OCEAN SWIM SCHOOL

FREE GUIDE FOR ADULT SWIMMERS

Freestyle Fix Guide

The 23 most common freestyle mistakes and how to fix each one.



Alex Coci

London 2012 Olympian and Swim England Level 3 Senior Coach

A note from Alex.

Most of the adults I coach are not short of effort. They work hard on every length and get very little back, and nearly always a small habit is the reason.

This guide puts the 23 freestyle mistakes I see most often in one place, with the fix for each.

Don't read it all at once. Find the page that sounds like you, pick one cue and swim a few lengths with only that in mind. When it starts to feel normal, come back for the next one.

Small changes, one at a time. That's how swimming gets easier.

Alex

Alex Coci, Ocean Swim School
London 2012 Olympian and Swim England Level 3 Senior Coach

Find the one that sounds like you. Then work on one cue at a time.

23 FIXES IN FIVE PARTS OF THE STROKE

What's inside.

Every page shows the mistake, why it happens, what to do instead and three cues to try one at a time.

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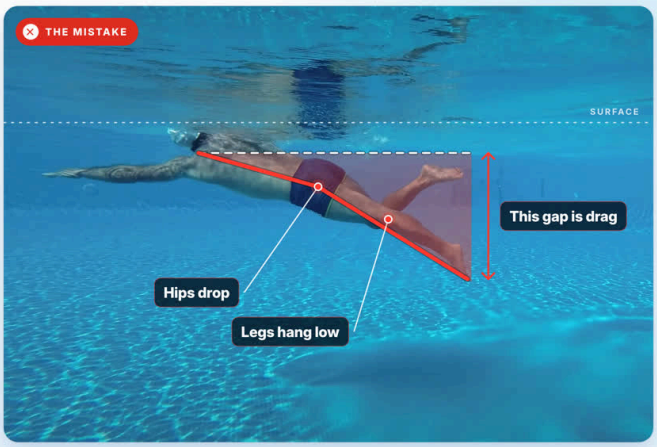
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Legs sinking?

Kicking harder won't fix it. **Your body position will.**



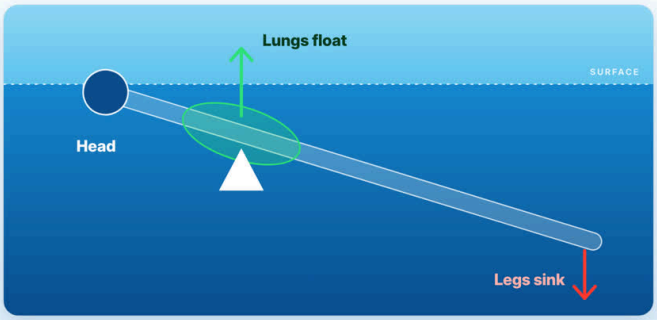
WHAT'S GOING ON

You're swimming uphill.

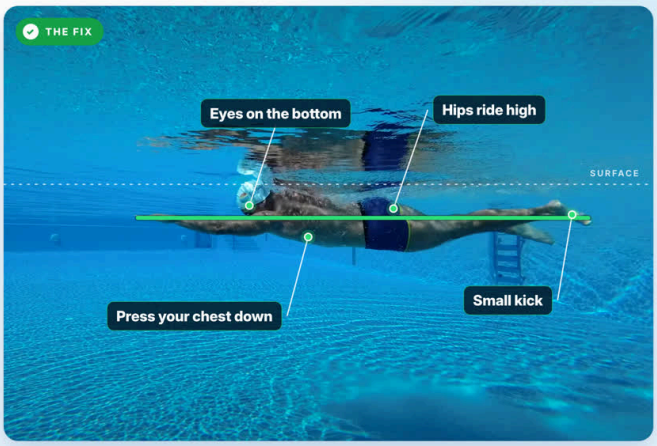
Your hips drop and your legs hang low, so every stroke has to drag all of that through the water. **That's why one length can feel like four.**

WHY IT HAPPENS

Your body is a seesaw.



Your lungs are full of air so your chest floats. Your legs are heavy so they don't. **Lift your head even a little and the other end goes down.**



SAME SEESAW, WORKING FOR YOU

Press the front down.

Look at the bottom and lean on your chest. **Your hips come up on their own** and your kick can finally stay small.

TRY THIS ON YOUR NEXT SWIM

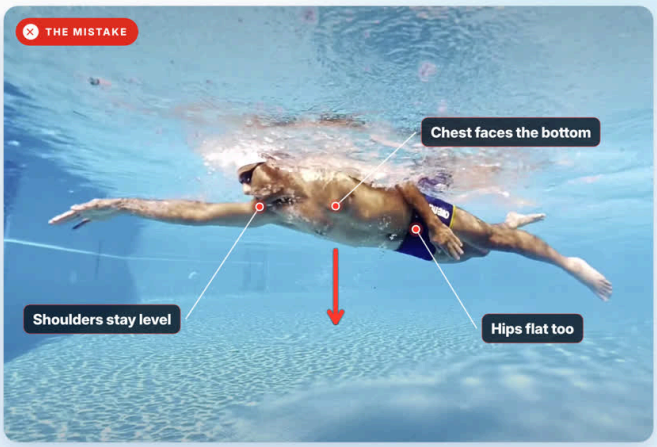
3 cues. One at a time.

1. **Look straight down**
   Eyes on the line at the bottom, not the wall ahead.
2. **Press your chest down**
   Lean into the water like you're swimming slightly downhill.
3. **Kick small and fast**
   From the hips, feet just under the surface.

Fix the body line first and everything else gets easier.

Swimming flat?

Your arms are doing all the work. **Let your body roll.**



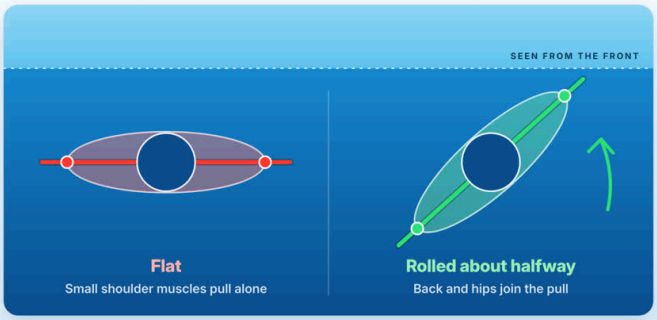
WHAT'S GOING ON

Flat like a plank.

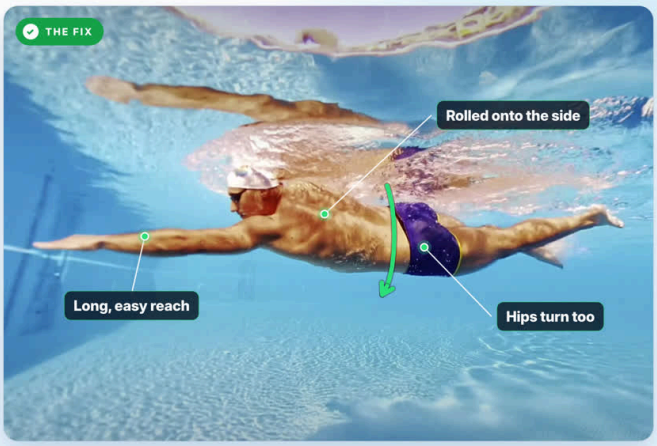
Your chest and hips stay square to the bottom, so your arms have to pull on their own. **The reach is short, your shoulders get tight and every breath means cranking your neck.**

WHY IT MATTERS

Your back is the engine.



The big muscles in your back only join in when your body rolls. Stay flat and your shoulders do it all. **Roll, and the same stroke reaches further with less effort.**



THE FIX

Roll with every stroke.

Turn from your hips, about halfway onto your side, as each hand reaches forward. **Your back joins in, the reach gets longer** and the breath comes with the roll.

TRY THIS ON YOUR NEXT SWIM

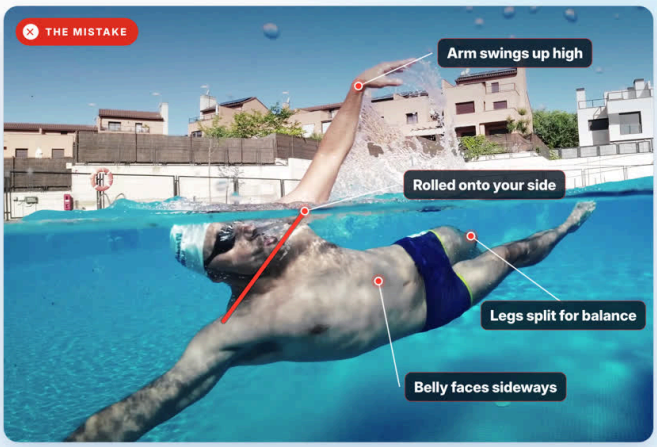
3 cues. One at a time.

1. **Roll from your hips**
   Turn about halfway onto your side with each stroke, hips and shoulders together.
2. **Reach and roll together**
   As one hand reaches forward, let that shoulder drop and the other one come up.
3. **Breathe with the roll**
   Let the roll bring your mouth to the air, so your neck can stay relaxed.

Let your whole body share the work and every length gets easier on your shoulders.

Rolling too far?

You only need to roll halfway. **The rest just tips you over.**



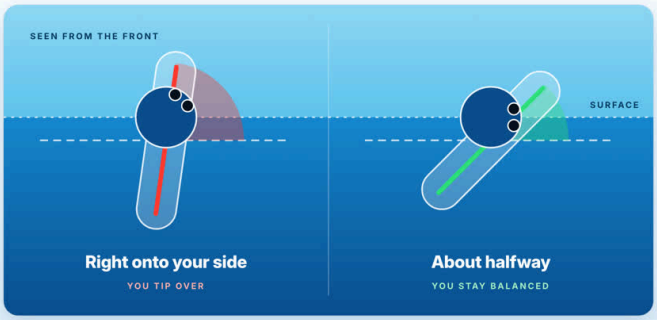
WHAT'S GOING ON

You tip right over.

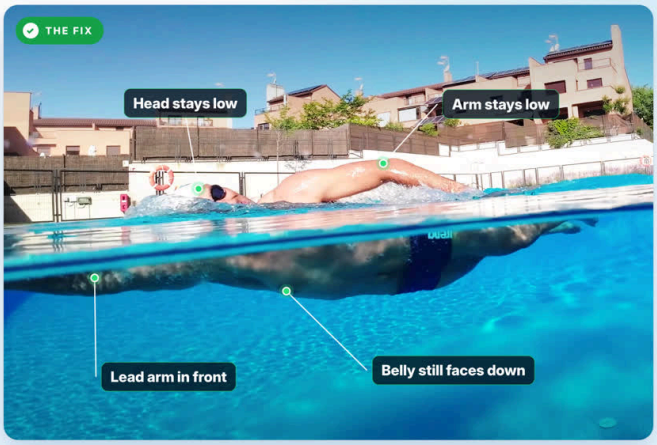
You roll so far that your belly faces the side of the pool and your balance goes. Your legs split to catch you and your arm pulls under your body, **so every stroke takes longer.**

WHY IT HAPPENS

All of you turns for air.



