

# Tips for Coaches of Novice Swimmers

BY JOHN LEONARD

<http://www.swimmingcoach.org>

1. Coach “face to face...” get down low and see the swimmers eyeball to eyeball without them having to crank their head back to see you, or staring at your belly button. Bend, sit, squat down, whatever gets you eyeball to eyeball. Don't be afraid to get up close and take up their whole view so you have their complete attention, either.
2. People repeat what they enjoy. You want them to repeat the “coming to practice” mechanism. Make sure you end each practice with something that sends them home smiling and happy. There is no point in having a wonderfully detailed physiological training plan if swimmers aren't coming to practice regularly. Get attendance first, then train. You can't train people who don't come to practice.
3. Technique is everything. Spend your time doing strokework, drills and technique work in all strokes. The senior coaches who later get “your kids” will thank you for it. (or at least, they Should) You can incorporate technique work into aerobic development work easily. Get the strokes as fast as you, as soon as you can.
4. Corollary to #3, is the developmental principle of “go as fast as you can on as little volume and intensity as you can, for as long as you can.” That means that swimmers with good technique will swim fast. Keep the training levels low as long as the swimmer is “progressing” at an acceptable rate to themselves, (and their parents, in some cases.) Any coach can make an age grouper swim faster by increasing training volume or training intensity. But is you are going 12,000 a day at age 12, how much will you have to do daily to swim well at 17? At 24? Don't make training the ONLY way to go faster. On the recommended side... gradually increase volume and intensity over a period of years, not months or days. Increase systematically.
5. When you correct, correct the action, not the person. Use “Billy, you need to do flip turns at every wall, no open turns, please.” Rather than “Billy, don't be lazy! Every turn a flip turn.”

<http://www.swimmingcoach.org>