

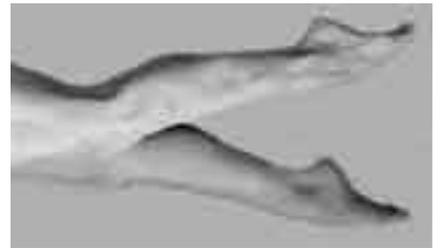
Excerpts from *The Parents Guide to Swimming*

For more information, please visit www.swimmingparent.com

The Long-Term Benefits of Swimming—“Think about what happens when swimmers stand on the starting blocks. For those of you who have had the dream where you find yourself in front of a class or a group in your underwear, this is pretty close to swimming. Swimmers stand on the starting block, clad in only a thin piece of Lycra, set to put themselves and their hard workouts on display for the public. Is there stress involved in this? You bet! A swimming career is filled with stress. Some of this stress is self-imposed while some comes from external sources like parents (yes, you), coaches and teammates. Swimmers must learn how to handle both of these types of stress in order to perform their best. Life itself is filled with stress from these same sources. When swimmers learn how to deal with standing on a starting block set to perform for the crowd with only a thin piece of Lycra covering them, they have learned more stress management than many adults. . .”

Mental Strength—Visit www.swimmingparent.com to read a sample of this chapter.

The Flexible Swimmer—“Ankle mobility allows swimmers to have pointed toes while swimming without forcefully using their calf muscles. Swimmers who do not have flexible ankles must either maintain a less than optimal streamline toe-point (poor choice, lots of drag) or use calf muscles while they swim for the sole purpose of pointing their feet to reduce drag. Any extraneous muscle use reduces the total energy available for propulsion, as well as eventually reducing the force available for pushing off a wall. Also, using muscles to actively point the feet can make swimmers’ legs or feet cramp. Having flexible ankles reduces the need for muscles to be highly contracted to maintain a streamlined position. . .”



The flexible ankle puts the foot at a much better angle to propel the swimmer forward.

The Well-Trained Swimmer—“Some of the goals parents should have for their swimmers are; to become technically correct at all the strokes, to perform starts and turns with excellent technique/streamline, and to learn good racing strategies. . . Swimmers who stop swimming *without* these skills/techniques will have a difficult time catching up to the other swimmers in their age groups if they want to start again. Swimming is a lifelong skill. It is worth having kids learn it and learn it correctly. So what I’m saying is, don’t let your child(ren) stop swimming until they have become technically correct at all the strokes, can perform starts and turns with excellent technique/streamline, and have learned good racing strategies. This is kind of a ploy, since once they have learned these things, they will be pretty competitive and they won’t likely *want* to stop swimming. . .”

Swimming Equipment—“Having uncomfortable goggles can make practice miserable and having goggles that fit well and stay on during a race is imperative for good swims. Just as with suits, swimmers should have more than one pair of goggles. . . Swimmers should not use the same pair of goggles for practice that they do in a meet. There are a number of reasons for this. The first is because goggles wear out and lose their seal after a number of practices and swimmers are more likely to feel the effects of this when they dive off the block at a meet. Also, swimmers should wear their meet goggles tighter than their practice goggles. Young and old swimmers alike are prone to forget to tighten their goggles before their first race and this can lead to goggles in the mouth or around the neck shortly after the dive.

Swimming Burnout—“A major cause of older swimmer burnout is stagnation. Swimming stagnation occurs when little or no improvement is made in swimming times over a sustained period. When swimmers are young they have so many things they can improve and just changing *one* allows them to swim faster almost every time they get in the water. They do a best time in at least one event at every meet. This is fun for swimmers and after a while they learn to expect this improvement. It can keep coming too, as swimmers grow older, wiser, taller and stronger. But inevitably, there is a plateau where their times stop improving. That is when stagnation occurs. . .”

Letting Coaches do Their Jobs—“Coaches are teachers not only of sports; they are teachers of life. Many of us can remember a coach who significantly and positively affected our lives. These are very special people. They don’t do it for the money or the glory. Swim coaching seldom provides these things. They do it for your child. They do it for the sport of swimming because they know that swimming can teach children so many lessons, lessons that shape them into great adults. Age group coaches for all sports are some of the best people with whom we can ever hope for our children to interact. . .”