When the breath feels rushed, you keep turning until your mouth is well clear of the water. **Your head only needs a small turn and your body only needs half.**



THE FIX

Roll halfway. Stop there.

Turn your hips and shoulders together, about halfway to your side. Keep your head still with one goggle in the water on the breath, **and leave your lead arm out in front to steady you.**

TRY THIS ON YOUR NEXT SWIM

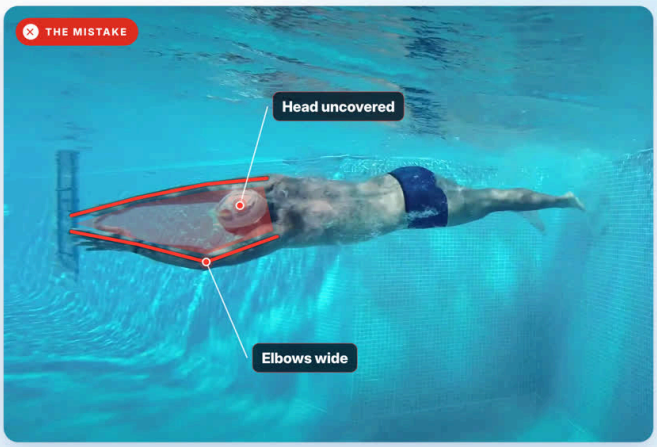
3 cues. One at a time.

1. **Roll only halfway**
   Hips and shoulders turn together, then come straight back.
2. **Keep one goggle in**
   Head stays still. On the breath, one eye stays in the water.
3. **Reach as you breathe**
   Leave your lead arm out in front. It keeps you steady.

Roll just enough and you stay balanced, so every stroke feels smoother and easier.

Wasting the wall?

Open arms throw away free speed. **Push off like an arrow.**



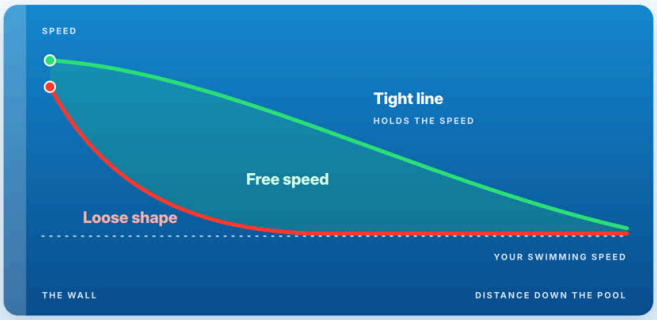
WHAT'S GOING ON

You leave the wall wide open.

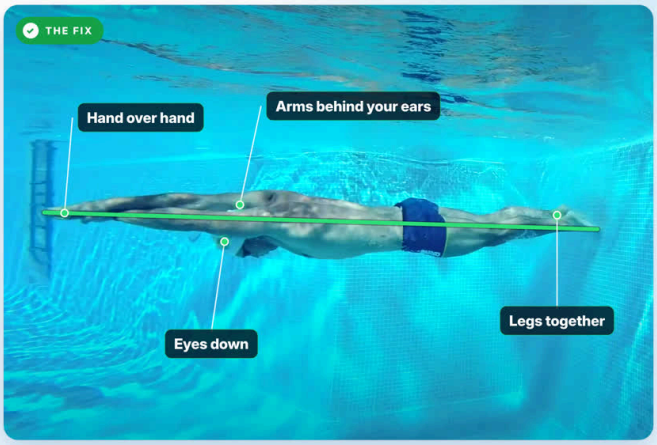
Your elbows bend out and your head sits in the open gap between your arms. **The water hits all of it, so the push is gone before you take a stroke.**

WHY IT MATTERS

You are fastest off the wall.



A good push moves you faster than you can swim. A tight shape holds that speed for a few metres. **A loose shape brakes you to swimming pace almost at once.**



SAME WALL, MORE SPEED

Squeeze into one tight line.

One hand on top of the other, arms squeezed behind your ears, eyes on the bottom. **Set the shape before your feet leave the wall** and hold it until you slow to swimming speed.

TRY THIS ON YOUR NEXT SWIM

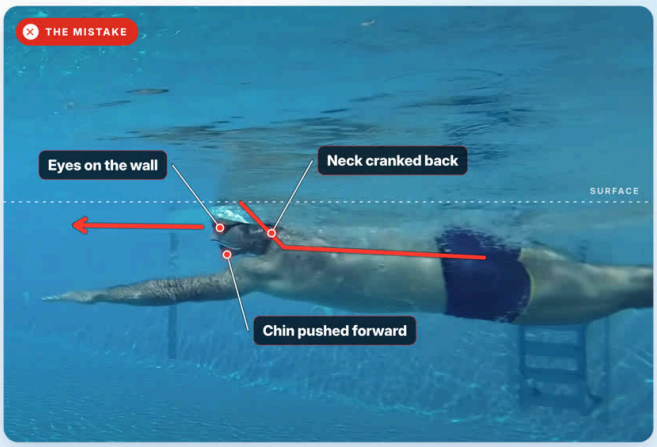
3 cues. One at a time.

1. **Lock hand over hand**
   One palm on the back of the other, with the top thumb wrapped around to hold it.
2. **Squeeze your ears**
   Arms straight and pressed just behind your ears, so your head hides between them.
3. **Shape first, then push**
   Sink under, set your arms, then drive off the wall and hold the line for a count of two.

Get the push off right and every length starts with a few free metres.

Sore neck?

Looking at the wall strains your neck. **Look down instead.**



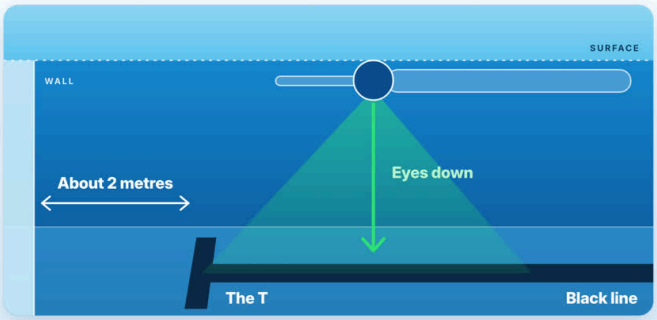
WHAT'S GOING ON

Eyes forward. Neck tight.

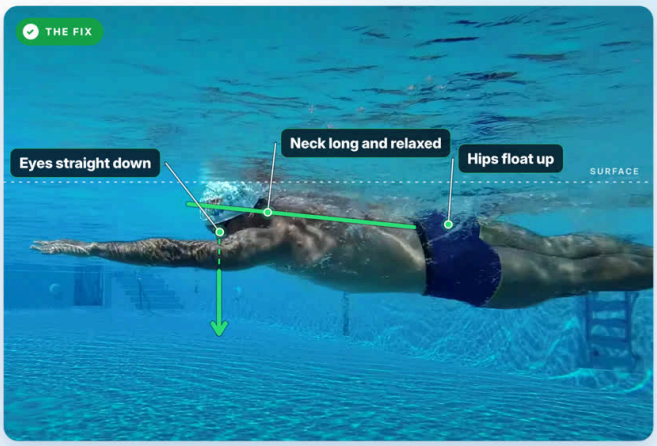
When you look at the wall your neck has to hold your head up the whole way. Your head lifts, your hips drop and your legs drag behind you. **That's why your neck aches after a swim.**

WHY YOU DON'T NEED TO LOOK AHEAD

Follow the black line.



You look forward because you want to know where the wall is, but the pool already tells you. **Follow the black line and when it ends in a T, the wall is about two metres away.**



THE FIX

Eyes down. Neck long.

Look straight down and let your neck go long and relaxed, like you're standing tall. **The water line sits at the crown of your head**, your hips come up and your legs stop dragging.

TRY THIS ON YOUR NEXT SWIM

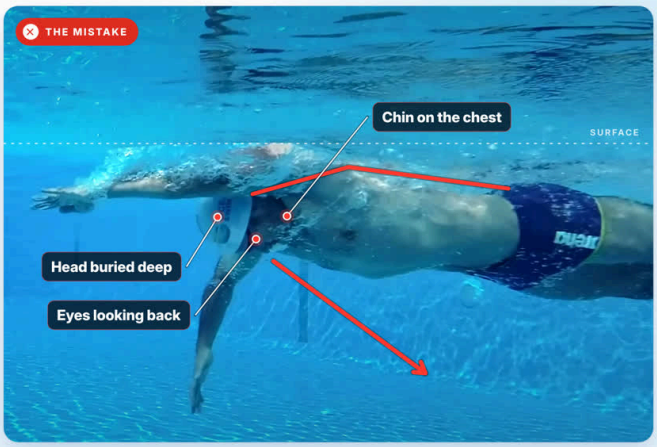
3 cues. One at a time.

1. **Eyes on the line**
   Look straight down at the bottom, not at the wall ahead.
2. **Keep your neck long**
   Like standing tall, with your jaw and shoulders relaxed.
3. **Trust the T**
   The black line ends in a T about two metres from the wall.

Let the water hold your head and the whole swim feels lighter.

Head too low?

Tucking your chin buries your head. **Look at the floor below you.**



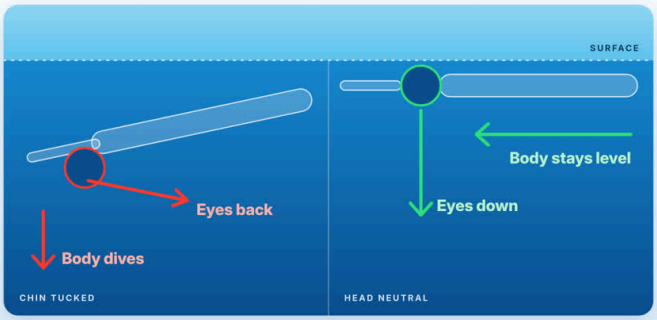
WHAT'S GOING ON

Chin down. Body dives.

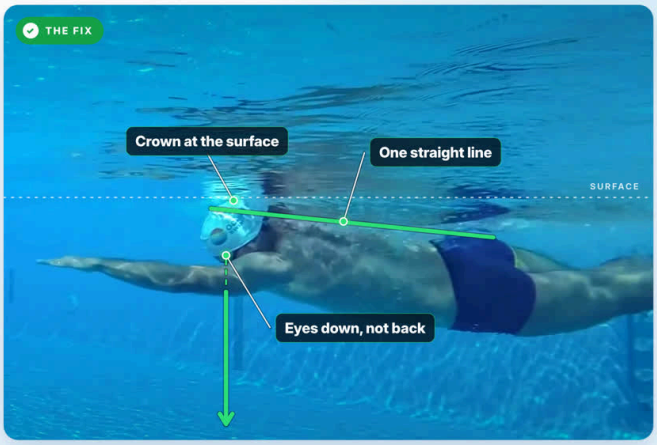
Looking down is good, but you've gone past it. Your chin is on your chest, you're looking back at your feet and your whole head is buried under the water. **That's why you have to fight your way up for every breath.**

WHY IT MATTERS

Your body follows your head.



Your head steers everything behind it. Tuck your chin and your back rounds, your shoulders follow your head down and your mouth ends up a long way from the air. **Level head, level body.**



THE FIX

Look down, not back.

