

## Lap Swimming 101 - Building a Bridge to Masters from ALTS

USMS Webinar (William Kolb, Karen Harris, Carol Nip)  
Thursday, June 16, 2022 @ 8:00 pm EST

1. **Intro** – Coach’s Name, Club, Location -- [William Kolb, Lakeside Masters/Central ALTS, Inc., Louisville, KY](#)
  - a. What experience qualifies you to talk on this topic?
    - i. [USMS Level 3 certified coach, USMS Adult Learn-to-Swim certified instructor](#)
  - b. How have you grown from this experience?
    - i. [Since I started coaching Masters and becoming an ALTS instructor approximately 5 years ago, I have become an immensely more knowledgeable coach and stroke clinician, a better communicator, a more organized coordinator of events and trainings, and a faster swimmer to boot!](#)
  - c. Who should not attempt doing what you have achieved? What steps would you recommend such a person complete first?
    - i. [I think anyone with an open mind, warm heart, and willingness to help others can become a dedicated and engaged fixture in their community as a coach or instructor. When I recruit instructors or coaches for my programs, I always say my minimum requirements are:](#)
      1. [a willingness to teach those who want to learn -- patience](#)
      2. [a willingness to learn from those you teach -- humility](#)
      3. [a love for the water, no matter its length -- lifelong or beginner](#)
    - ii. [Beyond these things, professionally it is important to be:](#)
      1. [honest](#)
      2. [organized](#)
      3. [prompt](#)
      4. [flexible](#)

## 2. **Bridge to Masters**

- a. Definition please! What is “Bridge to Masters – from ALTS?”
  - i. [ALTS II: Stroke Refinement and Beyond: This is the second level of the Adult Learn-to-Swim program, specifically designed to further develop the skills of those who have taken and passed Level I and wish to move forward with swimming for fitness or even competition. This includes: lap swimming, drills, workout design, diving, racing, and more.](#)
  - ii. [This is implemented in a weekly three or four-part, 90-minute group class with one or two instructors. We use 20y or 25y lanes with flags and lines on the bottom of the pool. We use equipment like fins, kickboards, and pull buoys.](#)
  - iii. [Class I -- introduction & basic drills](#)
    1. [work on USMS ALTS curriculum start to finish in ~45min-1hr \(ARC skills are a prerequisite\)](#)
    2. [provide continuation of freestyle instruction w/ 1-3 drills \(with or without fins\) like:](#)
      - a. [fist/open palm \(feel of the water\)](#)
      - b. [hesitation or 6-3-6 \(body position, kicking\)](#)
      - c. [catch-up \(timing of freestyle strokes\)](#)
      - d. [head-tap \(timing of freestyle strokes\)](#)
      - e. [flip flop \(kicking, rotary breathing\)](#)
    3. [close with relaxation & floating -- body position/awareness & mindfulness/love of water](#)
    4. [homework: swim for 30 minutes continuously -- no other assignment, be prepared to report back and bring questions](#)

- iv. Class II -- continuation of drills, backstroke, breaststroke
    1. continue w/ freestyle drills -- get feedback from "homework" since last lesson, answer questions
    2. teach rotary arm backstroke
      - a. move away from "elementary" backstroke (chicken/airplane/soldier)
      - b. using backstroke flags
      - c. rotating & body position
      - d. doing freestyle drills on back (all are applicable on back except head-tap)
    3. teach "legal" breaststroke
      - a. pull to breathe, kick to stretch
      - b. no arms past hips on pull
      - c. over water/near surface recovery
      - d. teach breaststroke drills
        - i. kicking on back w/ kickboard in "teddy bear" position (kicking)
        - ii. 1-pull, 2-kick (body position, gliding)
        - iii. head up breaststroke (strength)
        - iv. breaststroke w/ freestyle kick (timing)
    4. close with homework: write your own 30-minute workout based on what you know/can remember and swim it, make adjustments, swim it again (cycle 3x in a week) -- be prepared to share your process next week
  - v. Class III -- 30-minute swim, working planning
    1. swim for 10 minutes straight (combination of strokes) under instructor supervision
    2. discuss homework, share 30-minute plans, answer questions
    3. guided discussion: combine best ideas from all workouts shared, make it today's plan -- coach swimmers through it/work together as a teach to complete the 30-minute plan
    4. conduct 30-minute workout
    5. feedback & homework: invite to "pre-Masters" practice next week
  - vi. Class IV -- "pre-masters" trial workout
    1. complete modified (B/C) version of a real Masters workout in your own space but at the same time and with a separate, dedicated coach as an introduction to the team environment
- b. How can this program benefit your Masters program?
    - i. What rank and file USMS members know to be "traditional" Masters programs are often lacking an organized and intentional effort to support the beginning swimmer. By creating space for and offering instruction geared towards beginners or "continuers" will expand your reach and function as a USMS coach. The same joy and exhilaration an instructor witnesses giving a non-swimmer the gift of loving the water is identical to that of giving a "continuing" swimmer the gift of learning how to swim for fitness or compete.
  - c. What are the similarities and/or differences between a Bridge and ALTS program?
    - i. For me, everything is still taught as a progression. We spend time working within the ALTS curriculum as a refresher and move on from there. So many of those skills are foundations to great swimming that should not be ignored as you progress in your swimming journey. What's different is the context of the swimming you are teaching. In an ALTS class, you have many different goals-- survival, accomplishment, fitness, recreation, etc. For ALTS II the goals are more strictly for fitness or competition.
  - d. How is Masters bridged from ALTS to actually swimming?
    - i. Goals, Milestones, Stepping Stones

