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## Bilateral Breathing



This week's Speedo Tip of the Week is an excerpt from the Jan.-Feb. 2008 issue of Splash. Here are some pointers for making bilateral breathing a little easier.

### The Tip:

If you're not breathing to both sides, it's never too late to start. It helps balance your stroke, creates symmetry in back musculature, helps eliminate cramping and increases your oxygen intake, resulting in a more efficient, faster stroke. Plus in a race, breathing bilaterally helps you keep an eye on your competition.

The key to doing this correctly is proper rotation. If you're whipping your head around to breathe on your weaker side, your hips will drop and throw your balance. Here's how to make bilateral breathing easier:

- Practice rotation drills. A great one to start with your body on its side, with the bottom arm extending out in front and the top arm resting on your side. Point your nose to the bottom of the pool. Slowly kick to keep your hips up. Roll and stroke until you are lying on the opposite side. Breathe freely and check your balance. Then turn your head so your nose points to the bottom, and stay on your side for 10 kicks. Repeat the motion for the length of the pool.
- Try a set where you breathe to your right side on one length and to your left on the next.
- On a set of 75s, breathe every five strokes on the first 25, every three strokes on the second length and every stroke (right-left-right-left) on the last length.
- Breathe to your weak side in all warm ups, cool downs and slower swimming sets, and to your strong side on main sets. Gradually make the shift to bilateral breathing on main sets.
- It doesn't matter if you practice bilateral breathing per lap or per set. What matters is staying balanced and symmetrical so you can breathe easily on both sides. Once you begin regular bilateral breathing, it gets easier with every practice.
- Stay smooth and fluid while breathing every third stroke. Eventually with practice, breathing every cycle with no interruption in your flow should be easy. Your goal should be to breathe evenly to both sides in all your practices and races.

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