Look at the floor right under you, or just a touch ahead, with your chin off your chest. **The water should break at the crown of your head.** From there a breath is only a small turn away.

TRY THIS ON YOUR NEXT SWIM

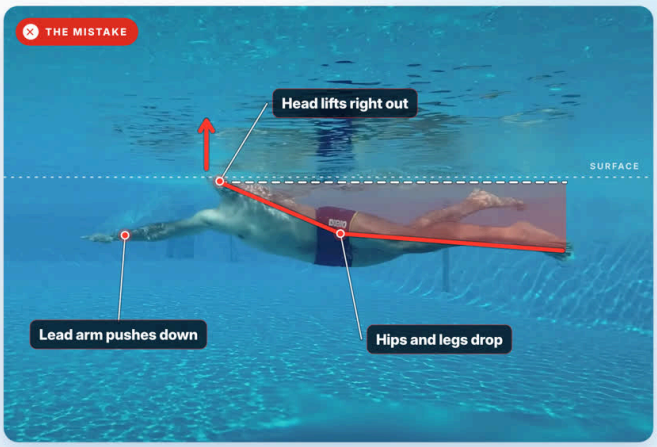
3 cues. One at a time.

1. **Look under your nose**
   Eyes on the floor right below you, not back at your feet.
2. **Chin off your chest**
   Imagine you are holding a tennis ball under your chin.
3. **Water at your crown**
   It should break on top of your cap, not behind your head.

Keep your head level and every breath gets easier.

Fighting for air?

Lifting your head sinks your legs. **Turn it instead.**



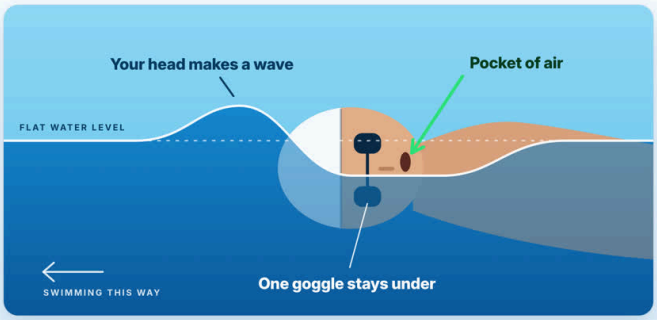
WHAT'S GOING ON

Head up. Legs down.

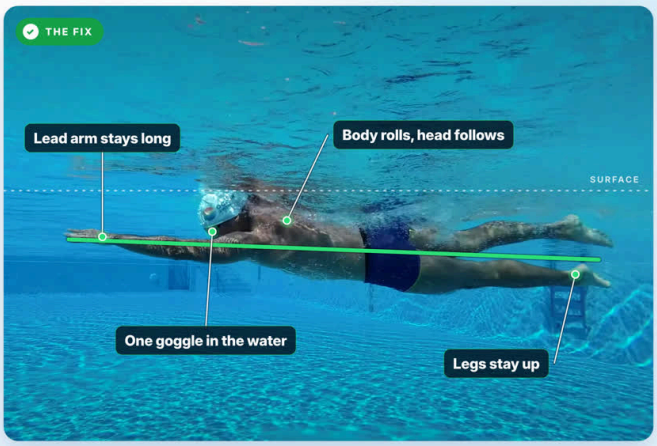
When you lift your head to find air, your lead arm pushes down to hold it up and your hips and legs drop. **Every breath becomes a fight and you lose your speed.**

WHY YOU DON'T NEED TO LIFT

The air is beside you.



Your head pushes a small wave ahead of it, and that leaves a dip in the water right beside your face. **Turn into that pocket and the air is already there.**



THE FIX

Turn. Don't lift.

Breathe out while your face is down. Then roll with your body and let your head turn with it, **one goggle still in the water.** Your legs stay up and the breath feels easy.

TRY THIS ON YOUR NEXT SWIM

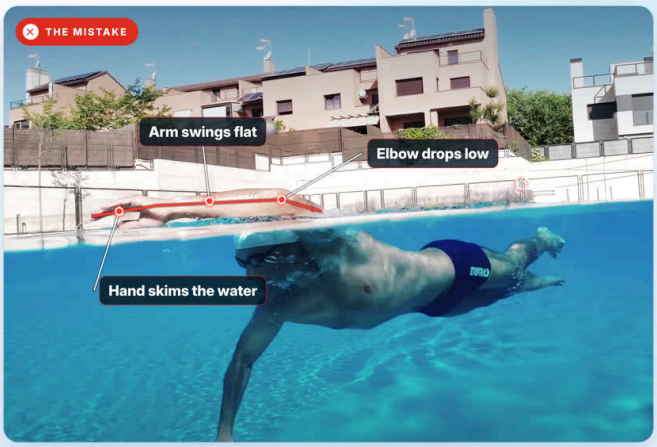
3 cues. One at a time.

1. **Breathe out underwater**
   Steady bubbles while your face is down, so you only have to breathe in when you turn.
2. **Turn with your body**
   Roll your shoulders and let your head go along for the ride.
3. **Keep one goggle in**
   One eye in the water, one out, and breathe into the pocket beside your head.

When the breath stops being a fight, the whole swim feels easier.

Heavy arms?

Your elbow drops on the way over the water. **Let it lead.**



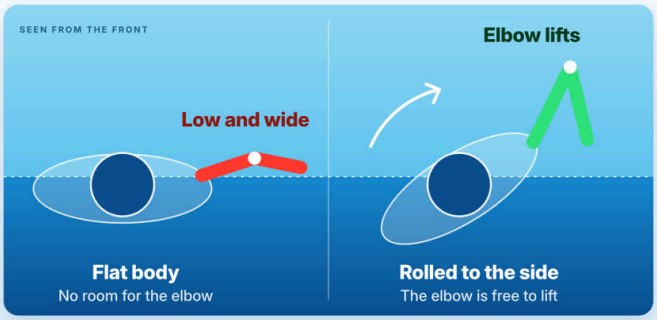
WHAT'S GOING ON

Your arm swings low and flat.

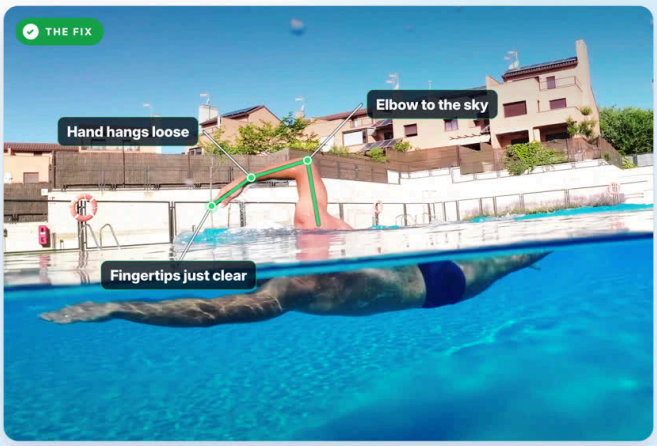
As your arm comes over the water your elbow drops, so the whole arm skims along just above the surface. Your shoulder has to carry it all the way round and **the part of the stroke that should be a rest turns into work.**

WHY IT HAPPENS

No roll, no room.



Your elbow can only lift if your body rolls to the side first. Swim flat and the arm has to go round the side, low and wide. **That wide swing tugs your hips the other way, so you wiggle down the pool.**



THE FIX

Elbow high, hand loose.

Roll onto your side as your hand leaves the water and let your elbow lead the arm forward. Your forearm and hand just hang underneath, close to your body. **Nothing below the elbow is working, so the arm gets its rest.**

TRY THIS ON YOUR NEXT SWIM

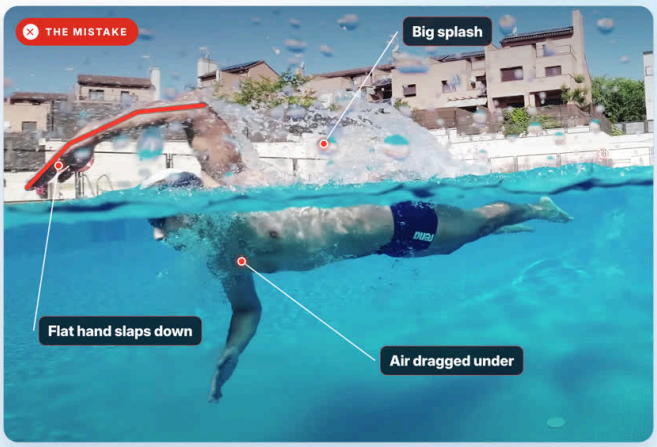
3 cues. One at a time.

1. **Lead with your elbow**
   Out of the water first and the highest part of your arm.
2. **Let your hand hang**
   Loose wrist, soft fingers, passing close under your elbow.
3. **Trail your fingertips**
   Brush the surface with them for a few lengths.

Let your arm rest on its way over the water and every length starts to feel lighter.

Hands slapping?

A slap carries air into your pull. **Slide your hand in instead.**



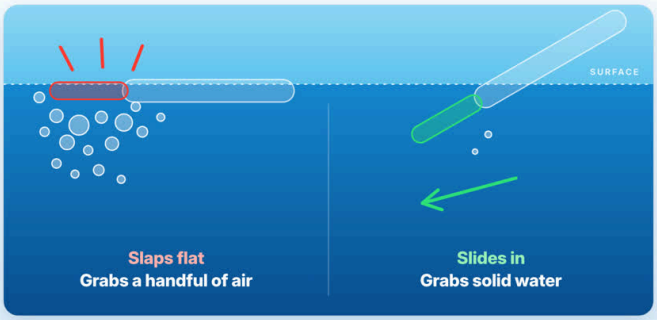
WHAT'S GOING ON

Your hand lands flat.

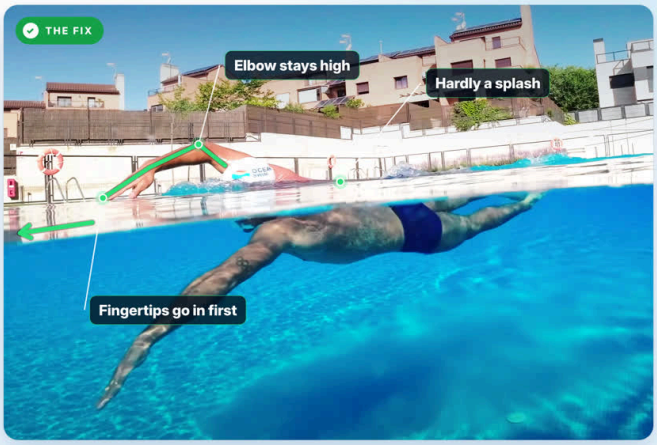
Your arm swings over straight and the hand and forearm hit the surface all at once. You hear the slap, you see the splash, and **a cloud of bubbles follows your hand under.**

WHY IT MATTERS

You can't pull on air.



Your hand needs solid water to press against. Bubbles are full of air, so the first part of your pull slips instead of gripping. **The slap itself is a small brake on every stroke.**



THE FIX

One hole in the water.

Fingertips go in first, in front of your shoulder. Your wrist and elbow follow through the same hole, then **you reach forward under the surface** where the water is clean.

