

The Benefits of Yoga for Recovery in Swimming by Trina Schaetz of [Swimmer's Edge Yoga](#)

The swim scene is filled with loads of ideas about training:

- What sets should you be doing?
- What kinds of workouts are best?
- What pace? What frequency?
- How hard? How fast? How much?
- Which stroke technique?

With all of this training, swimmers are some of the hardest working athletes on the planet and also, the most fatigued. Tight shoulders, tired legs, sore lats/back, and exhausted bodies are not uncommon after practice. In fact, many are so used to the fatigue they might say these aches are in some ways the mark of a great workout. But, heading back to the pool later in the day or the next morning makes it a challenge for our bodies to be restored to good working order before the next intense practice. This rigorous repetition (without good recovery) can lead to reduced practice effectiveness, overtraining, exhaustion or even injury. Without enough recovery, the next workout just doesn't "go" as well. You feel sore, immobile, tired; and the training just isn't as effective. In order to continue to train well, a swimmer needs time to recover.

Chris Ritter discusses the importance of recovery in his podcast [Recovery & Monitoring for Sports Performance](#). He asks, "So you're training really hard, but are you recovering as hard as you are training?" This is a great question! Are you spending as much effort on restoring your body to good working order as you are pushing your limits in the pool? Chris says this is the way to real improvement. The most successful swimmers and coaches know that to make progress, you need to work hard in the pool and then take time to recover, restore, and rebuild.

This recovery should include reducing intensity, attending to nutritional and hydration considerations, allowing for some down time for your mind, and getting enough rest and sleep. It might also incorporate stretching, body massage, myofascial release, ice baths, compression, and other therapeutic treatments.

Yoga can be a powerful addition to a swimmer's recovery arsenal. Swimmers who practice yoga, even infrequently, agree that just a few yoga poses can make them feel much better. Yoga increases a swimmer's mobility, helps unravel the body's tightness from training, aids in clearing the mind, and can assist swimmers in sleeping better. These are huge assets when it comes to recovery.

Mobility Benefits of Yoga

Moving freely in the water is essential for swimming performance. Without range of motion, swimmers cannot execute their strokes optimally. Yoga can be a powerful tool for swimmer's mobility because it involves restorative postures for the body in every workout. Those postures, should specifically address the training needs of swimmers, which are their shoulders, backs, chests, hips and groin areas. However, just dropping in

to any yoga practice at your local gym may not be the best for your needs as a swimmer. Having a *swim-specific* yoga practice can help to unravel the typical swimmer training tightness from the pool, help to lengthen muscle tissues, and can emphasize swimming stability at a level above traditional stretching.

[Swimmer's Edge Yoga](#) workouts keep these swimming-specific mobility needs in mind during each online class, and our clients agree that the workouts are improving their mobility. The postures and poses that we use in our online classes are meant to bring a swimmer's body back to good order for their next pool workout. We have shared a few restorative poses below that you can practice with your swimmers as a team or on your own. If you would like to try an actual yoga class, [click here](#) for a 30-minute Swimmer's Edge Yoga recovery "workout" for swimmers.

If you are not sure about your specific mobility needs, you might consider checking out the podcasts [Good Movement is King](#) & [You Made it to the Off Season](#) from RITTER Sports Performance. They can help you assess the areas that need your attention.

Mental Recovery Benefits of Yoga

Recovery is not only physical but mental. A swimmer's mental down time can be as challenging to acquire as their physical down time. The pace of our lives and the constant go-go-go to balance school, work, social lives, and practice can take a toll on swimmers. Carving out a focused time to eliminate daily stresses and distractions is a high priority to help swimmers recover.

Yoga incorporates mental restoration from several different angles. A typical yoga practice will involve some meditation or mindfulness training, instruction in visualization, practice of distraction elimination, and promotion of positive thinking. What's exciting is that these techniques have multiple and compounding benefits for swimmers! With regular yoga practices, swimmers may gain the immediate perk of a quiet mental down-time. Yet, in the long run, these practices also strengthen their mental capabilities for confidence, concentration, composure, and team building. These mental abilities combined with athleticism are powerful weapons in the pool.

Sleep Benefits of Yoga

One of the best side effects of practicing restorative yoga is the ability to sleep better. When swimmers improve physical mobility and strengthen their capacity for mental down time, they are investing in the resultant benefit of better sleep. When your body feels better and your mind is cleared, you can find the rest you need to wake up ready to train. The relaxation training in each yoga workout (called "shivasana") is proven to help practitioners get better rest. And what is more awesome than sleep practice?

If you are in the pursuit of improving your swimming with better training, it is equally important that you become disciplined about recovery. Regular yoga practice is an effective way to add multiple restorative benefits to your training. [Swimmer's Edge Yoga](#) offers the convenience of online swim-specific yoga practices that are 45 minutes long

and that can be practiced anywhere and at anytime. We have swimmers who take [Swimmer's Edge Yoga](#) classes on their own in their homes. We also have teams who practice together in multipurpose rooms, gyms, and hallways at their pools. Swimmer's Edge workouts are suited for all levels and ages and are an easy way to add swim-specific yoga to your dryland practice. We know your body and mind will thank you for it!