

STEADY BEFORE THE START

A grounding guide for athletes — simple practices to help every swimmer feel calm, focused, and ready, from the call room to the blocks.

WHY IT HELPS Grounding simply means bringing your attention back to the present moment — your breath, your body, the water beneath you. A few quiet minutes of grounding before a race can help you race from a place of calm and confidence, not just adrenaline.

CALMER BREATH

SHARPER FOCUS

STEADIER MIND

READY BODY

WHEN TO USE THIS

Start in the call room, about 10–20 minutes before your race, and carry it with you to the blocks. Breathing and reframing take seconds to a couple of minutes — repeat as often as you need. Journaling works best earlier: the night before or morning of the race, when you've got a pen and a quiet minute, not race-side.

RACE DAY PRACTICES

THREE WAYS TO GROUND YOURSELF



01

BREATHE

Breathing techniques

- **Box breathing** — in for 4, hold for 4, out for 4, hold for 4. Repeat 4 times before you step up.
- **The long exhale** — breathe in for 4, out for 6. A longer exhale tells your whole body it's safe to settle.
- **Three deep breaths** — right before you step onto the blocks or into the water, one breath for your legs, one for your arms, one for your mind.

TIMING

Call room or behind the blocks, 5–15 min before your race.
Box breathing ≈1 min · long exhale ≈50 sec · three deep breaths ≈15–20 sec — save that one for right before you step up.



02

WRITE

Journaling

- List **three things you're grateful for** about this race — the training, the team, the chance to compete.
- Write **one word** for how you want to feel when the starter calls "take your marks."
- Note **one thing that's gone well** in training this week, and why you can trust your preparation.

TIMING

The night before or morning of race day — not race-side, since it needs a pen and a quiet minute. Takes about 2–3 minutes.



03

REFRAME

Thoughts & reactions

- Swap "**What if I mess up?**" for "**I've trained for this.**"
- Turn butterflies into fuel: "**My body is getting ready to perform.**"
- Replace "**I have to win**" with "**I get to race.**" — swim the process, let the result follow.

TIMING

Anytime nerves spike — especially the walk to the blocks. Just a few seconds each; repeat as needed.

“Team Dugong swims zen — one breath, one stroke, one race at a time.”

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