



## 8 Tips for Faster Kicks

By Wayne Goldsmith

The role of kicking in swimming is a matter for study, research, debate and discussion, but one thing we do know:  
**better kicking equals better swimming.**

There are eight key elements that will help improve your kick:

### 1. Loose Legs

*The key to fast swimming and fast kicking is to stay loose and relaxed.*

Too many swimmers think fast kicking means hard kicking. The great swimming coach, Yoda, once said, “Unlearn what you have learned.” By that, he meant that to progress – as a Jedi (and a swimmer) – you need to forget about trying harder when trying to go faster.

The faster you want to go, the more relaxed you have to be. This is especially true of kicking.

When trying to kick faster, keep your legs loose and relaxed. Increase your foot speed, but keep your legs loose and flowing.

### 2. Strong Hips

*The real power in swimming is in your hips. (Just look at the size of the muscles around your hips and butt compared to your ankles and feet!)*

Great kicking starts in the hips, then the power builds and flows down your legs: hips, thighs, knees, shins, feet; hips, thighs, knees, shins, feet.

Start your kicking with a small but powerful movement of your hip, then allow the power to build as the muscles around your thighs, knees, shins and feet all join in sequence to produce real kicking strength.

How do you practice this?

Go for a walk! You kick the way you walk – with your hips, thighs, knees (slight bend), shins and feet working in sequence. Thank about that the next time you go for a walk: “My walking is helping my swimming!”

### 3. Rhythm

*Rhythm is the crucial element in all efficient movements.*

Start simply. When kicking in backstroke and freestyle, count, “1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4,” and so on to start to develop a consistent kicking rhythm.

In breaststroke, use a rhythmic mental “chant” like, “Long and strong, long and strong, long and strong” or “Reach long, kick strong; reach long, kick strong; reach long, kick strong” to develop flow and real rhythm.

Music really helps. When you start kicking practice, imagine a song that has the same beat and rhythm as your kicking, then beat out the rhythm with your feet as you practice.

#### 4. Long Legs

*Long legs can build kicking power more effectively than short legs.*

Knowing this fact, you obviously have two options:

- Have plastic surgery to add some inches to the length of your legs; or
- Keep your own legs long (and loose) when you kick. (This is obviously a far better and cheaper option than having plastic surgery!)

Try to keep your legs as long as possible, as often as possible in the water. Point your toes – but without tension – and stretch your toes toward the wall behind you with each kick.

#### 5. Flexibility

*Flexibility allows you to get into efficient swimming positions with little or no effort.*

Flexibility is not only important for minimizing injuries, but in terms of kicking, it means that you can keep your legs long and loose and build power in a flowing sequence from hips to toes.

Work on flexibility every day, particularly around your hips, thighs, knees, shins and especially your feet. Great kickers tend to have loose, flexible ankles.

#### 6. Strength

*Get Stronger*

Great kicking is a combination of three things:

- Long legs: Technique
- Loose legs: Flexibility
- Strong legs: Strength Training

The combination of these factors makes a great kicker. Strong legs without flexibility will not work. Loose legs without power will not work. You need all three to achieve optimal kicking efficiency.

Why not ride your bike to practice or school. But most importantly: When you train, do plenty of quality kicking with great technique all year-round.

#### 7. Fast Kicks

*During your workouts, kick as you swim. Practice fast kicks.*

Try some timed kick goal sets. Try to achieve your kicking goals and standards with the same determination and passion as you do when you chase your swimming goals.

#### 8. Underwater Kicking

*It is important to maintain momentum when kicking underwater off the wall.*

In butterfly, backstroke and freestyle, master these three crucial underwater techniques.

- *Kicking underwater*  
Underwater fly kick needs to be fast and powerful with strong kicking in both directions. The kicks should be relatively small – ideally, not much deeper or wider than your hips.
- *Kicking to the surface.*  
As you start to move toward the surface, keep kicking fast, powerfully and deliberately. Do not allow your body to simply “pop” up to the surface.
- *Kicking into your first stroke.*  
This is the most important part of the underwater process. The speed you generate under the water must be close as possible to the speed you want to achieve as you explode from the water into your first stroke.