



# Breathing Patterns

The biggest dilemma facing a swimmer when considering a breathing pattern is.....holding their breath too long can reduce their oxygen supply and may cause fatigue and tightness, whereas, breathing too often may reduce their speed. It is important for swimmers to have a breathing pattern plan for each stroke, freestyle and butterfly, and distance before stepping behind the blocks for a race. Equally as important is practicing the right way, working on the patterns the coach gives during practice.

Whatever strategy the swimmer selects, they should **never breathe into or out of turns or into the finish (from flags in)**, no matter the distance of the race.

## 25 Freestyle

This distance can be swum without breathing; a lack of oxygen shouldn't cause too much stress on the muscles, even for 8 & Under swimmers.

## 50 Freestyle for 13 & Older

This distance is also short enough that a lack of oxygen won't cause too much stress on the muscles.

- **Three breath pattern** (one down, two back)
  - The first breath is taken approximately 7 to 10 yd/m before the turn (under the flags)
  - The second breath is taken about 1/3 of the way back
  - The third breath is taken about 2/3 of the way back (under the finish flags)
- **Two breath pattern** (one down, one back)
  - The first breath is taken about 7 to 10 yd/m before the turn (under the flags)
  - The second breath is taken about 1/2 way back
- **One breath pattern**
  - There are two methods that can be used; 1) the breath is taken under the flags before the turn 2) the breath is taken about 1/3 of the way back

## 50 Freestyle for 12 & Under

This distance is short enough that a lack of oxygen won't cause too much stress on the muscles.

- **Four breath pattern** (2 down, 2 back)
  - The first breath is taken approximately 1/2 way on the first 25
  - The second breath is taken about 7-10 y/m from the turn (under the flags)
  - The third breath is taken about 1/3 of the way back
  - The fourth breath is taken about 2/3 of the way back (under the finish flags)

- **Five breath pattern** (2 down, 3 back)
  - The first breath is taken approximately 1/2 way on the first 25
  - The second breath is taken under the flags before the turn
  - The third breath is taken about 1/3 of the way back
  - The fourth breath is taken about 1/2 way back
  - The fifth breath is taken under the flags before the finish

### **100 Freestyle**

There is a fine line of increasing speed by not breathing too much and delaying fatigue by breathing more. We find that some swimmers get a touch excited and hold their breath too long during the first 50, thus causing them to fatigue a little early in the second half of the race. Most swimmers would benefit from breathing a little more during the first half of their 100 freestyle. Here are a few breathing patterns that swimmers should try....

- Breathe every 5th stroke for the first 25 and every third the remaining 75
- Breathe every 5th stroke for the first 50 and every third for the last 50
- Breathe every 5th stroke from the start to finish
- Breathe every 3rd stroke from start to finish

### **200 Freestyle or Longer**

It is generally accepted that swimmers should breathe every stroke or every third stroke during races of 200 or more. The increased supply of oxygen will more than compensate for any speed loss caused by breathing.