



WORKOUT 1: STROKE CADENCE & RHYTHM

Learn to change stroke rate while maintaining body position, rhythm, and control.



1) PURPOSE

Develop the ability to deliberately change stroke rate while maintaining body position, control, and efficiency.



2) TOTAL DISTANCE

Approx. 1,600–2,000 yd/m



3) WARM-UP

300 easy freestyle

Then 4 × 50 (15 sec rest)

- First 25: relaxed normal cadence
- Second 25: slightly quicker cadence
- Keep effort controlled throughout



4) MAIN SET

3 rounds of:

- **100 Long & Controlled** — natural, relaxed stroke rate; extend forward and complete the pull
- **100 Moderate Cadence** — slightly increase turnover without significantly increasing effort
- **100 Quick Cadence** — noticeably faster rhythm like chop, crowded water, or buoy approach
- Rest 15–20 sec after each 100
- 50 easy after each round



5) SKILL SET

6 × 50 (15 sec rest)

- Odd 50s: long, relaxed swimming
- Even 50s: quicker turnover
- Goal: change gears on command, not simply swim harder



6) COOLDOWN

200 easy



7) FOCUS ON

- Stable body position
- Relaxed recovery
- Maintaining the catch as cadence increases
- Avoiding frantic arm turnover
- Keeping breathing controlled



8) COACHING REMINDER

Cadence and effort are not the same thing. You should be able to increase stroke rate without turning every higher-cadence segment into a hard interval.





WORKOUT 2: SWIM LONG & EFFICIENT

Improve stroke length, body position, and efficiency without over-gliding.



1) PURPOSE

Improve stroke length, connection with the water, and the ability to move forward efficiently without rushing the stroke.



2) TOTAL DISTANCE

Approx. 1,600–2,000 yd/m



3) WARM-UP

300 easy freestyle
Then 4 × 50 (15 sec rest)

- Swim progressively smoother, not harder
- Think: Reach → Catch → Push → Relaxed recovery



4) MAIN SET

6 × 100 (20 sec rest)

- First 25: long and smooth
- Middle 50: normal swimming
- Final 25: return to long and smooth
- Keep effort at RPE 4–5



5) SECONDARY SET

- 4 × 50 stroke-count focus
- Find the lowest stroke count you can maintain without excessive gliding
- Then 4 × 100 steady endurance effort
- Keep stroke count and rhythm similar from first 25 to final 25



6) COOLDOWN

200 easy



7) FOCUS ON

- Length through the front of the stroke
- Early catch / connection with the water
- Complete underwater pressure
- Stable head position
- Relaxed recovery
- Avoiding excessive glide



8) COACHING REMINDER

Swimming long does not mean pausing between strokes. Maximize useful distance per stroke while maintaining continuous forward momentum.





WORKOUT 3: BREATHING RHYTHM & ADAPTABILITY

Practice different breathing patterns and learn to adapt them without losing stroke rhythm.



1) PURPOSE

Develop control over different breathing patterns and the ability to adapt breathing based on effort and conditions.



2) TOTAL DISTANCE

Approx. 1,600–2,000 yd/m



3) WARM-UP

300 easy freestyle
4 × 50 (15 sec rest)

- 25 breathe primarily right
- 25 breathe primarily left
- Focus on relaxed exhalation and easy rotation



4) MAIN SET 1

Explore different breathing patterns
2 × 50 each pattern

- Every 2 strokes
- Every 3 strokes
- Every 4 strokes
- Every 5 strokes if comfortable
- 2 × 50 alternating patterns: 25 every 2 then 25 every 3, or 25 every 3 then 25 every 4
- Rest 15–20 sec



5) MAIN SET 2

6 × 100 (20 sec rest)

- #1 every 2 strokes
- #2 every 3 strokes
- #3 by 25: 2 / 3 / 2 / 3
- #4 by 25: 3 / 4 / 3 / 4
- #5 by 25: 2 / 3 / 4 / 2
- #6 athlete's choice



6) RACE-SITUATION SET

6 × 50 (15 sec rest)

- Plenty of air: every 2 strokes
- Bilateral awareness: every 3 strokes
- Waves from right: breathe left
- Waves from left: breathe right
- Sight → breathe every 6–10 strokes
- Athlete's choice



7) FOCUS ON

- Continuous exhalation underwater
- Relaxed inhalation
- Rotate rather than lift the head
- Staying relaxed as breathing frequency changes
- Comfort breathing to either side
- Changing patterns without disrupting rhythm



8) COACHING REMINDER

More breaths are not bad swimming, and fewer breaths are not automatically better. The goal is to control and adapt your breathing without losing your stroke rhythm.





WORKOUT 4: OPEN-WATER SKILLS INTEGRATION

Combine cadence, efficiency, breathing, and sighting in one race-specific session.



1) PURPOSE

Combine stroke rhythm, stroke length, breathing adaptability, and sighting in one integrated session.



2) TOTAL DISTANCE

Approx. 1,800–2,200 yd/m



3) WARM-UP

300 easy
4 x 50

- 25 long and smooth
- 25 moderately quicker cadence



4) MAIN SET

4 rounds of 300

- First 100: efficient swimming — long body, clean catch, controlled breathing
- Second 100: race rhythm — slightly quicker cadence
- Every 8–10 strokes: sight → breathe → return to rhythm
- Third 100 by 25: long & controlled / quicker cadence / breathe one side / breathe other side
- Rest 30–45 sec between rounds



5) RACE-FINISH SET

4 x 50

- First 25: controlled race rhythm
- Second 25: slightly increase turnover
- Imagine approaching swim exit or swimming through traffic



6) COOLDOWN

200 easy



7) FOCUS ON

- Changing cadence without losing technique
- Returning to rhythm after sighting
- Maintaining breathing control
- Staying long when conditions allow
- Increasing turnover when needed
- Remaining composed when the pattern changes



8) COACHING REMINDER

Open-water swimming is not about one perfect stroke for the entire race.
Build a stable foundation that you can adapt when the environment changes.

