

We tend to forget the fastest path to faster swimming = better technique.

Being technically efficient means that you can glide through the water with less effort. It means you are creating less drag. And it means you are going faster through the water.

Here are some things to keep in mind the next time you hit the pool deck with technical change on your mind:

### **It takes time and repetition to change your technique.**

If you are serious about making a change to your stroke, this requires devoting a sizable amount of time and practice yardage to promoting and solidifying this change.

Doing it once, for one main set, or for a couple hundred meters [during warm-up](#), won't cause the adaptations you want. Be persistent, and put in the reps.

[Your bad habits in the pool](#) weren't created overnight either.

### **Press time-out on the competitive instinct.**

Racing our teammates is a fun way to challenge ourselves and them, particularly during breath-shaking workouts. Having someone to go goggle-to-goggle with can push us to new heights.

However, when it's technique work we are supposed to be focused on, avoid that primal urge to sprint through what is supposed to be focused, "perfect" swimming in order to slap your hand on the wall first, throwing that focus off-balance in a flurry of white water.

The competition at this point becomes you—out-perform the technique you used on the previous lap on the next one. And the one after that, too.

### **Your focus and attention levels will get tested.**

Our bad swimming habits are hard to break. When we do something for months and months on end, and then suddenly want to change things, whether it's a new arm recovery, a better hand entry, or using more hip rotation, the new thing is at odds with what you've been doing to date.

The more [natural and automatic your training habits](#), the more focus and time you'll need to create change. This kind of focus is hard, particularly when we are used to not having to think about our technique.

Every time you catch your mind wandering and your technique reverting back to its old ways bring your focus back and hit reset.

### **Persist past the struggle.**

Technical changes can be difficult because there is usually a dip in performance before we start improving. Because of this swimmers revert right back to the status quo.

For example, if you have been a lifer at breathing every two strokes, [breathing bilaterally](#) will be awkward and difficult in the immediate short term, even though eventually the benefits of breathing this way will outpace your past ways.

As a result of this struggle we like to go back to what's familiar and non-struggley. Persist through the awkwardness—a better looking and faster stroke awaits you on the other side.

### **Trust that your stroke will improve.**

When something *feels* right it can be hard to understand the need to change your stroke and technique. That adjustment will likely initially leave you swimming slower, even more sloppily.

You see this all the time with athletes who are bigger and stronger; they can power their way through the water for a while with less-awesome technique (if it ain't broke, don't fix it), and as a result ignore opportunities for technical improvement.

Have [trust in the process](#), have faith in your coach's instruction, and improvement *will* happen.

### **Focus on one change at a time.**

Ever try to think through the entire process of swimming a stroke?

Hand entry, hand placement, bending your wrist just a little at the beginning of the catch, keeping your head straight, breaking the surface just enough to breathe, keeping your ankles loose, rotating your hip, bracing your core—on and on and on.

Trying to think about every single aspect of our swimming ends up having the opposite intended effect—it leaves us feeling overwhelmed, our brain a jumbled pile of chlorinated cues.

To speed up change keep is simple and hit up one specific technical element at a time. (Or one element per lap/set/workout.)

An odd benefit of this kind of unilateral focus is that when we do one thing exceptionally well in our swimming, it tends to bleed into the rest of our stroke without us really having to think about it.

\*

The perks of better technique—like you don't already know—are huge. Bigly, even. You'll be a more efficient swimmer. You'll be a faster swimmer. And you'll get a sense of mastery from improvement.

And something else...

The kind of deliberate swimming that is required to improve technique, when you are actually focused on what you are doing in the pool instead of letting your brain roam like a free-range chicken on Red Bull, you will not only be more engaged in your practice, but you will enjoy your swimming more, too. Giddyup.

**by Olivier Poirier-Leroy**