



# Basic Breathing

As a swimming teacher I found that I spent the majority of my time trying to teach pupils how to get a breath. This was especially true towards the end of the swimming season. Teaching someone to get a breath certainly presents a great variety of challenges, which range from a toddler struggling to get that first breath to trying to teach an advanced swimmer how to breath behind the bow wave (trough breathing).

## **I have broken this session into several stages.**

- Popping up and or rotating for a breath
- Rotating for a breath
- Breathing rhythm
- Timing
- Advanced breathing techniques.

## **Popping up and or rotating**

Both of these techniques can be use with toddlers.

In order to get a breath either by popping up or by rotating over on to their back the toddler needs to have developed certain skills.

To pop up for a breath the toddler needs to be able to hold the water fairly well with their hands (a very basic front sculling), keep their chin close to the top of the water (so their feet do not sink too far), hold the water with their instep and be able to exhale and inhale at the precise moment, while continuing to hold the water.

Getting a breath by rolling over on to their backs or at least into an oblique floating position requires the skills of being comfortable floating either on their backs or in an oblique position with their heads back, having the skills to rotate, to hold the water with their hands (a basic form of sculling) and being able to take a breath while their mouth is clear of the water. After they take the breath they need to be able to rotate back on to their face and continue moving through the water.

Either way the instructor plays a very important role in supplying diminishing assistance while the pupil perfects the skills.

**Heated dressing rooms, private classes and parent viewing room.**

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Diminishing assistance means that the instructor supplies a lot of help in the early stages when the pupil either lifts their head or rotates, and as the pupil perfects the skill this help (assistance) reduces (diminishes).

Pools session to look at the various grips involved in supplying this diminishing assistance.

The link, between popping up for a breath and rotating (turning) for a breath, is the ability to be able to float on your back. There are cases, especially when you are working with older pupils (4 years and over) where they will be able to go straight on to turning for a breath and not have to worry about popping up for a breath.

## Rotating

Once your pupil is up to the stage where they are ready to learn how to turn their head for a breath, teach them to float on their backs and sides.

You can use aids such as noodles (cut down or whole), kick boards, mats, flippers etc., to help the pupil get their balance on either their backs or side. If you keep in mind that turning for a breath is a balancing act then you can use your imagination to create games that will involve the pupil balancing on their sides and back.

## Breathing Rhythm

At some stage your pupil will need to be able to exhale all their air under the water, come up take a quick breath in, then go back under and exhale; and be able to repeat this cycle at least 20 times without losing their breath.

## Timing

Once your pupil can rotate on to their side and or back, and maintain the breathing rhythm for an extended period, they should be able to synchronize the breathing rhythm with the rotation and arm movement.

You may like to start talking in terms of Bubbling arm and Breathing (turning arm). This will help your pupil understand when to exhale (bubble) and when to inhale (Breath). If your pupil is going to breath to the left, then they would start blowing out their breath when their left arm starts to

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move back through the water, and just before their right hand touches the water start to turn (rotate) for their breath. Make sure that the hand comes all the way back to the pupils side, and is recovered straight and high and then reaches out to full extension in front. This way your pupil will not be able to rush the cycle. It is important that the breathing cycle is slow and rhythmical.

## Advanced Breathing

Pool session dealing with rotation, breathing rhythm and timing.

If you watched Ian Thorpe closely at the recent World Championships you would have noticed that he would breath to the side he felt his greatest challenge was going to come from. This meant that was breathing every two strokes to the left side going one way and then breathing every two strokes to the right on the way back down the pool. To me that is the ultimate in breathing.

This may not seem unusual to most of you because I have been asking you to teach your pupils to breathe this way. I can assure you that breathing every two strokes to one side is not the norm, and that being able to breath equally well to either side is something very unique to our swim schools.

The majority of children are taught to breath every three stokes. This breathing technique is all but useless outside of competition swimming, because when you are fighting for survival in the water, you do not get enough air breathing every three. If you can breathe every two to either side then you can breath bilateral 1-3-5-7. Teaching as swimmer to be able to breathe equally well to either side should be your goal.

## Pool session on

- Trough breathing
- Open discussion on all of the above.

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