1. showing up, graduating, completing 5 ARC skills, 30-minute swim, 1st Masters practice, first event (fitness, competition, postal, OWS, clinic, etc.)
- ii. Share an example of a swimmer(s) who crossed the Bridge program from ALTS becoming a masters swimmer (3:00 or less – I will time you).
  1. Marie Ruf -- journey from fearless swimmer/nonswimmer (some experience, no fear, very little comfort) to Masters swimmer participating in meets, ePostals, fitness series, and teaching ALTS
- e. How would you categorize the following swimmers: Bridge or ALTS?
  - i. Can't swim, fearful of water -- ALTS
  - ii. Can't swim, not fearful of water -- ALTS, but not for long
  - iii. Can swim, fearful of water -- ALTS, but not for long
  - iv. Can swim, not fearful of water -- ALTS or ALTS II
- f. Is there a particular swimmer (i - iv) you enjoy instructing? ii -- fearless nonswimmer  
Optional: why? -- This is a ridiculous (to me) category of swimmer but it's surprisingly common. These students are always such a joy to work with because they are so willing to do whatever it takes to get where they want to be. These are the kinds of students who will (or already have) go on to try new things like jetskiing, ATV riding, skydiving, etc. They're thrill and experience seekers and are always so highly motivated to try something new.
- g. As a coach, it helps to know what kind of swimmer you are comfortable working with. In knowing you're strengths - you can grow where you need to OR find another coach to complement you. How would two different coaches complement one another as they work to establish a Bridge program from ALTS?
  - i. This is a wonderful question to ask as my co-head coach is not a certified ALTS instructor and despite her vast experience working with all age groups and competing across a lifetime, she hasn't had the time during her professional career to expand into adult instruction, especially for beginners. We complement each other very well as I run all of our club's ALTS II classes and funnel their graduates into our Masters team. I have to consider what Sydney's expectations of a beginner are, pre-empt any confusion or questions the swimmers may have when they meet her and attend her practices, and in general just prepare them to work with someone who is sharing their attention with 20-40 other swimmers at a time instead of in the more intimate group class or clinic format.

### 3. Implementation – IMPORANT!

- a. How have you incorporated Bridge Swimmers – from ALTS - into your masters club?
  - i. The fourth 90-minute section of ALTS II is a special trial Masters swim practice coached by myself or a dedicated “ALTS II” coach that serves as the last step on the “bridge” to the Masters team. We complete a B or C version of the workout written by the Masters coach on deck for the day and take time to learn about things like intervals, sets, reps, drills, etc. and prepare for joining the team later that week for an “on your own” Masters experience-- with an on-deck coach to guide you, of course!
- b. Scheduling suggestions?
  - i. See above. We keep ALTS II separate from Masters practice until the time is right. Sometimes people take ALTS II two or three times before they try Masters.
- c. Scheduling (lesson learned: how would you do things differently)
  - i. n/a
- d. Bridge swimmers may need more attention than other swimmers. How do you balance your coaching amongst so many different swimmers in the pool?
  - i. A coach who struggles with this may be dealing with a fixed v. growth mindset. If the workout is scaled (ABC) with varying total distances, and if (and this is a big if, I know) you have the space, you should not have this problem. A swimmers do

more reps of the same sets than B or C swimmers do, but the concepts you are trying to teach or reinforce should be the same. Ex. Any swimmer can work on the length or intensity of their underwater butterfly kick off the wall -- they just may not be able to handle as much as more experienced swimmers.

