Swimming Essay, Research Paper

Swimming

Swimming is the act of moving through the water by using the arms, legs, and body in motions called strokes. The most common strokes are the crawl, backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly, and sidestroke.

Some scientists believe that human beings are born with an instinctive ability to use their arms and legs to stay afloat. That instinct, however, disappears within a few months after birth. Later in life many children and adults learn to swim in order to be safe around the water, to have fun, and to participate in competition.

Most people learn to swim by imitating others, most often their parents, brothers, sisters, and friends. Most youngsters in also take lessons at swim clubs, community centers, schools, and recreational facilities. In addition, the American Swim Coaches Association (ASCA) and the American Red Cross sponsor programs that teach children about water safety. Instructors teach students skills that will make them safe, efficient, and confident swimmers. Beginners first put their heads in the water and blow bubbles by exhaling. Gradually, students progress to floating, treading water, and ultimately, learning the techniques of the major strokes.

Individuals should not swim in conditions that their ability and experience will not allow them to handle. For inexperienced recreational swimmers, many safety hazards exist, even in a pool. These hazards include misjudging a dive and hitting one’s head on the bottom, holding one’s breath too long, becoming exhausted, and experiencing sudden cramps while too far from shore or other swimmers.

The history of swimming dates back thousands of years. One of the earliest representations of swimming is an ancient Egyptian wall relief that shows soldiers of Pharaoh Ramses II.

Swimming was very important in ancient Greece and Rome, especially as a form of training for warriors. In Japan, competitions were held as early as the 1st century BC. In Europe, swimming was less popular during the Middle Ages, swimming didn t pick up until the 19th century. In the late 19th century amateur swimming clubs began conducting competitions in the United States and Britain. In the United States, colleges and universities such as Yale University, Indiana University, and the University of Southern California played an important role in spreading interest in swimming as a competitive sport. In 1875 Matthew Webb of Great Britain became the first person to swim across the English Channel. Webb swam between Dover, England, and the coast of France near Calais, where the channel is more than 20 mi in width. By 1896 swimming had become well established. It was one of the sports at the first modern Olympic Games, held that year in Athens, Greece. Despite the popularity of swimming as a whole, the use of performance-enhancing drugs has cast a shadow over some of the individual accomplishments in the sport. Some athletes were even secretly given drugs, without their knowledge, their coaches. Many of these athletes later suffered major health problems.