

Swimming with Fins

By Sue Haugh

As coach, I never give sets I would not want to do myself as a swimmer. Well, ok, most to the time, I would not do such a thing, knowing it could come back to haunt me. One exception though, is a swim/kick set with fins. Love! Love! Love! making fins part of my coaching practices. Dread! Dread! Dread! having to physically do them myself. Why? I'm a 2-beat kicker. It does not matter if it's a 50FR or a 500FR, I'm a 2-beat kicker.



So by putting on fins, we are almost forced to kick. And that's good. Not only for freestyle, but for the other strokes as well. Swimming with fins has benefits for ease, flexibility, strength, and speed. Fins can make non-free strokes easier as they help with body position and the relaxation of the arms, requiring the legs to do more work, making the entire swim stroke less challenging. With fins comes improved flexibility in the ankles; stretching of the ankles and feet as well. This flexibility will carry over into swimming or kicking without fins, and result in increased swimming speed as the feet move in a greater range of motion.

Increased speed? Yes, for most swimmers, speed improves. For some folks, maybe not. Those with ankles that are very flexible or not flexible at all, they may not see a big time difference when wearing fins because they may hinder their speed as opposed to helping it. However, the increased intensity and cardio/aerobic benefits of the fin workout outweighs the speed. Regarding strength, the surface area of the end of the fin forces the legs to work harder through the water. This strengthens the muscles of the legs and ankles. Perhaps you tire more quickly, as one would expect, but in time one will gain cardio endurance and improved stroke technique.

Example of a Swim w/Fin Set: focus on legs throughout the set; distance u/w off walls; streamline position u/w off walls; tight core.

Repeat two times

(10 x 125) swim w/fins; rotating 25s

- #1 - 25 blast kick only; 100 swim
- #2 - 25 swim; 25 blast kick; 75swim
- #3 - 50 swim; 25 blast kick only; 50 swim
- #4 - 75 swim; 25 blast kick only; 25 swim
- #5 - 100 swim; 25 blast kick only