e. Other ideas on implementation?

f. Scenarios:

- i. #1: "I'm a new coach at a YMCA indoor pool, a new masters club. We have 6-10 regular swimmers @ 3 workouts/week, 75 minutes each workout. How do I incorporate the Bridge program?
  1. Allow time and space (maybe not the entire 75 minutes, could be the last 30) for beginners to join these 3 workouts a week. Prepare to get your experienced swimmers started and coached through the first 45 minutes of their practice, then utilize 1/3 of your lanes to conduct a 30-minute swim for beginners/bridge swimmers.
- ii. #2: "I'm a USAS assistant coach. We don't have a masters program yet. I'm taking the lead to start a masters program. What's the best strategy - do I start with Bridge or Masters?"
  1. Go for it! Be prepared to be versatile and play around with time and space options for swimmers of varying levels. Beginners are "low-hanging fruit" for a motivated swim coach looking to build a team. Be prepared to pay careful attention to habits and norms of all of your swimmers and decide which of these to "lock-in" as policy as you continue to grow your program.
- iii. #3: "I'm one of several assistant coaches to a 250+ member team, holding 14 workouts each week. How would I team with my associates to establish a Bridge program?"
  1. Piece of cake! Find the time and space to market a new program geared toward beginners. With these many workouts and this much space, you should be able to secure at least one lane at half of your practices to conduct a C or D version of the main workout, providing dedicated attention to the swimmers in that lane. With 250 swimmers, over time you'll be able to "graduate" swimmers out of your lane to swim with existing like-ability or like-speed members of your team.
- iv. #4: "I just accepted a job as coach of a small team, swimming together for 15 years. They're ingrown, somewhat fast swimmers - not welcoming of new people. I want to implement a Bridge program. How do I do that without ruffling feathers at my Club?"
  1. If finding time and space to conduct a "synchronous" bridge program alongside a "traditional" program, do your best to find the time and space elsewhere and "graduate" your students to the established Masters program like I have done at Lakeside.

#### 4. Closing – how to learn more about **Building a Bridge to Masters from ALTS.**

a. My resources:

i. 3 or 4-part basic plan w/ USMS:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/15fAzghbkOGgVvE50ppjw9x-EkF9emnbXEOnozYISxYU/edit>

ii. 6-day basic plan w/o USMS:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SqAAyTu2PUzwzdCWMMcx2nlf1AwQSUv9hfNGO-\\_dWKS/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SqAAyTu2PUzwzdCWMMcx2nlf1AwQSUv9hfNGO-_dWKS/edit?usp=sharing)

b. USMS resources:

i. ALTS II: Choose Your Own Adventure call series (topics include preparing for a meet after ALTS, open water swimming after ALTS)

1. Part I:

[https://zoom.us/rec/play/W4CbhKxvGCoEcAV1NRQhRzKYutTsxE9rVj3\\_L2oQsV](https://zoom.us/rec/play/W4CbhKxvGCoEcAV1NRQhRzKYutTsxE9rVj3_L2oQsV)

[2efXOs\\_bgZ46dp3W5IlzigE-OMsdIpovH-xY0z.OSr7IpGgXyXQnG48?continueM  
ode=true](https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/play/zzGkNXYeBulubmSVOOXRIAy8JchD7SB8ZrV00cqLNeyGAUuINU3_2c825jpuTZNUmeOtw2NjdhaCWAUI.-FrmZMdlj7zHeWs?startTime=1630022750000&x_zm_rtaid=IEHjxpucSyWq037sxKnBlw.1655418165193.f1eb5d12dd55d58ebe0709dcaa48234b&x_zm_rtaid=571)

2. Part II:

[https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/play/zzGkNXYeBulubmSVOOXRIAy8JchD7  
SB8ZrV00cqLNeyGAUuINU3\\_2c825jpuTZNUmeOtw2NjdhaCWAUI.-Frm  
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37sxKnBlw.1655418165193.f1eb5d12dd55d58ebe0709dcaa48234b&x\\_z  
m\\_rtaid=571](https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/play/zzGkNXYeBulubmSVOOXRIAy8JchD7SB8ZrV00cqLNeyGAUuINU3_2c825jpuTZNUmeOtw2NjdhaCWAUI.-FrmZMdlj7zHeWs?startTime=1630022750000&x_zm_rtaid=IEHjxpucSyWq037sxKnBlw.1655418165193.f1eb5d12dd55d58ebe0709dcaa48234b&x_zm_rtaid=571)

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