

# Adult Learn to Swim Home Guide



Home Practice  
Before Your  
First Pool Lesson

**Graham Dietrich**

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Graham Dietrich is a swimming instructor who specialises in teaching adults to swim. He has created a successful revolutionary new way to teach adults to swim in one three-hour session. This is achieved by not just teaching the swimming movements but rather using a building block process that includes explanations and experiments in swimming so students understand what is required to be a swimmer.

## **Other Publications:**

How to Teach an Adult to Swim in One Three Hour Session

Adult Learn to Swim Guide - For People with no Access to a Swim Instructor

Essential Ocean Swimming Skills You Can Practice in the Pool

The Secret to Teaching Butterfly to Older People

The Easiest Way to Swim in Clothes ( or uniforms )

For more information or permissions contact:

[www.SwimBetterToday.com](http://www.SwimBetterToday.com) or [grahamdietrich@bigpond.com](mailto:grahamdietrich@bigpond.com)

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# Contents

Introduction.....	4
Your Mind and its Role in Your Learning to Swim .....	5
Exercise 1 - New Personal Saying.....	5
Exercise 2 - Watch some Videos .....	5
Exercise 3 - Visualise Swimming .....	5
Body Position .....	6
Why Being Streamline is so Important when Swimming .....	6
Exercise 1 - Standing Tall - .....	7
Exercise 2 - Y Position - .....	7
Exercise 3 - Laying Straight - .....	8
Exercise 4 - Basic Arm Circles .....	8
Exercise 5 - Gentle Push-ups - .....	9
Kicking Practice.....	10
Breathing Actions .....	11
Exercise 1 - Head and Body Turns.....	11
Exercise 2 - Breathing Exercises.....	12
Useful Tips .....	13
Goggles .....	13
Useful Tips to Take to the Pool.....	13
The Biggest Secret to Learning to Swim .....	14

# Introduction

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So, you have decided to learn how to swim. That's fantastic! Congratulations on taking this first step in learning how to swim efficiently and gain confidence in the water.

Heading straight to the pool for your first lesson can be somewhat daunting. This is because there is so much unknown. Firstly, you are in an environment you may not be comfortable with, your body does not know the movements required for swimming, some people have trouble with the strength and flexibility required for swimming, and possibly you have attempted to swim before and felt unhappy with how it went.

This home guide can help make learning to swim much easier by showing you some practice you can do at home before your first lesson in the pool. It will help with your confidence, and you may even get to enjoy your first lesson.

## **If You have a Deep Fear of Water**

Learning to swim is mostly about overcoming physical barriers. A deep fear of water is mostly about psychological barriers. These are separate issues and need to be addressed as such.

It is normal to be nervous about learning to swim, and this will diminish as you learn, but a genuine deep fear of water may need professional help before you learn to swim. If you cannot stand waist-deep in a pool and put your face in the water, then you are not yet ready to learn to swim. This does not mean you will not eventually be able to swim, but this issue needs to be resolved first.

## **Before You Start**

As with all new things you need to be sure that you have no medical or physical conditions that may be affected if you follow the program in the guide. This is not a strenuous program, but it does contain some gentle stretching and exercises. If in doubt, please consult your medical practitioner before commencing.

With all of the listed exercises, they should be done gently without straining.

## **Finally**

**Everyone** can learn to swim.

Learning to swim is not about being perfect; it's about progress. Celebrate every stroke, every breath, and every step forward.

# Your Mind and its Role in Your Learning to Swim

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There are two aspects to learning to swim. There are the obvious physical aspects, but just as important is the mental aspect.

Never have I seen it so obvious as in teaching swimming how powerful the mind is in helping people achieve their most dominant thought. If this happens to be, “I cannot swim” or “It is too hard”, people find it difficult to learn. On the other hand, if your thoughts are positive about learning to swim, your mind will work to help you achieve it.

**Exercise 1 - New Personal Saying** - From now on, your saying is “I Can Swim”. Each time the little voice in your head says you can’t swim or it is too hard say 5 times, “I Can Swim”. You can also throw in the occasional, “Everyone can learn to swim”. Your belief will make it so.

**Exercise 2 - Watch some Videos** - View videos of people swimming. In YouTube search on the words “graceful swimming”, watch some of the listed videos and picture in your mind how relaxed swimming can be.



**Exercise 3 - Visualise Swimming** - Find a comfortable place to lay down and relax. Visualise yourself swimming easily through the water. Picture yourself as being confident in the water and you enjoying yourself.