TRY THIS ON YOUR NEXT SWIM

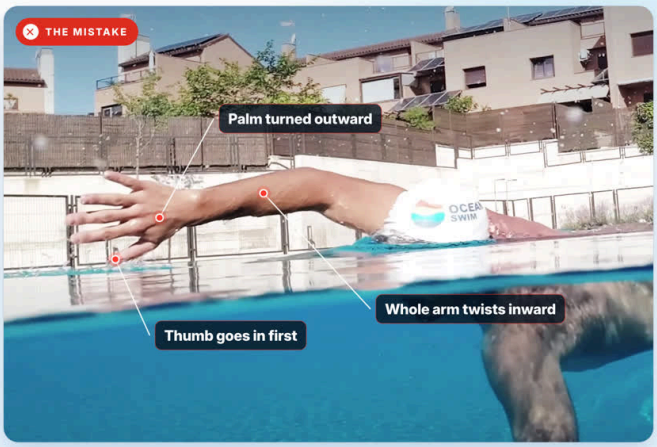
3 cues. One at a time.

1. **Slide your hand in**
   Fingertips, then wrist, then elbow, all through the same hole in the water.
2. **Reach under the surface**
   Enter in front of your shoulder with a bent elbow, then extend forward underwater.
3. **Swim quietly**
   Listen to your hands. If you can hear them land, soften the arm and slow the entry.

Quiet hands find solid water, and solid water makes every stroke feel easier.

Thumb first?

It twists your shoulder on every stroke. **Go fingertips first.**



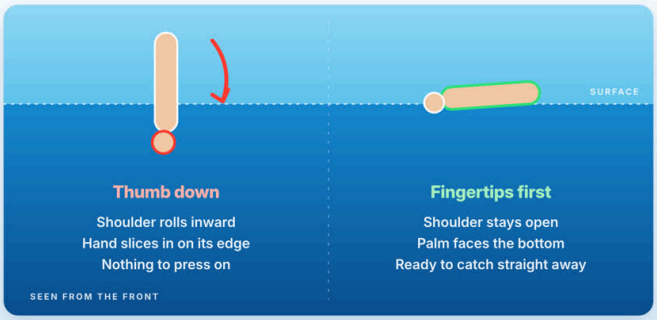
WHAT'S GOING ON

Thumb first, palm out.

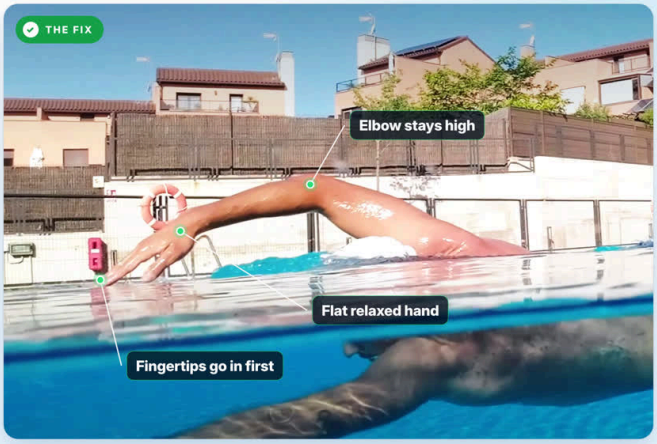
Your hand turns palm out and slices in on its edge. It feels smooth and quiet, but **your whole arm has to twist inward to do it, on every single stroke.**

WHY IT MATTERS

It pinches your shoulder.



Turning the thumb down rolls your shoulder inward just as the arm reaches full stretch, and that is the classic recipe for swimmer's shoulder. **The hand also arrives on its edge, so it slips instead of gripping the water.**



SAME REACH, KINDER ON THE SHOULDER

Fingertips first, palm down.

Let your fingertips go in first with a flat, relaxed hand. **Your shoulder stays open** and your palm already faces down and back, ready to catch.

TRY THIS ON YOUR NEXT SWIM

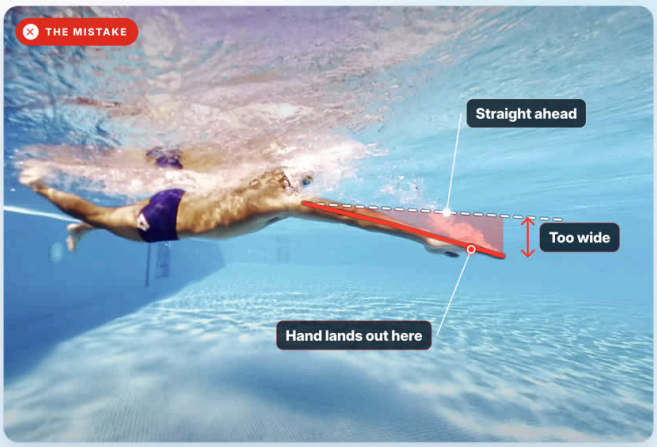
3 cues. One at a time.

1. **Fingertips in first**
   Middle finger leads, thumb and little finger land together.
2. **Palm faces the bottom**
   Flat, relaxed hand. No turning it out to slice in.
3. **Reach, then press back**
   Slide forward under the surface and you are set up to catch.

Get the entry right and your shoulders stay happy and every stroke feels easier.

Hands too wide?

A wide hand is a short stroke. **Reach straight ahead.**



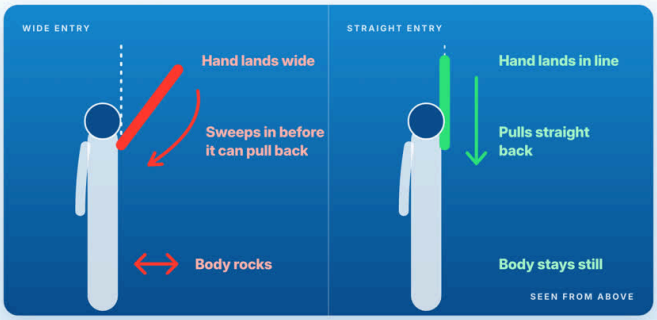
WHAT'S GOING ON

Your hand lands too wide.

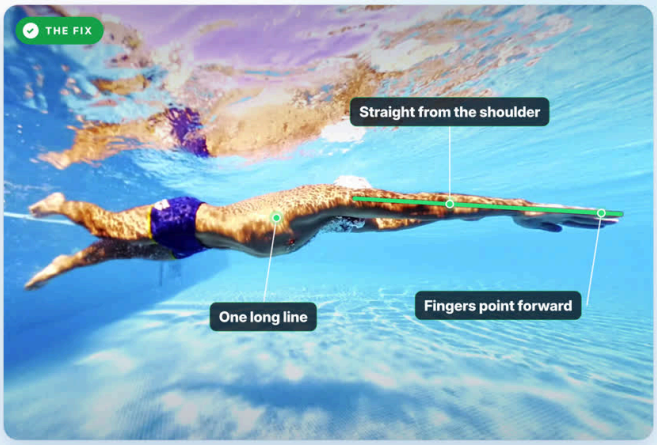
It goes in outside the line of your shoulder, so your arm points away from where you want to go. **Your reach gets shorter and the pull starts off line.**

WHY IT COSTS YOU

Sideways is not forward.



From a wide entry your hand has to sweep back in under your body before it can press back. That sideways push rocks you from side to side, **and a shorter reach means more strokes for every length.**



THE FIX

Straight ahead of the shoulder.

Slide your hand in ahead of its own shoulder, middle finger first, and stretch forward just under the surface. **Now the whole pull sends water back and you travel further with each stroke.**

TRY THIS ON YOUR NEXT SWIM

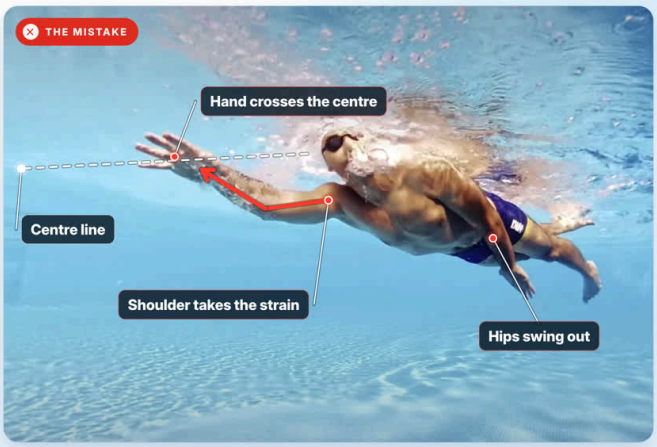
3 cues. One at a time.

1. **Reach straight ahead**
   Your hand goes in ahead of its own shoulder, not out wide.
2. **Middle finger first**
   Point it down the pool and the hand follows.
3. **Go long, then pull**
   Stretch forward just under the surface before the pull starts.

Reach where you are going and every length takes fewer strokes and less effort.

Crossing over?

Reach in front of your shoulder, **not your head.**



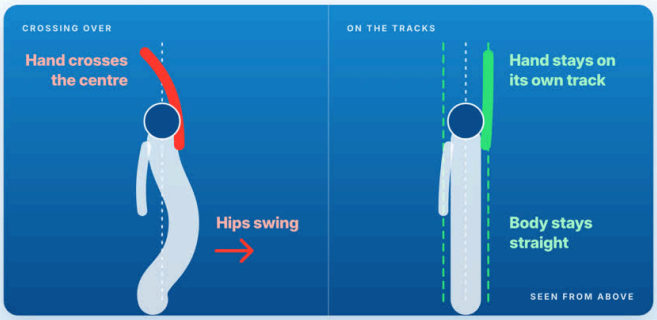
WHAT'S GOING ON

Your hand crosses the centre.

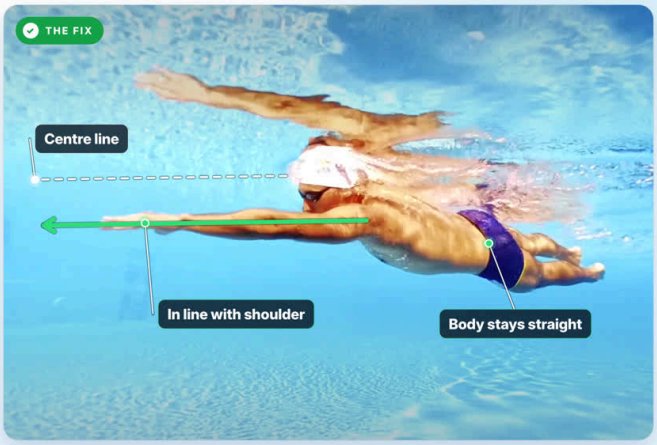
It lands in front of your head instead of your shoulder. Your hips have to swing the other way to balance, **so you wiggle down the pool like a snake.**

WHY IT MATTERS

Every wiggle is a brake.



A crossed hand pushes sideways before it pulls back, so part of every stroke is wasted. **Reaching across can also pinch the shoulder, and that adds up.**



THE FIX

Swim on train tracks.

Each hand enters in line with its own shoulder and reaches straight forward. **If it feels too wide, it is probably right.**

TRY THIS ON YOUR NEXT SWIM

3 cues. One at a time.

1. **Enter shoulder width**
   Your hand goes in ahead of your own shoulder, never across in front of your head.

