Here are some critical concepts that experienced swimmers take for granted but that can be utterly foreign to new Masters swimmers.

Safety and Etiquette

Please read and understand the club's Rules and Etiquette policy, including the following:

- No swimming without lifeguards, diving in shallow areas, running on deck, etc.
- Rules for circle swimming, passing, and courteous lane behaviour.
- See https://www.glamourheads.org/pool-etiquette

Swimming Energy

Many dry-land athletes misunderstand the requirements of moving through liquid. They often approach training with the intent to overpower the water. Learn the concept of the swimming equivalent of "walking pace"; i.e. a sustainable swim speed that allows you to best use energy in the water.

- Muscles need oxygen for sustained effort. Processing air with regular breathing is essential for swimming longer distances. And rather than going as hard as possible until depleted, help swimmers develop a sustainable pace. (Compare it to walking versus running on dry land. If you swim at a "walking" pace, you should be able to swim for hours.)
- Lungs filled with air are almost always buoyant enough to support the body. Trust that your lungs will support you, so that you can use the energy for moving forward.
- Leg muscles are larger than arm muscles, so it's tempting to think that most effort should be allocated below the waist; so many inexperienced swimmers kick so hard they exhaust themselves. But arms provide most of the propulsion (especially in freestyle), so focus your energy on balancing and using your arms and energy there.

Alignment and Balance

Drag is the resistance created by the body moving through the water. Tiny decreases in drag provide larger speed improvements than applying large increases in power. Therefore, it's critical to focus on improving technique, including these concepts:

- The lungs act as a floating fulcrum for the body, so extending the arms provides a counterweight to the legs, helping the body stay level in the water and reducing resistance.
- Overkicking, reaching sideways to breathe, and strokes that go wide or cross over center cause extra drag. Keep your body profile nice and narrow.

Listen when you are offered stroke correction, learn how the desired technique reduces resistance or increases thrust.

Workout Terminology

Though runners and cyclists know all about interval training, heart-rate zones, and rest and recovery, they often come to the pool expecting to swim continuously until they achieve

their target yardage. Understand that although technique is paramount, swimming well also requires training that targets multiple metabolic systems. Cover these concepts:

- Workout distances are given in metres, usually not lengths, laps, or miles. Learn to think in terms of 50s and 100s.
- Swimming has its own language (jargon); see below for terms like - sendoffs, intervals, rest, and other terms used to describe sets and drills.
- Pace Clocks are a swimmer's best friend. See the note to learn how to use it well.

The Swimmer Mentality

Perhaps the best thing for new members is to develop an "aquatic mindset".

- Kinesthetic awareness is essential. Swimmers always monitor how their hands, heads, and bodies relate to the water. Think also "Proprioception"
- Open water swimmers and triathletes who never plan to compete indoors still benefit from incorporating good pool techniques. Consistent two-hand touches on breaststroke and butterfly turns, flipping on freestyle and backstroke turns, streamling of the walls, and regularly attending practice develop a multitude of skills; and the confidence to proudly identify yourself as a swimmer.

Terms you will hear at a training session.

Drill

Stroke modification or exercise done in the water to isolate a particular body part or technique. Such as dragging fingertips in the water to promote a high-elbow recovery. See the Freestyle drills attached if interested, and try to remember some of them.

Pull

The arm movement, or using only arms for propulsion. A pull set will be one where you'll use a pull buoy designed to keep your legs still so that you can focus on your pull.

Kick

Leg movement, which is isolated in kick sets, often using a kick board, maybe fins.

Glide

The highly desirable ability to keep moving without pulling or kicking.

Streamline

What skinny fish have naturally, we have to achieve by squeezing our arms and legs into lines. The opposite of a streamlined position would be a "Superman" with arms spread wide.

Catch

The ability to "grab" and push the water with your hand/arm. The opposite is "slipping."

Tumble / Flip turn
Near the wall, spin 180 degrees, feet over head, feet land on the wall and push off on your back and rotate after leaving the wall.

Open turn –
Touch the wall with your hand, (two if swimming breaststroke or butterfly), turn around and push off in a streamline position.

Push-off
The movement from the wall until the first stroke. Try to incorporate your streamline and some underwater butterfly kicking (the 5th stroke).

Bilateral breathing
In freestyle, breathing on odd numbers of strokes, such as 3, 5, etc., so that you breathe equally on both sides.

Split
A split is your time for a segment of a prescribed swim. If you swim a 100 (four lengths) and your time at the 50 (two lengths) is 35 seconds, then that is your split.

Learning "SwimmerSpeak and Clock Lingo"

The pace clock is a true frenemy—a friend and an enemy. It never lies, but sometimes you wish it would. Because the clock never stops, you need to break it into manageable parts. Get your thinking cap on, because your coach may give you some intense, clock-based instructions for a set, such as:

"5 x 200s descend on the 4:30, negative split #5. Leaving on the top."

Got it?

Here are some terms to help you translate the coach's instructions:

The top

The beginning of a minute (the 12 on a clock face), shown as either 0 or 60 on a traditional swimming pace clock, also called a sweep clock, as the hands sweep around the face. Seen as :00 on a digital clock. Stated as "leaving on the top" or "on the 60."

The bottom

Again, on a traditional clock face, the bottom is actually the middle of a minute, where the number 6 is, which is the 30 on a sweep clock and :30 on a digital clock. Stated as "leaving on the bottom" or "on the 30."

5 (or 10) seconds apart

The time to wait after one swimmer leaves the wall, before you leave. Watch the clock for your cue to push off.

Repetition

The number of swims within a set. In 5 x 200s, 5 is the repetition—you'll be swimming 200 metres, 5 times, on an interval.

Interval

The repetition of a constant, given amount of time, indicating when you should leave the wall. Stated as an amount of time, such as "on the 4:30." This is the amount of time you have to both swim and rest before leaving for the next repetition in the set. In the 5 x 200s on the 4:30 example, you'll leave on the top, swim 200 yards, then rest for the remainder of time left in that 4 minutes and 30 seconds, at which time you will push off and swim the next repetition. If you "miss your interval," that means it took you longer than 4 minutes and 30 seconds to swim the 200.

Rotate a lap (section of the distance) Fast

Sometimes coaches will give a set such as 4 * 100 – Rotate 25 fast. Or 4*200, rotate 50 fast. Note that the 25 (or 50) is ¼ of the distance. So this means on the first 100, the First lap is extra fast; on the 2nd 100, the 2nd lap is extra fast; and so on. This sequence can be repeated as long as needed. EG 12*100; rotate 25 fast would mean doing the sequence of 4 three times through.

"Descend" Sets

For instance, you may be given 6 * 100 Descend 1 – 6. This means you are meant to try and **increase your speed between each swim**, (100 in this case), so that #6 is the fastest 100 you swim in that set. So your Swim time has descended (gotten smaller). You might also be asked to swim 6*100, descend 1-3. (The 4-6 is usually implied) So Swim 1; 2;3 as Moderate, Fast; Fastest. Then go back to Moderate, then Fast, Fastest for the next 3, or however many cycles have been set.

Build Sets.

With Build sets, the swimmer increases swim speed **within the swim,** and will be finishing hard into the wall. This can be any distance; e.g. a 25, a 50, a 100, etc, (Effectively what is known as a "Negative Split" – the Second half of the swim is faster than the first half).

Note that in these sets, say 8 * 100 Descend versus 8 * 100 Build the difference is that each 100 of the Descend takes a different time to swim (getting faster); but each 100 of the Build Set will actually take the same swim time, with the pace changing within the 100.