



## **How to Fry a Student's Brain in One Session or Less**

In my younger days, I was a poor swimmer. I was slow and would tire quickly due to my head up gasping for air style of swimming.

In my later years I decided to see if I could master the art of swimming. I found a number of experienced and friendly swim teachers who went to work to fix up my lousy technique. It was here that my plan began to come unstuck.

It took me a while but I eventually worked out that the problem was that they were trying to correct a fundamentally broken style. They could see the parts of my swimming that were wrong and tried to fix them, often all at the same time.

At the start of each lap and occasionally during a lap, the instructions would flow. Kick harder, keep your legs straight, roll to breathe, don't raise your head to breathe, keep your head down, look down but a bit forward, stretch out, pull harder, narrow your kick, slow your stroke, speed up your stroke, etc. All valid points BUT the trouble was it fried my brain as I swam lap after lap and I struggled to remember all the points I was supposed to be focusing on.

My brain is a simple creature and only likes focusing on one thing at a time, so it would give me a few seconds on each instruction and then move to the next. This had me doing lots of skills badly. I soon worked out there had to be a better way as this was not working for me.

The first, and I believe, the biggest problem was time. There was not enough time in weekly half-hour sessions to fix my swimming, even if I did some practice myself. The second was I was swimming laps with my poor technique as the instructors tried to correct it. This locked in the poor techniques into my muscle memory while I tried to fix another part. I have seen these instructors take reasonable swimmers and make them good swimmers so it was not them. It was using a system designed for someone who can swim okay on a poor swimmer.

Once I became an adult learn-to-swim teacher, my experience, and that of my students, lead me to a way that gets students swimming better after the first session.

Rather than week by week short improvement sessions I make the first lesson 2 to 3 hours, depending on the skill of the student. It is not about swimming laps but skill-building. The session goes through all the skills as if they were a complete beginner. This highlights the main flaws in their technique and allows time to focus on fixing it before moving to the next step.



The key benefits of this long first session are:

- 1) Having a clear path from floating & balance to propulsion to breathing ensures the correct foundation for swimming is built.
- 2) There is time to explain and do small experiments on the science of swimming.
- 3) There is time to focus on one skill until it is mastered.
- 4) Students understand the swimming techniques and when they practice themselves, they know what to do and can self-correct.
- 5) Student's attitude often changes from 'swimming is a struggle' to 'I can do this; I can swim better'
- 6) The student's brain doesn't get fried.

***Graham Dietrich***

Adult Learn-To-Swim Instructor

email: [grahamdietrich@bigpond.com](mailto:grahamdietrich@bigpond.com)

[www.swimbettertoday.com](http://www.swimbettertoday.com)