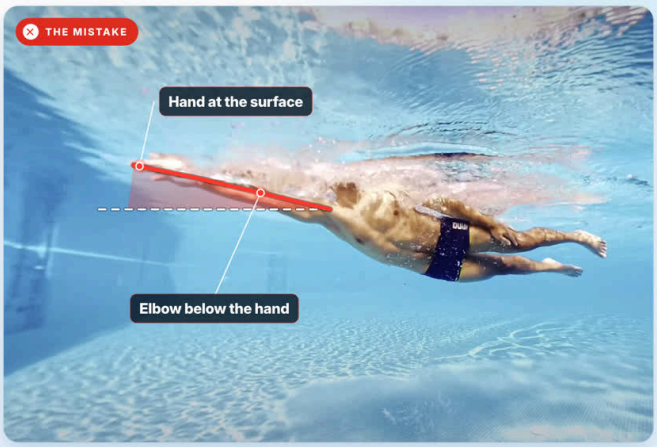
2. **Reach along train tracks**
   Picture two rails under you, one for each arm. Each hand stays on its own rail.

3. **Go wider than feels right**
   Aim for 11 and 1 on a clock face. If it feels too wide, it is probably straight.

When your hands stay on their tracks you swim straight, and straight is always easier.

Reaching too far?

Your hand climbs to the surface and **puts the brakes on.**



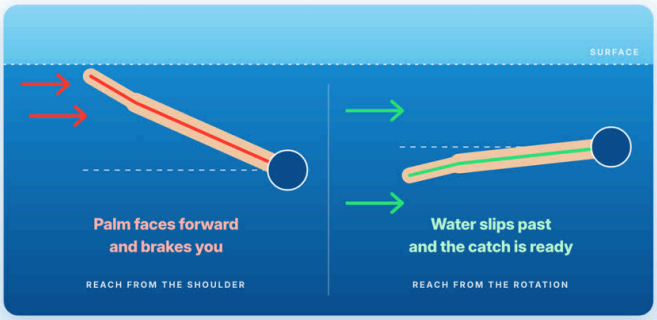
WHAT'S GOING ON

Your hand is a brake.

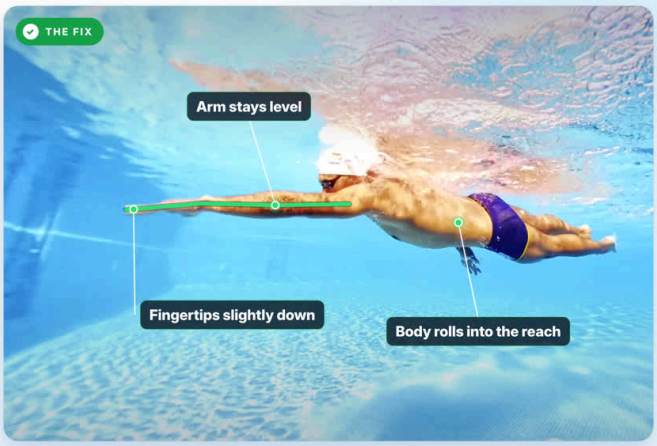
You stretch for every last centimetre, so your hand lifts to the surface and your elbow locks underneath it. **Now your palm faces forward and pushes against the way you are going.**

WHY IT HAPPENS

Longer is not better.



Once your arm is straight, the only extra length left is to shrug your shoulder to your ear. That tips the hand up and bends your body sideways, **so your hips swing out to pay for it.**



THE FIX

Let your body do the reaching.

Roll onto your side and let that roll carry your arm forward. **Your hand finishes just below your elbow with the fingertips slightly down**, ready to catch water straight away.

TRY THIS ON YOUR NEXT SWIM

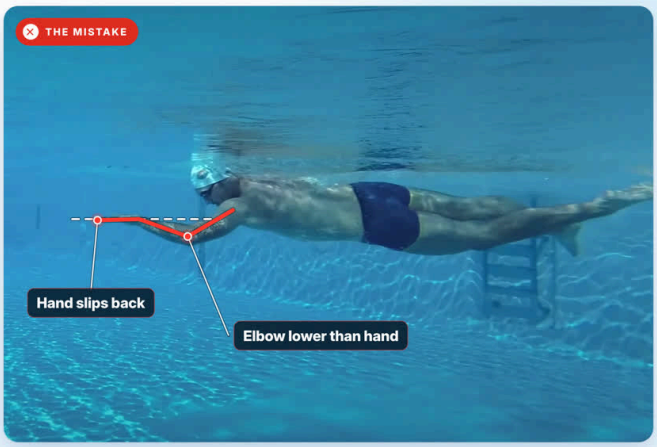
3 cues. One at a time.

1. **Reach with your body**
   Roll your hip and shoulder forward together and let that carry the hand.
2. **Fingertips slightly down**
   Spear forward and a little down, so your hand finishes below your elbow.
3. **Keep the shoulder soft**
   If it touches your ear you have gone too far. Stop just short of that.

Stop your reach a little sooner and every stroke after it feels easier.

Hand slipping?

Your elbow is dropping. **Keep it above your hand.**



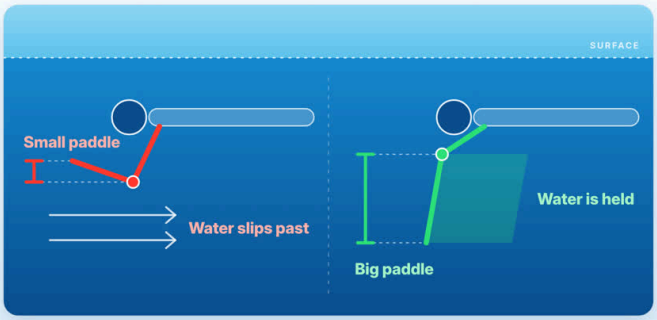
WHAT'S GOING ON

Your elbow drops first.

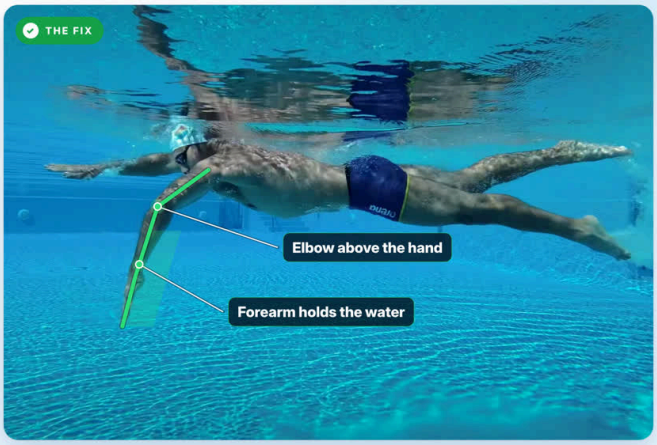
As the pull starts your elbow sinks below your hand and leads the way back. Your forearm slices through the water and your hand just slides along behind it. **You take plenty of strokes but each one moves you very little.**

WHY IT MATTERS

Your forearm is the paddle.



Your hand on its own is a small paddle. Hand and forearm together make a big one, but only while your elbow stays above your hand. **Drop the elbow and the water slips straight past.**



THE PICTURE TO SWIM WITH

Reach over a barrel.

Imagine a big barrel just under the surface in front of you. Your elbow stays high and wide while your fingertips go over the top and down. **Then your hand and forearm press back together** and you feel the water push against them.

TRY THIS ON YOUR NEXT SWIM

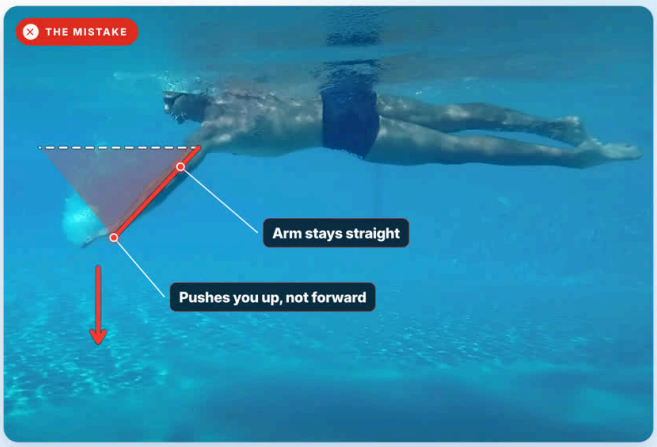
3 cues. One at a time.

1. **Reach over a barrel**
   Fingertips go down first while your elbow stays high and wide.
2. **Pull with your forearm**
   Hand and forearm press back together as one big paddle.
3. **Slow the front down**
   Take your time at the start of the pull and feel the pressure on your forearm.

Get a proper hold on the water and every length takes fewer strokes and less effort.

Heavy pull?

You're pushing the water down. **Press it back instead.**



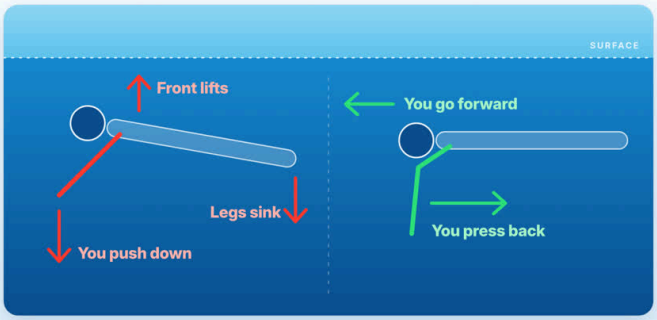
WHAT'S GOING ON

You're pushing water down.

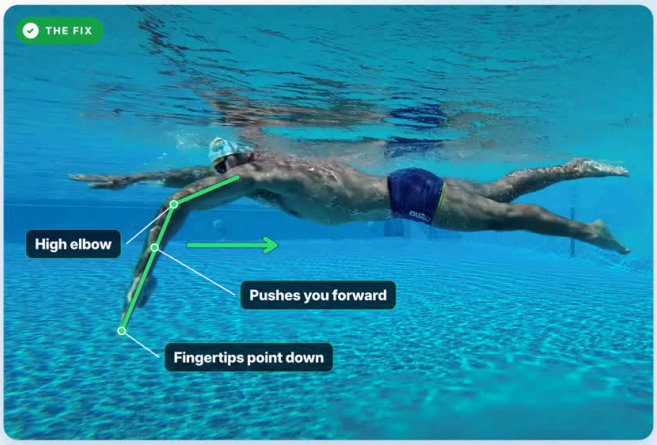
Your arm stays straight and presses down at the start of the pull. That lifts your front end and sinks your legs. **It feels heavy because you're lifting yourself, not moving forward.**

WHY IT HAPPENS

You go the opposite way.



Whichever way you push the water, your body goes the other way. Push down and your front end lifts while your legs sink. **Press back and you go forward.**



SAME EFFORT, NEW DIRECTION

Elbow high, press back.

Tip your fingertips down and let your forearm follow while your elbow stays high. **Now your hand and forearm face your feet** so every bit of pressure sends you forward.

