10 WAYS TO BE AN AWESOME SWIMMING LANE MATE

***We’ve all experienced it – extraordinarily limited pool space. Whether it’s the synchro team taking over a couple lanes (generally seen packing a piece of silverware that bangs loudly against a pool ladder – give me a heck yeah if you know what I mean), another group on the team, or a batch of shrieking kids in for public swim, we’ve all been there.***

***12 swimmers, 1 lane.***

***Having a crowded lane can be a nightmare when all of the swimmers aren’t on the same page. Here are ten ways to be a super-duper teammate and lane-mate:***

**1. Leave when you’re supposed to.** Don’t think the person in front of you doesn’t know what you are doing back there you sly dog. When coach says leave on the 60, and the rep is for time, we all get that same urge to sneak off a second or two early. Sure, taking off just a shade early might make for a faster time, but it’s a false result, no matter how much you try to tell yourself otherwise.

**2. Don’t complain between sets.** The shared struggle is what bonds us as swimmers. We all suffered through the two-a-days, the happy-fun-time distance sets that coaches “challenge” us with, and the holiday bender of workouts. Misery begets misery, so instead of bringing everyone down, supply encouragement or some of that golden silence. Complaining doesn’t serve you or your teammates any good.

**3. Agree to some basic passing etiquette**. It can be infuriating having a teammate who is unable to pass correctly. Either they claw at your feet, ankles and calves for 200m before they pass you, or they wait until they get to the end of the lap to make their move, causing a pile-up at the wall. In a crowded lane it can be helpful to have a pre-arranged protocol for passing; one tap on the foot and then make the pass. The passee knows what is coming, and the passer knows that it is time to make a move.

**4. Waves are fun, just not when you are swallowing them.** Jumping or diving in when a teammate is coming into the wall on a breath? Yeah, please resist the urge.

**5. Be a rad teammate**. We all have swimmers in our lives that we rue training with. Maybe it’s their unclipped nails, their propensity to steal our kickboard when they think we aren’t looking, or their broadcast announcements that they are urinating while we are all hanging on the wall. Whatever the case, strive to be a killer athlete and a great teammate by respecting the boundaries (and kickboards!) of the swimmers in your lane.

**6. Fold your arms when swimming past doing butterfly.** I frequently have nightmares of doing a yards fly set with Michael Gross, Matt Biondi and this dude named Jason I swam with back in the day who had an 18-foot wingspan (or at least it seemed it was at the time). Not only are they not allowed to do any dolphin kicks off the wall, but they are all wearing paddles. XXXXL paddles unavailable anywhere else except for this particular nightmare.

**7. Let your teammates finish.** At the end of the set or repeat we are gassed, bushed, exhausted. We have invested everything we had kicking that set’s butt, so much to the point that we float into the wall and forget that our teammate is coming in hot right behind us. Don’t forget to move over and let the others finish with an artsy flourish as well.

**8. Circle swim**. It seems so basic, doesn’t it? Swim up one side, swim back the other. But even swimmers can find a way to mess with something so simple. I had a teammate (not the aforementioned Jason, thankfully) who during the more challenging parts of the workout swam with his eyes closed between the flags – seriously – leading him to careen into oncoming traffic frequently. Master this simple process of swimming circles and you’re halfway there. Okay fine, maybe a third of the way there.

**9. Don’t stop mid-lap**. Okay, there is a bit of an asterisk on this one. The occasional hamstring or calf cramp will leave you no choice but to halt all forward progress and hang for dear life on the lane rope. Otherwise, stopping mid-lap – for what reason, I cannot imagine – and floating in the lane will get you run over. If you feel the insatiable need to halt all forward progress, do so without impeding the progress of the swimmer behind you.

**10. Be courteous**. One rule to rule them all. If you are about to set off to warm down, and a teammate is coming in hot and about to turn, wait till they pass. Remember, at the end of the day you guys are all in the soup together, and a little courtesy can go a long way to make it a productive session for everyone involved.