

Lane Etiquette

Dec 12, 2012

by Janine Joy

As a swimmer for many years, I still get nervous when I swim in a pool with people I don't know. Not because I don't know them - but because I don't know how much they know about swimming. Before I pick a lane, I usually look around, watch the swimmers, and choose the lane that's best compatible with my speed and ability. You could say my warm-up consists of an easy 500 yards or so, but most importantly, getting to know my lane mate's. I'm cautious - I don't want to get hurt.

I grew up swimming in a 25-yard, six lane pool. We did not have lane lines. We had about 6 people (or more) per lane - everyday. We learned how to share the pool, how to circle swim, and how to swim straight very quickly. And, yes, we even swam backstroke straight!

At AquaSol, we have the luxury of swimming, many times, with just two people per lane. This would very rarely (if ever) happen when I was young, and, because of that, I was fortunate enough to learn all the different situations in a pool. As AquaSol gets larger, perhaps this information will be helpful to all our swimmers (age group, high school, seniors, and masters) in practice and at meets.

Entering a Lane: If you join a lane already containing one other person who is lap swimming, it is polite and appropriate for you to wait until they stop at your end, and ask if you can split the lane with them. Let that person choose which side they prefer, and make every effort to stay on your side. In the event that a third person joins your lane, the two in the water should begin circle swimming counter-clockwise immediately.

Entering a Lane "Split" by Two People: In the event that a third person joins your lane, the two in the water should begin circle swimming counter-clockwise immediately. Both people in the pool should alert both individuals to change to a "circle swim" format. This is most commonly done by sitting on the edge of the pool, waving a kickboard under water, or standing in the water in the corner of the lane.

More than 3 in a Lane: At the end of a set, the first person touches on the far left side of the lane. The second person touches in the center, and remains there. The third person touches to the far right, and then immediately moves to the center of the lane, no longer adjacent to the wall, so that he is pool-side of the second person. Now the fourth person can touch in on the far right. Each additional person needs to move to the center of the lane after they touch in on the right. This works great at crowded meets and how Coach Janine likes to see her lanes set-up!

Lane Leader: Nothing makes a set run smoother than a great lane leader. The first swimmer in the lane must understand the set and all the intervals, be able to see and read the pace clock and have a good sense of pace. If you typically take it out fast and fade, you are better off swimming the set behind a teammate who will pace the set better. The Lane Leader should use common sense and realize that the way he/she swims the practice affects everyone in the lane. The other swimmers need to support their Lane Leader, politely correcting errors and electing new leaders at the correct times.

Pushing Off: The leader in the lane should always be on the far right side of the lane, ready to push off into the swimming lane. The lane leader knows when to start and does not leave early or late. The other swimmers should move to the right side of the lane as their turn to push off approaches and as the people ahead leave.

Circle Swimming & Turns: When circle swimming in practice, swimmers should make their turns at the Left Corner of the lanes. As soon as the swimmer ahead of you finishes his turn and goes by, you should swim towards the center of the lane, make your turn to the left of the cross on the wall, and push off on what is now the right-hand side of the lane. If everyone does their turns this way, we will avoid crashing in to each other.

Resting on the Walls Between Sets: If you have to rest on the wall in the middle of a set, swimmers should hang on the wall in the Right Corner of the lane. This will allow the other swimmers to continue to make their turns in the Left Corner without interference.

Finishing the Set: When finishing your swims, be sure to finish as far to the left as possible so that the swimmers behind you have some room to your right to finish as well. (see “More Than 3 in a Lane” for details)

Lead Swimmer Getting Passed: A lead swimmer who sees another swimmer coming up close behind as s/he turns at the wall should consider stopping and moving over immediately at that wall in order to let the faster swimmer past - rather than blocking that swimmer for an entire length to the next wall, creating a situation where toe-touching becomes necessary.

If more than one swimmer is bunched close behind, the swimmer being overtaken should allow the entire group of faster swimmers to pass before pushing off the wall again (i.e. don't push off right in front of someone else who's also obviously faster.)

If you do get the "toe tap" to pass in the middle of the lane, squeeze to the far right of the lane giving the swimmer behind you enough room to pass on your left. You can slow down a bit but do not stop in the lane.

Once Passed: Swimmers being overtaken should not attempt to speed up (or slow down) once 'tagged', nor should they jump in and 'tag back' the new lead swimmer on the next lap

Stopping in the Middle: Swimmers being overtaken should never stop in the middle of the pool, nor should they continue beyond the next wall (e.g. back to the shallow end) after being 'tagged' on the feet. Instead, they should stop at the first wall, at the corner of the lane.

Toys: Don't "borrow" your lane mate's fins/kickboard/pull-buoy without asking.

Leaving the Pool: Tell your lane mates you are leaving. Clean up your swim area. Put away your kick board, fins, and water bottle.