TRY THIS ON YOUR NEXT SWIM

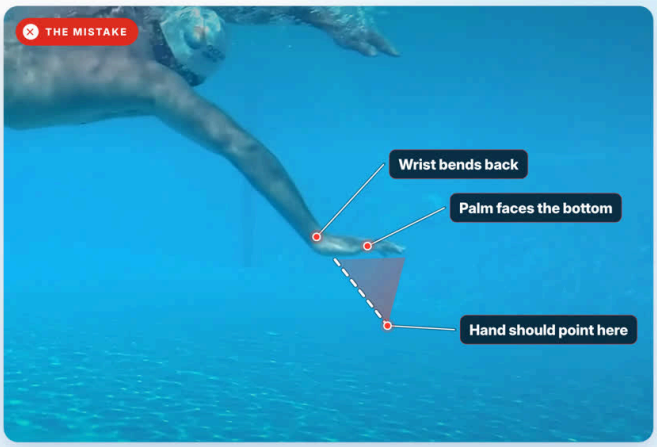
3 cues. One at a time.

1. **Fingertips down first**
   Start each pull by tipping your fingertips down.
2. **Keep your elbow high**
   Let your hand and forearm drop while the elbow stays near the surface.
3. **Press the water back**
   Send it towards your feet with your whole forearm, not just your hand.

Send the water back and every stroke takes you further for the same effort.

Loose wrist?

It lets the water spill off. **Keep your hand and forearm in line.**



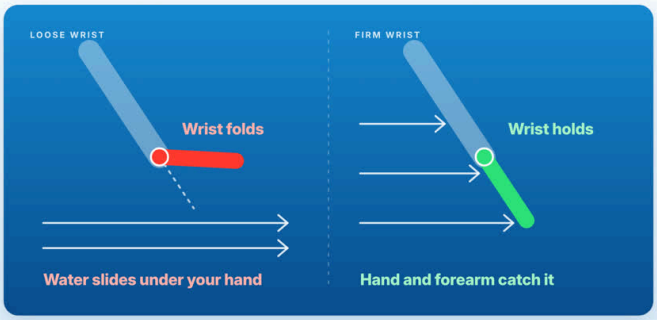
WHAT'S GOING ON

Your wrist bends back.

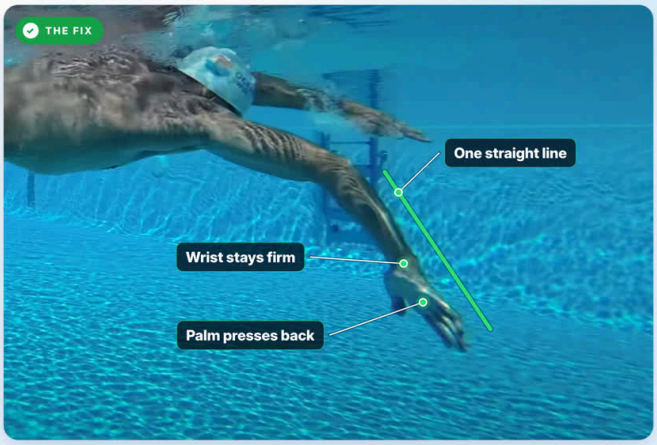
The pull feels soft, like the water isn't really there. Your wrist is giving way, so your palm tips towards the bottom and **the water spills off your fingertips.**

WHY IT HAPPENS

Your wrist is a hinge.



Water pushes back on your palm with every pull. If your wrist is loose the hinge folds and your hand gives up its hold. **Hold it firm and your hand and forearm press back as one.**



FIRM, NOT STIFF

Hand follows the forearm.

Keep a straight line from your elbow to your fingertips all the way through the pull. **Your palm faces back towards your feet** and the water has nowhere to go but behind you.

TRY THIS ON YOUR NEXT SWIM

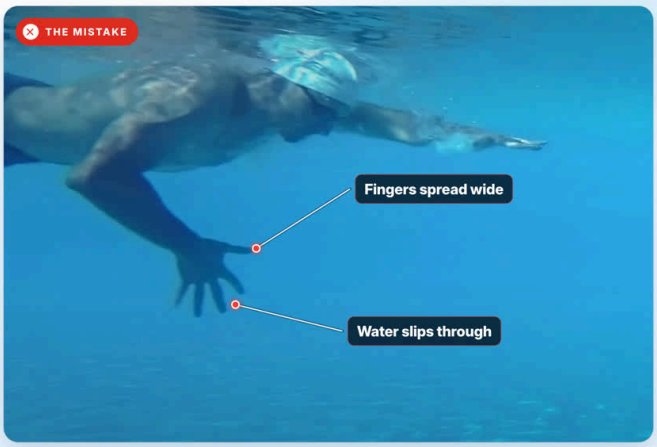
3 cues. One at a time.

1. **Keep one straight line**
   Elbow, wrist and fingertips in line through the whole pull.
2. **Point your palm back**
   Press the water towards your feet, not down to the bottom.
3. **Firm wrist, soft hand**
   Steady wrist, relaxed fingers. No clenching.

A firm wrist means nothing leaks away, so the same effort carries you further.

Spread fingers?

Water slips through the gaps. **A relaxed, flat hand holds it.**



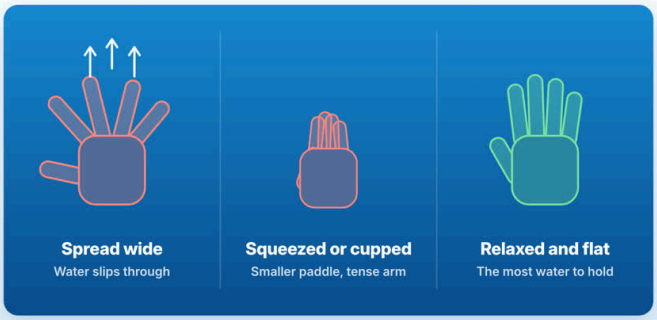
WHAT'S GOING ON

Water slips through.

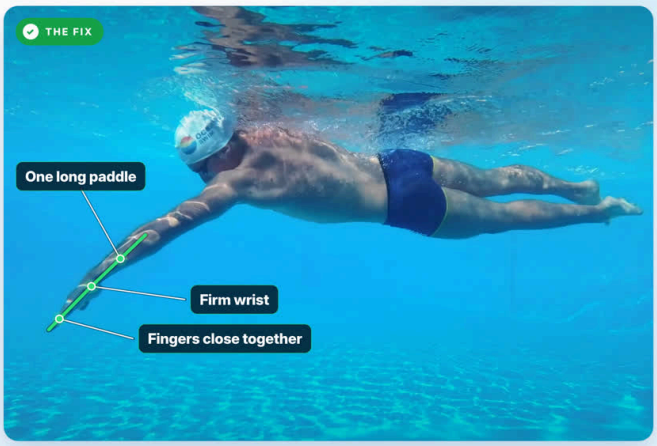
You pull hard but the water doesn't push back. With your fingers spread wide, **it slips through the gaps** and your hand has very little to hold on to.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Your hand is a paddle.



Spread your fingers wide and the paddle leaks. Squeeze them tight or cup your hand and the paddle gets smaller while your forearm tenses up. **Relaxed and flat gives you the most to pull with.**



RELAXED, FLAT AND FIRM

One long paddle.

Rest your fingers side by side and keep your wrist firm. **Your hand and forearm work as one paddle** and you can feel the water push back.

TRY THIS ON YOUR NEXT SWIM

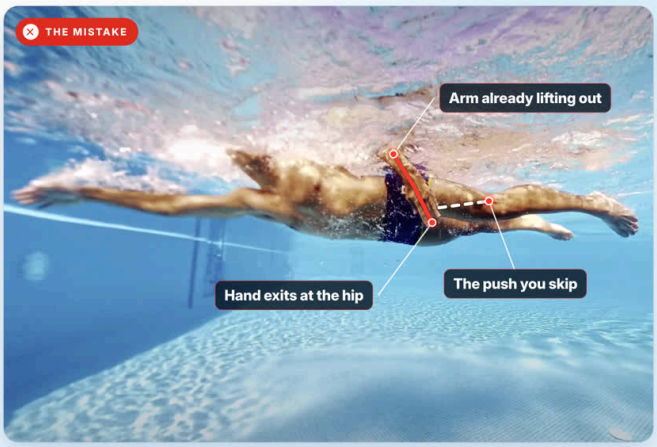
3 cues. One at a time.

1. **Close your fingers**
   Rest them side by side. A tiny gap is fine, squeezing is not.
2. **Keep your wrist firm**
   Hand in line with your forearm, no flopping or bending back.
3. **Use your forearm too**
   Feel the water on your palm and all the way up to your elbow.

Give your pull something to hold and every length starts to feel easier.

Short stroke?

Your hand leaves the water at your hip. **Push back to your thigh.**



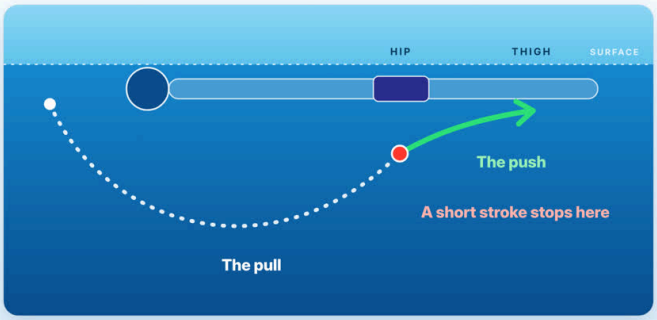
WHAT'S GOING ON

Your hand leaves at the hip.

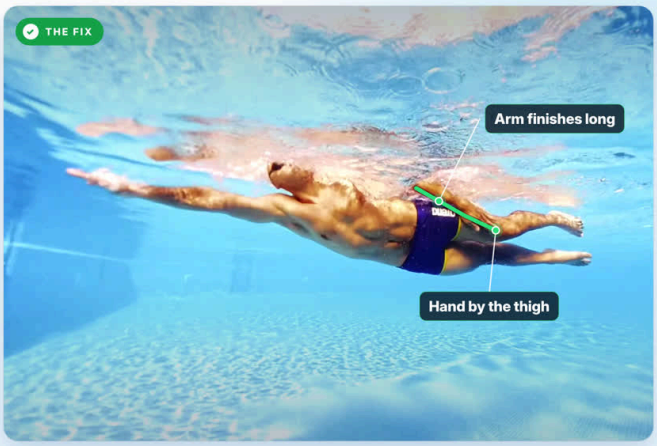
Your arms are turning over quickly but each stroke does not take you far. Your hand comes out at your waist with the elbow still bent, **so the last part of every pull never happens.**

WHY IT MATTERS

The push is the strong part.



From your belly button to your thigh your hand is moving fast and pressing water straight back. **Pull out at the hip and you throw that away on every stroke,** so you need more strokes to get to the wall.



WHAT TO DO INSTEAD

Push past your hip.

Keep pressing back until your arm is long and your thumb brushes your thigh. **Then relax and let your elbow lift the hand out.** No flick and no forcing it at the end.

