

# Investment Required to Swim Well

By Mary Reilly-Magee, Owner/Director, Love to Swim School  
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Swimming is hard. I should know, I've been swimming for more than thirty years and teaching it for more than twenty. Amazingly though, people often come to me as a coach or to my swim school expecting to learn to swim or improve their swimming skills quickly without much of an investment of time, energy or money. I have to ask: how is it possible for people to pay hundreds of dollars for golf or tennis lessons that go on for years, but consistently undervalue swimming as a sport and underestimate swimming's technical and physical challenges?

Let me make my case. When I coached and taught at Holmes High School, there were always athletes (and coaches of other sports) who dismissed swimming as simple and easy. They viewed it as a non-sport really. It was always great when those students would sign up for my Lifeguarding class. The first day of class, they would have to swim 500 yards (20 lengths of the pool) as a prerequisite for course participation. The dumbfounded, exhausted look on their faces was so sweetly satisfying. I knew their respect for my swimmers and the sport of swimming had multiplied exponentially, then and there. Those who couldn't swim the 500 couldn't take the class. Suddenly, swimming became a very real sport to them.

Likewise, some parents of children in my learn to swim school undervalue and underestimate swimming. There are complaints about the cost, time, and number of lessons necessary to make their child safe and proficient in the water. Again, I am flabbergasted. What other sport saves peoples lives, is a lifelong activity, and is as conducive to health and fitness? Swimming should be looked at in much the same way reading is: a lifelong activity that improves with time and study.

Adult beginner swimmers, runners, cyclists and other athletes are just as guilty as some parents. Time and time again, clients call me wanting to learn to swim quickly, taking a lesson once a week with no practice in between. Ridiculous. And what about swimming as a cross-training option for athletes? Is there a better non-impact sport than swimming? It improves strength, endurance and flexibility without the pound of running or the strain of cycling.

My point is this: be patient and invest. Like everything else in life worth having, swimming well requires an investment of time, energy, money and commitment. And like any good investment, your commitment and hard work will payoff for a lifetime.

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