

Yes Real Swimmers Use Fins!

by: Leslie Scott – Level 4 Masters Certified Coach

After a hard kick set, many swimmers wonder why they are so tired from using fins. Using fins have many advantages. Beginner swimmers are reluctant to use fins because they think it is cheating. However the benefits are huge. Using fins allows a larger muscle mass of the legs to be used. This allows a more demanding workout that burns more calories and increases fitness levels. This increased work load means exertion levels remain higher and the cardiovascular system gets a more intense workout with even greater fitness benefits. Fins will develop leg strength. Kicking with fins is like lifting weights. The added resistance from the blade increases the workload on the leg muscles. The body adapts by increasing the strength of the muscles.

Fins also help with increased ankle flexibility. Many triathletes have poor ankle flexibility and their feet point down which causes drag. Good swimmers can hyperextend their ankles. Fins use an increased surface area which forces ankle extension during the power phase of the kick. Using fins stretches the ankles and increases flexibility so the kick will become more efficient. Fins will improve body position and technique. Fins add propulsion which increases speed. Good swimmers stay on top of the water while beginner swimmers tend to drag their legs and swim more vertical. Fins allow swimmers to stay more horizontal in the water. Fins allow swimmers to swim at faster speeds. This will transfer to swimming faster without fins because of muscle memory. The muscles will remember the feeling of the faster swimming and will duplicate that pattern without fins. Technique will improve by repeated use of swimming faster with fins and staying higher in the water.

Many swimmers wonder what kind of fins to get. Longer fins provide more resistance and allow for more propulsion which is great for beginner swimmers. Shorter fins require a faster kick and are good for more advanced swimmers and those with good ankle flexibility. Medium blade fins capture the best of both worlds. The blade is short enough to allow a good tempo but long enough to work on ankle flexibility.