TRY THIS ON YOUR NEXT SWIM

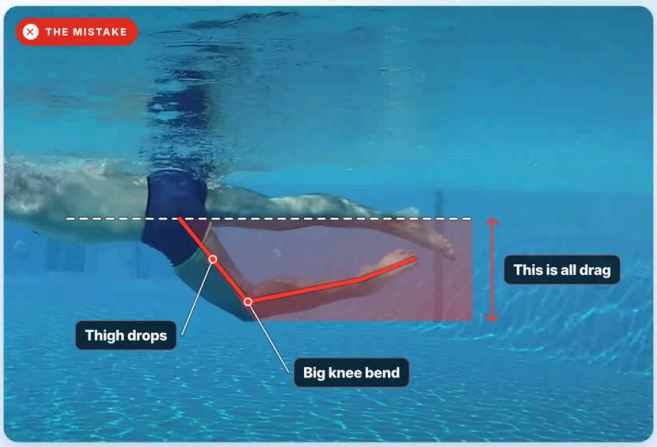
3 cues. One at a time.

1. **Push past your hip**
   Keep pressing back until your hand is by your thigh.
2. **Brush your thigh**
   Your thumb lightly touches your thigh, then the hand relaxes and comes out.
3. **Count your strokes**
   A full finish should take a stroke or two off every length.

Finish each stroke and you travel further on every one, so swimming starts to feel unhurried.

Out of breath?

It could be your kick. **Kick from the hip, not the knee.**



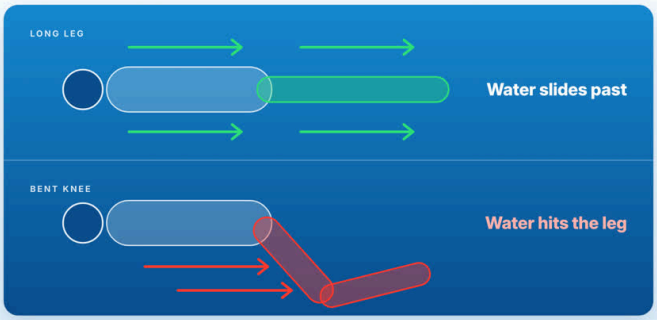
WHAT'S GOING ON

You're kicking from the knee.

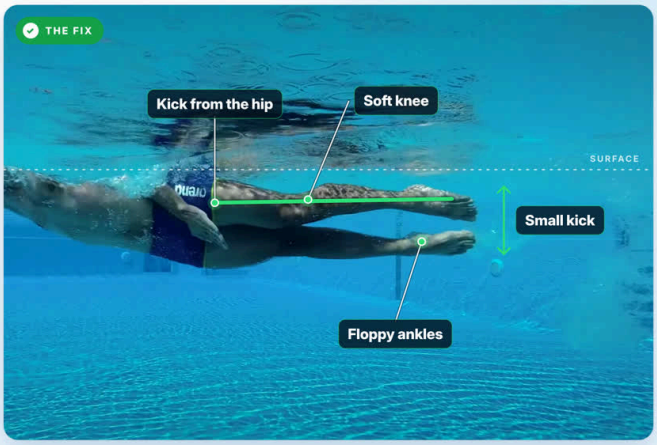
Your knee bends, your thigh drops and your foot swings deep below your body. It feels strong, **but every kick is putting the brakes on.**

WHY IT COSTS SO MUCH

Like towing a parachute.



A bent leg hits the water head on, thigh first and then the shin. Your legs are also your biggest muscles, so a big kick burns through your oxygen. **That's why one length can leave you out of breath.**



THE FIX

Kick from the hip.

Long relaxed leg, soft knee, floppy ankle. Keep the kick small and quick, with your heels just breaking the surface. **Your legs stay in line and stop stealing your air.**

TRY THIS ON YOUR NEXT SWIM

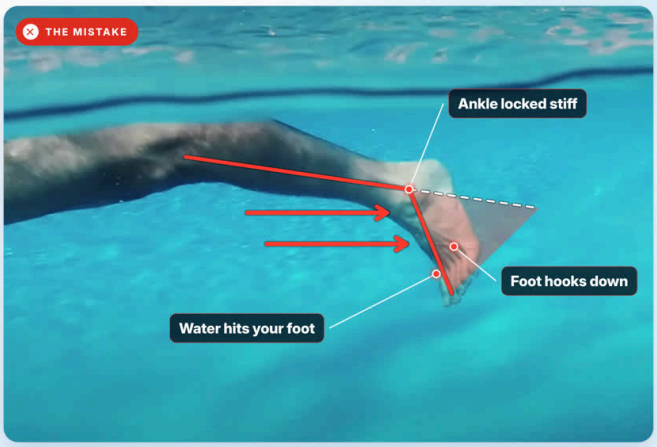
3 cues. One at a time.

1. **Kick from your hips**
   Swing the whole leg long and relaxed, with just a soft knee.
2. **Relax your ankles**
   Let your feet go floppy so they work like fins, not brakes.
3. **Keep it small and quick**
   Heels just break the surface and feet stay inside your body's shadow.

Kick smaller and you keep your breath, so every length feels easier.

Stiff ankles?

Hooked feet work like brakes. **Loose feet work like fins.**



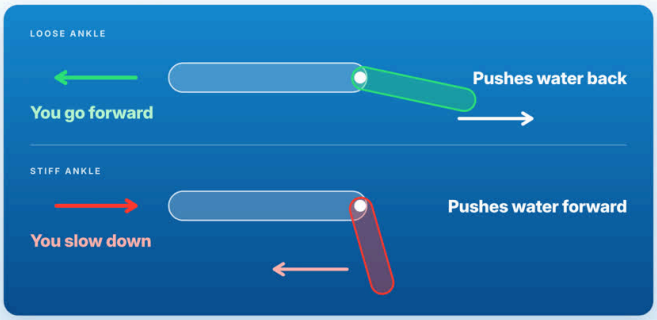
WHAT'S GOING ON

Your feet are hooked.

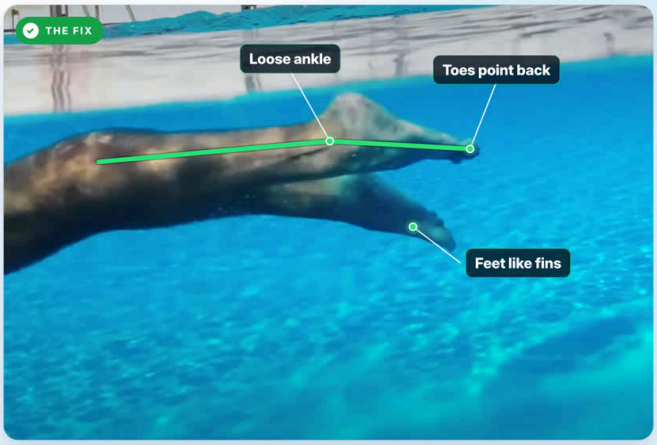
You kick hard and barely move. Your ankles are stiff, so each foot hangs down like a hook instead of trailing behind you. **The water hits it on every single kick.**

WHY IT MATTERS

A fin only works pointed back.



A pointed foot pushes water back and that sends you forward. A hooked foot pushes it the wrong way, so you slow down and your legs sink. **Kick hard with hooked feet and you can even go backwards.**



THE FIX

Long, loose feet.

Point your toes back, then let the ankle go soft so the foot flicks at the end of each kick. **Ankles loosen with time, so be patient.** A few lengths of kick with short fins will help.

TRY THIS ON YOUR NEXT SWIM

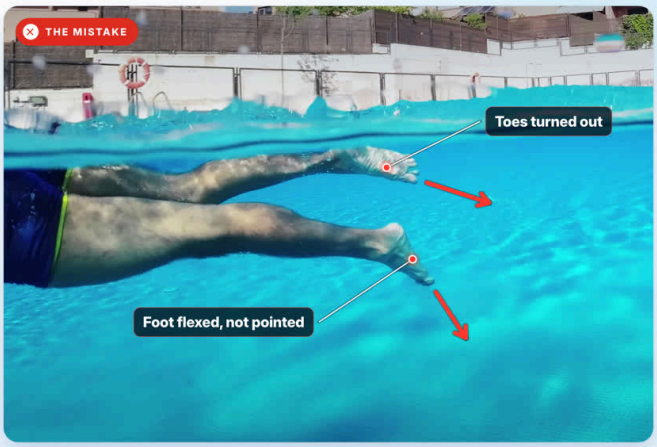
3 cues. One at a time.

1. **Point your toes back**
   Aim them at the wall behind you. Gently, no need to force it.
2. **Shake your ankles loose**
   Tension locks the foot in place. A soft ankle lets it flick like the tip of a fin.
3. **Turn your big toes in**
   Just slightly, so the top of your foot catches more water.

Loosen your ankles and your legs stop holding you back, so swimming starts to feel lighter.

Duck feet?

Flexed, turned out feet catch the water. **Pointed toes slip through it.**



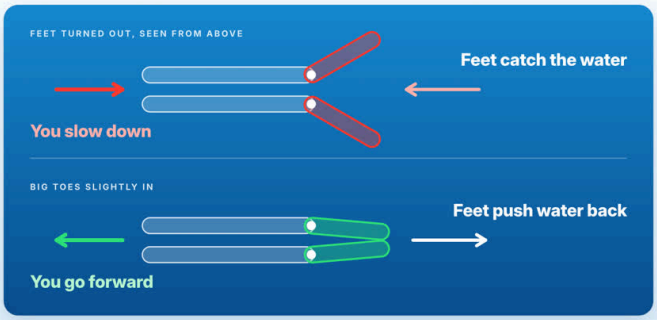
WHAT'S GOING ON

Toes out, brakes on.

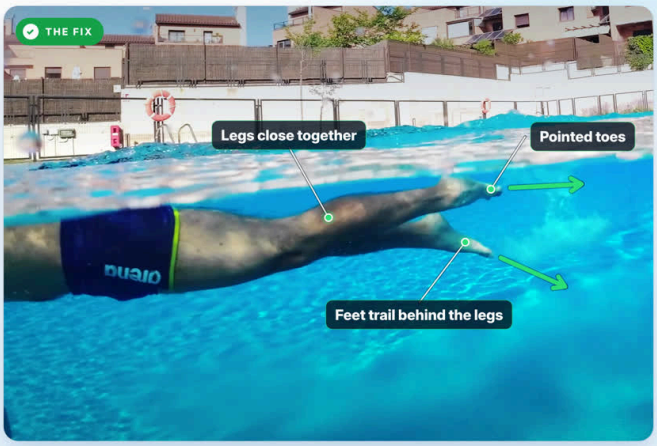
You kick and kick and hardly move. Your feet are flexed and turned out to the sides, like a duck walking. **Every kick catches water instead of pushing it back.**

WHY IT HAPPENS

It comes from breaststroke.



Most of us learned breaststroke first, where flexing the feet and turning them out is exactly right. So the legs do it in freestyle too, without you noticing. **But in freestyle a turned out foot is a brake.**



THE FIX

Long feet. Toes in.

Point your toes back and turn your big toes slightly towards each other. Now the top of each foot presses on the water, **so every kick pushes it back and sends you forward.**

TRY THIS ON YOUR NEXT SWIM

3 cues. One at a time.

1. **Make your feet long**
   Stretch your toes away from you like a dancer, with the ankle still soft.

