

# Swimming for MIT Tri-Athletes

*“Plan your workouts  
and Work your workouts”*

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## **Today's Scenic Overview:**

- Riding your bike in New Hampshire
- You see the sign “Scenic Overview”
- You venture down the road and stop
- You see the most amazing, picturesque, mountain range with wonderful colors and a winding river. It's so beautiful!
- Today's session is a “scenic overview” of swimming. Kind of a short and sweet version!
- Take what you like and leave the rest behind!

## Overview

- Technique: If you don't understand what you are supposed to do, you'll probably never just get it!
- Being efficient is the name of the game!
- 5 phases of free-style swimming
- Some Open water swimming concepts
- Being smart'ah will make you fast'ah!
- Some racing points: Oh.... I am not a triathlete  
but I do stay at the Holiday Inn!

## Rules of the game:

### Rolling:

- Old coach used to say: never have to tell someone that they are rolling too much
- Hip and Shoulder roll: what is it about ?
- Toss a door into the pool
- Rotating and turning your axis: The ol'shish-kabob

## **Rules of the game:**

### Centerline:

- Cut body in half with your thumb
- All the way from your forehead to you toes
- Why? Because we use this as a guide

## **Five phases of swimming Freestyle:**

### Extension Phase:

- This is when you reach forward and make contact with the water
- What part of the arm enters the water first?
  - A: forearm      b: elbow      c: fingers
- Fingers hit first and travel to the centerline out front
- Trick: visualize: Capitol letter “A”

## **Five phases of swimming Freestyle:**

### **Catch Phase:**

- This is the instant when you transition from moving forward to pulling the water.
- Rock Climbing scenario (not pretty)
- Visualize: underwater photographer with flash
- Rowers? Got any here ?
- Also, your sense of timing plays a role as to when you actually 'catch' the water

## **Five phases of swimming Freestyle:**

### **Power Phase:**

- For today's session:
- Power comes from the tips of your fingers to your elbows
- Your 'effort' and resistance moves you forward
- Visualize: on the keyboard: a question mark... like the one in monopoly 'chance' card -- ?
- This goes from the catch phase to your belly button

## **Five phases of swimming Freestyle:**

### **Finish Phase:**

- After pulling to your belly button, you now continue all the way back to your thigh
- This ensures a long stroke which is desirable for distance swimming
- Visualize: A slash mark on the key-board
- A long stroke is more efficient  
which is the 'smahht' way to swim
- Use your thumb!

## **Five phases of swimming Freestyle:**

### **Recovery Phase:**

- At back end of stroke
- Relax here... (really)
- High elbows during recovery
- Fingertip-drag drill is helpful
- Relax and get ready to start the cycle again

# **“Caution Will Robinson”**

“Lost In Space”

**Crossing Over:** Not just a TV show

- Two types
  - 1. Out front during extension phase
  - 2. Underneath your body

# **“Caution Will Robinson”**

“Lost In Space”

**Pulling Motion**

- Think question mark “ ? “
- If this is too difficult, then think ‘parenthesis’ on the key-board
- Use caution: heavy bag at Trader Joe’s vs. shoulder injuries

## **“Caution Will Robinson”**

**“Lost In Space”**

### **Head position**

- Very Robotic: To the side to grab a breath, and back to the center point
- No sight-seeing: do not look over to see what’s going on in the other lanes
- There are some other coaching ideas here but remember we are on our ‘scenic overview’

## **“Caution Will Robinson”**

**“Lost In Space”**

### **Tri-Athletes are strong:**

- But not always in the legs
- All that biking and running, but not always strong when it comes to flutter kicking with freestyle
- Body posture in the water is key, and some tri-athletes are ‘sinkers’
- Sometimes related to low body fat – something I am not familiar with!

## **“Caution Will Robinson”**

**“Lost In Space”**

### **Some other points:**

- Kicking: In general, every swimmer has their own kick. I think of it like drumming and you hear your own beat, and this is usually ok.
- You don't need a lot of kick to be a distance swimmer
- Swimming 'uphill' vs. 'downhill'

## **“When you swim”**

**“things to think about”**

### **Pipeline Concept:**

- You have seen those huge sewer pipes in construction....
- Visualize that you are swimming thru one of them
- Every 25 yards the pipe width gets some 2 feet narrower
- Narrower, and narrower
- Goal is to swim being long, skinny, and narrow

## **“When you swim”**

**“things to think about”**

### **Bi-lateral breathing:**

- Or being able to breath on both sides
- Great for seeing your competition
- Great for giving your neck and back muscles a break
- Coach Bill does not advise people to learn this when they are *new* to swimming
  - Example of using a crayon to write you name when you were six.

