continue to include drilling, kicking and sculling sets within your athlete's swim sessions. Just a short set focusing on one aspect of their stroke will continue to develop their efficiency in the water and in the long run, their speed. Mix-up the workouts, keep it fresh, interesting, challenging and FUN!

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