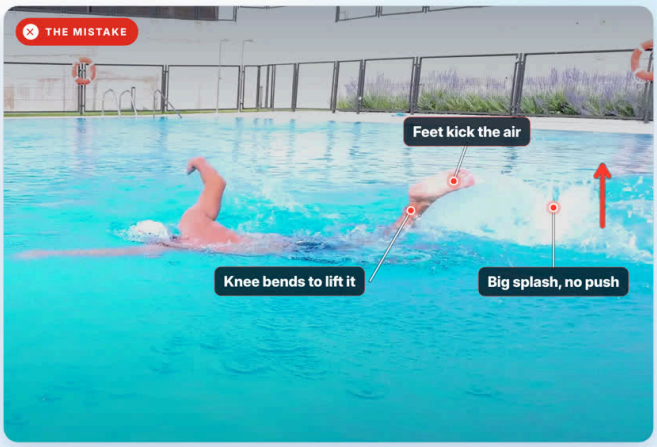
2. **Go a little pigeon toed**
   Let your big toes lean towards each other. Only slightly, so it still feels relaxed.

3. **Keep your kick narrow**
   Picture your legs kicking inside a bucket, never wider than your hips.

Line your feet up behind you and your kick stops fighting you, so swimming feels smoother.

Big splash?

A loud kick is not a fast kick. **Keep it under the surface.**



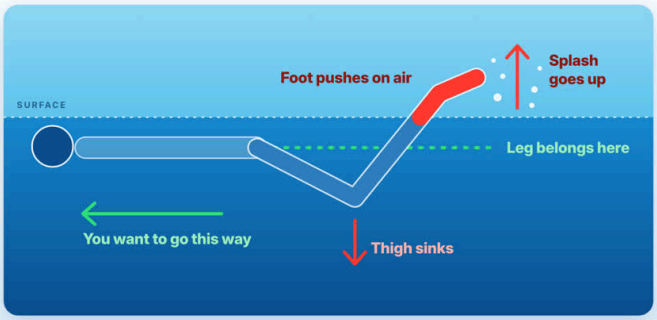
WHAT'S GOING ON

You're kicking the air.

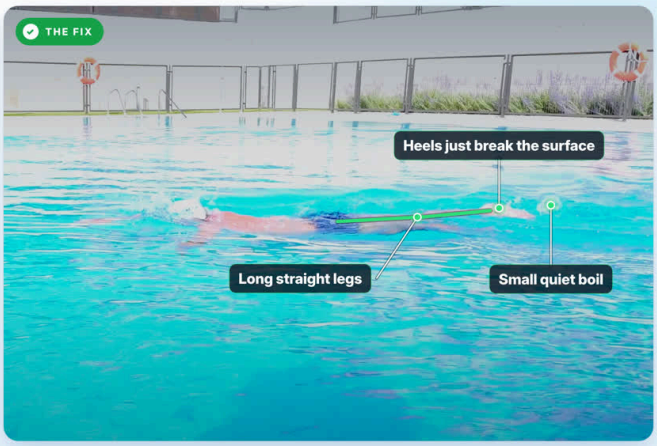
Your feet and shins come right out of the water and crash back down. It feels strong and it sounds strong, **but your feet can only push on water, not on air.**

WHERE THE EFFORT GOES

Your effort goes up.



A splash is water thrown up in the air, and none of that moves you forward. To lift your feet that high your knees have to bend a lot, **so your thighs drop and drag.**



THE FIX

Keep your feet in the water.

Kick from your hips with long legs and let only your heels break the surface. The water behind you should boil quietly. **Now every kick pushes on water.**

TRY THIS ON YOUR NEXT SWIM

3 cues. One at a time.

1. **Keep your feet wet**
   Feet in the air push nothing, so keep them in the water and let only your heels touch the surface.

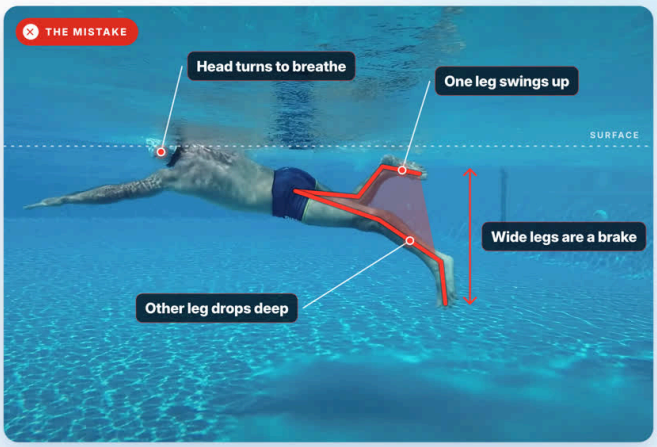
2. **Kick with long legs**
   Swing from the hip with a soft knee, so your thighs stay up behind you.

3. **Listen for the boil**
   A good kick sounds like a quiet boil. A slap means your feet came out.

Keep your kick in the water and the same effort takes you further, so every length feels easier.

Scissor kick?

Your legs split on the breath. **That's a brake every time.**



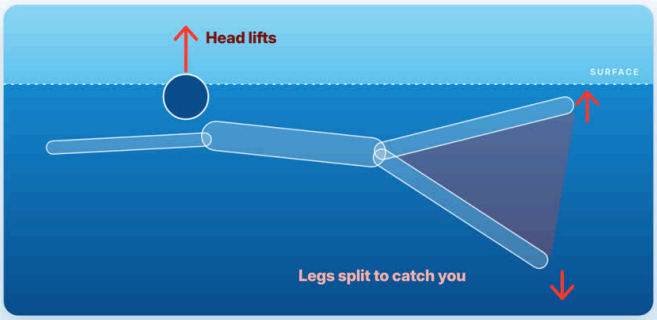
WHAT'S GOING ON

A brake on every breath.

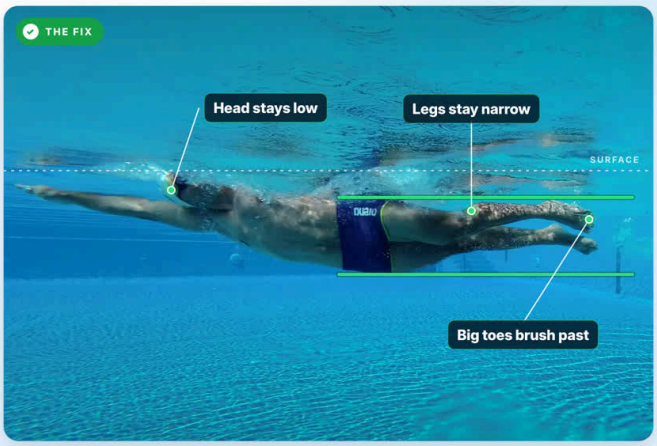
You feel a little stall each time you breathe. That's your legs. One swings up, the other drops deep, **and those wide legs catch the water like a brake.**

WHY IT HAPPENS

Your legs catch you.



Lift your head to breathe, or roll too far, and your body starts to tip over. Your legs fly apart to stop it. **It's a balance reflex, not a bad kick.**



FIX THE BREATH, NOT THE KICK

Breathe low. Kick narrow.

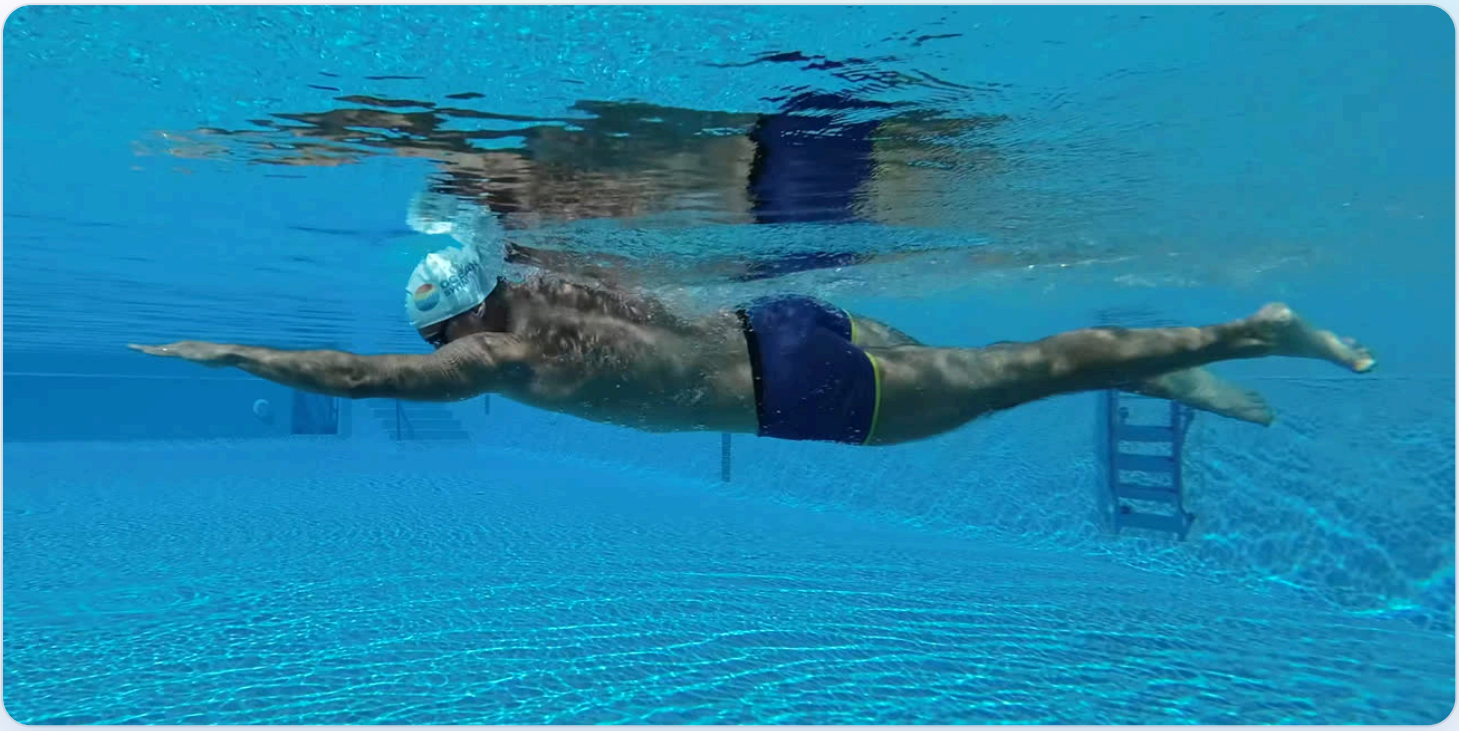
Keep one goggle in the water and roll only as far as you need for air. **Your balance holds, so your legs have nothing to catch** and the kick stays small.

TRY THIS ON YOUR NEXT SWIM

3 cues. One at a time.

1. **Keep your head low**
   One goggle stays in the water when you turn to breathe.
2. **Roll a little less**
   Turn just far enough to get air, then come straight back.
3. **Brush your big toes**
   Small kick, toes almost touching, right through the breath.

Keep your balance on the breath and your legs stop braking, so every length feels easier.



Ready to go further?

This guide gives you the what and the why. The next step is having someone watch you swim, tell you which of these actually applies to you and keep you on track while it changes.

That is what I do at Ocean Swim School, with full coaching and swim sessions for adult swimmers. If you would like that, you will find me here:

www.oceanswimschool.com →

Thanks for reading. See you in the water.

Alex Coci, Ocean Swim School