## **“Open water swimming...”**

**“Is a different animal”**

### **Some things to think about:**

- Are you going to be comfortable in deep water, if not swim along the shoreline
- Are you going to swim alone? Can you tell someone? Is this a safe idea?
- Hydration? Cramps ?
- Strong sunlight ? Are you goggles dark ?
- Heat stroke & heat exhaustion
- On race day: NO new goggles, caps, wet suits, or shoes
- Food: this is your fuel: got any ?

## **“Open water swimming...**

**“Is a different animal”**

### **Before you get in (sighting & navigating):**

- Can you do a warm up? Or will you freeze after?
- Do you understand the water course?
- Is it choppy, wavy, cold?
- Can you tell if there is a moving current?
- Is your swim “point to point” or “out and back”?
- Study the shoreline (lake) to help you get to where you are going
- Have you practiced running the course from where the swim ends to where your bike should be? Being familiar is key

## **“Open water swimming...**

**“Is a different animal”**

### **Where is the finish line (sighting):**

- What will the finish line look like when you are out in the middle of the course?
- Remember: everything will appear much smaller (tiny)
- Did you make a mental note of what things will look like?
- Big difference between the pro’s and the amateurs: the pro’s are not wondering and trying to figure things out
- Well, not all pro’s

## **“Open water swimming...**

**“Is a different animal”**

### **How to sight:**

- Practice in the pool with picking your head up and looking at your target. Let your muscles get used to this
- Sometimes due to circumstances it might be ‘smahhter’ to do a few breaststrokes to really ‘see’ where you are and where you are going
- Not sighting can cost you a lot of time, effort, and energy
- Sometimes it’s smahhter to sight more and swim a straight line.

## **“Your race start...**

**“Use your head & think”**

### **Waves of swimmers:**

- On the starting line: if you are slower, do not push your way to the front of the starting line. You’ll get trampled, traumatized, and lose your goggles,
- and there goes your fun day!
- Slower swimmers get beat up by ‘adrenaline rushers’, so be cautious. You’re on the starting line ... to finish!
- Start on the right side of the starting line or left? Why?
- Be nice... nobody should be physically bashing others
- Rules for drafting ? Are there any for the swim?

## **“When things go wrong...”**

**“Use your head & think”**

**It’s bound to**

**happen:**

- You lose your goggles
- You get kicked in the eye
- your swim cap breaks
- You forgot to use grease and  
your getting chaffed
- You forgot where you left  
your bike
- You got a flat tire

- You ate too much
- You didn’t eat enough
- You stubbed your toe
- You only have one shoe
- Your cellphone keeps  
ringing

## **“When things go wrong...”**

**“Use your head & think”**

**Tree-ing:**

- Touch a tree, or anything
- Give yourself 5 seconds and leave the problem here
- Move on
- Do not dwell on it
- Don’t obsess about it
- Tell yourself: it’s a new race and start fresh
- Don’t get down... well not now anyway!

## **“How to improve your swim...**

### **Ideas:**

- You need a coach, someone who can watch your stroke and give your pointers
- You need to be open and listen
- Triathletes tend to listen to many coaches at the same time. This is not always the ‘smahhtest’ way to proceed
- Are you listening? Did you ask your coach for help? Some swimmers have been doing this since they were 6 years old and do not want to change.... Ask the coach – it’s easy!
- So you read something in a magazine and you think it will be helpful? Bring in a copy for your coach and initiate a dialog.

## **“How to improve your swim**

### **Ideas:**

- Join a Masters Swim Group
  - You’ll get great coaching
  - And you’ll swim more distance with a group
  - And you can join MIT Masters!
- Join a Triathlon Club
  - You’ll find training partners
- Consider doing swim meets during your training in order to get bench-marks which will tell you where you are at.
  - One hour swim
  - 1650 free
  - 1000 free

## **“Ideas to succeed**

### **Recognize your confidence level:**

- Sometimes your swim experience is fast and positive because you are confident in your abilities and training. And you can use this ‘thinking’ as a tool against your competitors
- One other theme:
  - “You wanna swim fastahh, you gotta swim fastahh!

## **“Ideas to succeed**

- Stories (if time permits):
  - Lost in the Merrimack River (amateur move): where’s joe?
  - Hungry and lost in Chesapeake bay (amateur move)
  - Somewhere near Nahant beach, ding-ee died (big fish too)
  - Ptown and leave the driving to greyhound
  - Mashpee: counting your laps &  
don’t be afraid of the speedo crowd

## **“Special Thanks....**

I would like to thank Patti Christie for always offering support, and working tirelessly to keep MIT Masters operating, in the pool, and benefiting hundreds of masters swimmers over many years. She has done so much behind the scenes work... just immeasurable!

I would also like to thank Alex Slocum and the ESG Department for adopting our swim group, and helping to keep the high energy of masters swimming alive and well on MIT's campus!