

To: Editor - American Swimming Magazine  
Fm: Coach Shev Gul - London, 07  
Re: The power of metaphors in teaching/coaching breaststroke

One of the fastest and most natural ways for skill development, understanding and knowledge acquisition to take place is through the creative use of metaphors.

In teaching swimming skills/technique, from nappy, competitive, Olympic to senior citizens level, I have always sought to find out the most effective communication-linguistic strategies, which learners can lock-on instantly to.

What stimulated me to share these few lines with ASCA/WSCA was; when the 3 1/2 year-old little Sophie's mom, came over to me on the pool deck and said "Shev, you have got the message across to Sophie so well that in the house, on the way to the nursery, in the supermarket, in the car and everywhere we go, she just can't get enough practicing her 'breaststroke pizza arm action' ".

"Hands round the pizza, and chop it/slice it "....

For some time, I've been using the 'pizza' metaphor in teaching and correcting the breaststroke arm action to every ability group with some instant connection and success. This is the recipe.

Dry land practice:

1. Line up the swimmers along the wall facing the pool;
2. Get them to extend their arms, straight in front of them at shoulder level;
3. Leaving their elbows fixed, and parallel to the ground, ask them to drop their wrists and their lower hands slightly, pointing to the floor;
4. Leaving the elbows high and in a fixed position, get the swimmers to move their hands and forearms outward in a circle, at mid-chest level, around a body-wide image of a pizza which is positioned – horizontally in front of their belly;
5. As the palms meet in front of their chest/belly, ask them now to 'chop/slice their pizza' forward, really fast, sharp and in a straight line;
6. After slicing the family-size pizza into two halves, allow the long arms to rest for a second, (very important) before the hands and the forearms resume the continuous "hands round the pizza and chop/slice it" action.

Now take your pizza to the pool.

1. Push and glide in a streamlined position with the nose pointing down. Keep a balanced body, with the arms extended in front with no kicking. Continue the "hands around the pizza and chop it" action in the pool. Making sure the swimmers rest their arms for a second after each chopping/slicing action. Take a breath after making the three pizza arm actions, then repeat.
2. When ready, integrate the 'pizza' arm action with correct breaststroke breathing and leg action timing.
3. Make time to taste the pizza underwater too:
4. And finally, Top up your pizza arm action with some tasty underwater practices.
5. Slip down underwater, approx 4 ft. deep, and take 4 to 5 underwater pizza arm actions before refueling the lungs with some fresh O<sub>2</sub>, and keep repeating the cycle until you reach the other end of the pool.

Enjoy your very fast and tasty breaststroke pizza take-out!

Coach Shev Gul - London