

PERFECT PRACTICE: GETTING THE MOST OF YOUR TRAINING

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RACES ARE WON AND LOST, LONG BEFORE YOUR MEETS

Most serious swimmers put in the same amount of time training each and every week. Why is it that only a select few of these athletes will end up getting more out of their practices, and as a result, improve faster and go further in the sport than the majority of their teammates? The answer has to do with **HOW** they practice.

IT'S THE QUALITY OF YOUR TRAINING THAT ALWAYS COUNTS, NOT THE QUANTITY

Diligently making every practice, each week and putting in all that required yardage by itself will not make you a champion. What will always help you take your swimming to the next level is the **quality** of your work. Simply put, what you put into your training is key. For example, if you go through those long brutal sets distracted, slowing down when things get hard, wishing you were elsewhere, or focusing on how much you hate this set, then this kind of "dead yardage" training will always hold you back when it comes to race time.

However, if you train smart and you focus on all the little details while you're swimming, if you make sure your stroke is correct, you're working on integrating the changes your coach has suggested, your turns are precise, and you push yourself to keep going hard when you don't want to anymore, then you will find that you get far more out of your practices and race faster when it counts!

"PERFECT PRACTICE" IS TRAINING MENTALLY, PHYSICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY

This is the highest quality that you can train at.

The vast majority of swimmers just train **PHYSICALLY**

- Attend most if not all practices
- Usually make most sets
- Do dryland and weight training
- Concentration is not always on what they're doing
- Oftentimes wish practice was over or they were elsewhere

A much smaller percentage of swimmers train both **PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY**

- Attend all practices, dryland and weights
- Concentrate very carefully on what they're doing while they're doing it
- Conscientious about stroke technique, starts and turns
- Make a point to integrate corrections from coaches into work

A select few athletes use "perfect practice" and train **PHYSICALLY, MENTALLY AND EMOTIONALLY**

- Attend all practices, dryland and weights
- Focus very carefully on what they're doing while they're doing it
- Conscientious about stroke technique, starts and turns
- Integrate corrections from coaches into training
- **Love to swim and want to be at practice**
- **Have an emotionally compelling, BIG goal in their mind whenever they train** (That is, they regularly ask themselves, "How is what I'm doing right now, going to help me get to my goal?")

FIND AN EMOTIONALLY COMPELLING REASON TO TRAIN

Swimming is a very difficult sport to do well. Ultimate success involves a huge time commitment, sacrifice and almost continuous, year-round training and the discipline to regularly push yourself outside your comfort zone. To become a champion, you must learn to tolerate a tremendous amount of pain and discomfort. In order to do this every day, you need very powerful motivation. This motivation will always come to you from your personal reasons for swimming. Swimming is much too hard a sport to do for others, i.e. your parents or coaches. The motivation for working hard must come from inside of you. You have to have a compelling, personal reason to regularly train hard. You will go much further as a swimmer and have far more success when you make a commitment to using “perfect practice” whenever you train.

This means that at any given moment in training, when the going gets rough and a part of you wants to back down, you have to be able to ask yourself WHY you're doing what you're doing and how it will get you that much closer to your goals. When you can connect with your emotional reasons for swimming, it becomes far easier to ride out the storms of fatigue, boredom and doubt that regularly roll in over the course of a season.