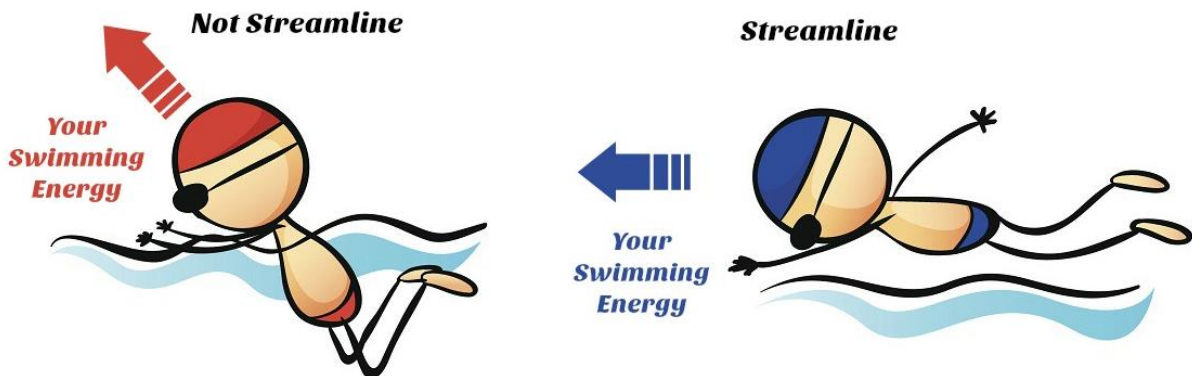
# Body Position

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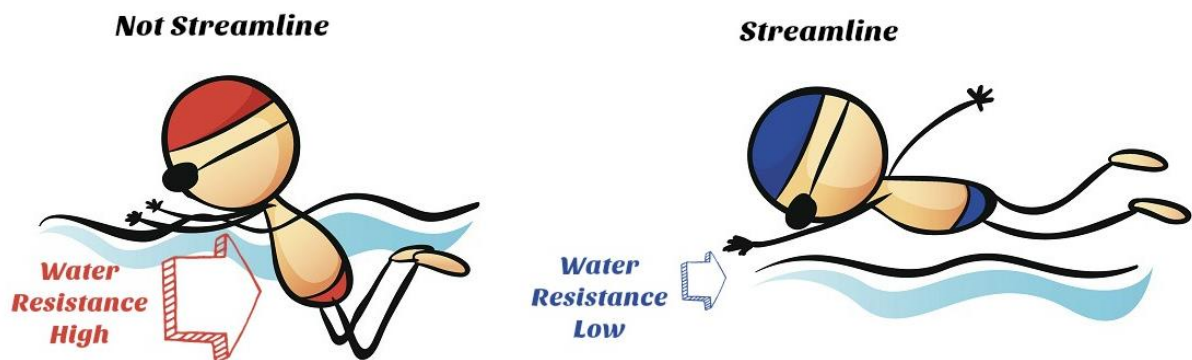
The best body position when swimming is having your body as horizontal and straight as you can. We call this the streamline position.

## Why Being Streamline is so Important when Swimming

This illustration shows that if the head is high and the legs are low a high percentage of energy is going towards lifting up and out of the water instead of along the surface of the water.



This second illustration shows that the more of the body you have underwater, the more drag or resistance the water creates.



If you are directing your energy forward, and you have a low level of water resistance, you will find it easier to swim.

Another way to think of this is like paddling a canoe. If it is flat on the water then it is the easiest to paddle. If one end is sticking out of the water and the other is deep in the water it is much harder.



**Exercise 1 - Standing Tall** - Stand up straight and tall in front of a mirror. Feel like there is a string attached to the top of your head and it is pulling you up towards the ceiling. When you swim you want the same straight body you now see in the mirror, except you will be horizontal.

**Exercise 2 - Y Position** - From the “Standing Tall” position, raise your arms up straight over your head with your arms in the comfortable position just wider than your shoulders. Move your arms together and you will feel how your body tightens, now move your arms wider until you feel a comfortable, more relaxed position. This is the basic arm position you want for swimming.





**Exercise 3 – Laying Straight** - Lay face down on a bed with your arms in the “Y Position”. Relax here for a few minutes and visualise your body straight and streamline in the water.



**Exercise 4 – Basic Arm Circles** – Stand in the Y position practiced previously. Move one arm in a gentle relaxed circle, returning to the starting Y position. Make sure the arm is straight but not rigid or stiff. There should be no restrictions or straining as you do the circle. Now repeat with the other arm. Change the size of the circle until you find the circle that that feels the most relaxed. Start with a few on each arm and build up the number you can do each day. Aim to be able to do 20 with each arm.

