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Swimming for Life

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### Lane Etiquette

by Samantha Grant  
October 1, 2005

After paying dues, and receiving that nation-wide passport known as the USMS card, immigrants to the People's Republic of Swimming must realize that they have entered a new culture, with its own language and nuanced rules of etiquette. Unfortunately these rules are largely undocumented, and the immigrant may be breaking them left and right, whilst completely unaware.

To avoid making enemies of your fifth generation fellow swimmers, a few words to the wise for the practice or lap swim novice:

First, if there is an empty lane in the pool, take that one. Don't join a swimmer in some other lane because you don't "like" the lane that is free (eg: the lane against the wall). It creeps out and annoys other swimmers when there is an open lane that you didn't take. This is the equivalent of sitting down next to the only other passenger on an otherwise empty bus.

Second, before you get into a pool with plenty of swimmers, try to figure out who is roughly your pace. You need not time their 50s to compare with yours, but if you are a novice swimmer, try and swim with another person who appears to be a novice as well. Signs to look for: they stop to rest at both ends of the pool; they aren't paying attention to the clock; if female they are wearing a bikini, if male they are wearing knee-length board shorts.

Third, 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 on 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.

Fourth, (and this is applicable to many advanced swimmers) if you are circle swimming with other people in your lane pay attention to where you push off the wall when you flip-turn. Envision yourself swimming down the right side of the lane, with another swimmer five

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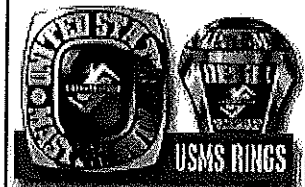
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