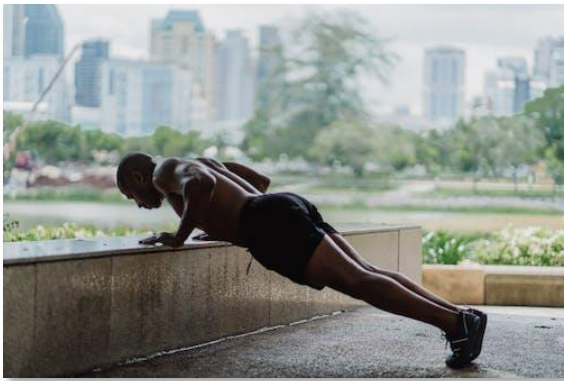




**Exercise 5 – Gentle Push-ups** – Push-ups help with all over strength and helps you keep your body straight for swimming.

There are three types of push-ups you can try depending on your fitness level.

The first one is a knee push-up. The second is leaning on something solid and finally a full push-up from the floor. Ideally aim to be able to do at least 10.



**Exercise 6 – Plank Position** – If you are feeling okay with the gentle push-ups you can try holding your body in a straight plank position. Just hold this position for as long as it is comfortable without straining.



## Kicking Practice

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When you are learning to swim, think of kicking more as a way to keep your legs up and your body streamline than as being a large propulsion force. You can always increase the intensity of your kick, if you choose to, as your swimming abilities improve.

Lay on your back on the ground, raise your upper body and support yourself on your elbows. Keeping your legs fairly straight, with your toes pointed away from you, gently flutter your legs with one leg going up while the other leg is going down. They only need to move 30 cm (12 inches) apart. Like when you are swimming, this is not a frantic kicking, but instead a steady 1 to 2 kicks per leg each second.

You will not need to do many before you feel your muscles working. Start with a few and gradually build up the number before your first lesson. Only do what is comfortable; there should be no straining.

You can also practice this kicking movement laying on your stomach.



# Breathing Actions

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For many people, the breathing part of swimming is the most difficult. Part of this is due to our human nature and the fear of not being able to breathe. The other part is not knowing or fully understanding what to do.

This section will help you know and understand the swimming breathing actions.

## **Holding Your Breath**

One of the biggest misconceptions with learning to swim is that you need to hold your breath as you swim.

Holding your breath with your face in the water triggers your nervous system to become concerned because it recognises that your face is in the water and you are not breathing. To overcome this, we breathe out slowly when our face is in the water. The other advantage is that we have more time when our face is out of the water for a breath.

**Exercise 1 - Head and Body Turns** - Stand up straight with your arms down. Turn your head, hips and shoulders to the right and look over your shoulder. Return your shoulders and face to the front. Now turn your head and shoulders to the left and look over your shoulder. Return your shoulders and face to the front. Repeat the exercise 10 times.

This is the breathing action we want when we swim. Our head turns with our body to get our face out of the water so we can take a breath. Many beginners try to lift their heads out of the water to breathe rather than keep their bodies straight and rolling to breathe. Lifting the head causes the legs to sink and the body loses its streamline, which makes learning to swim harder.

When learning to swim you will find it easier to breathe on one side. Concentrate on that one favoured side until you are swimming comfortably.



## **Exercise 2 - Breathing Exercises -**

- ≈ Breathe in deeply to your belly, then filling your whole lungs. Your stomach should first move out and then your chest should move up as you breathe in. Repeat 5 times.
- ≈ Breath out slowly counting to 3 then breath in quick like you are taking a big sip of air. This is how we breathe when swimming; we breathe out slowly then we turn our body and face out of the water and take a quick breath in.

# Useful Tips

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## Goggles

I always recommend a good pair of goggles to people who want to learn to swim. You will be much more comfortable in the water if you can see clearly in the water. They will also stop the eye irritation caused by the pool water.

This type of goggle is good for beginners as it gives more visibility, creates a good seal, and is more comfortable as it fits around the face, rather than just the eye sockets.



If your goggles are new, then try them on and adjust them before you go to the pool. You can test if they are working correctly by wearing them in the bath or shower.

## Useful Tips to Take to the Pool

Try to arrive at the pool relaxed and refreshed, even if you are nervous. Ideally not after a hard day's work when you are tired.

Remember your new motto, "I Can Swim".

Whenever your face is in the water be gently breathing out.

A good lungful of air before you start each exercise will help you float.

Relaxed, smooth swimming actions work better than frantic, tense ones.

Kick just enough to keep your legs up and give you a little propulsion. Most propulsion comes from your upper body.

## The Biggest Secret to Learning to Swim

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Once you are comfortable in the water, can float reasonably well and your body knows the swimming actions, swimming will become an enjoyable and relaxing way to exercise.