

Artistic Swimming: One Tough Sport

Read the text, and then answer the questions that follow.

- 1 It may look effortless—it's meant to—but Olympic-level artistic swimming may just be the most demanding of all the aquatic sports.
- 2 Artistic swimming—formerly known as synchronized swimming—requires exceptional strength, flexibility, and endurance. Artistic swimmers must perform acrobatic feats gracefully, in synchrony with each other and to music—often while holding their breath underwater, upside down. Try smiling through that!
- 3 What artistic swimmers do is even more impressive when you consider that none of the swimmers can ever touch the bottom or sides of the pool throughout an entire routine, which typically lasts between three and four minutes. So, when their legs are sticking straight up out of the water, when they “leap” waist-high up from the surface, or “toss” teammates up to perform flips and twists, not one of them ever touches or pushes off the bottom of the pool. How do they do that? With incredible strength! Using arm movements called “sculls” and powerful leg kicks called “eggbeaters,” the swimmers support themselves in various positions in the water while performing the motions of their choreographed routine.
- 4 To reach the level of strength, stamina, precision, artistry, and acrobatic flexibility necessary to compete at the Olympic level takes a lot of training. In fact, the USA Artistic Swimming team practices more than any other team of any Olympic sport, according to the U.S. Olympic Committee. Olympic-level artistic swimmers typically train six days a week, for eight to ten hours each day! They spend about six hours in the pool, but they also do strength, gymnastics, and dance training on land.
- 5 The aquatic sport of water polo has often been ranked as the “toughest” Olympic sport. It is certainly demanding: players must tread water for four eight-minute intervals, while throwing, catching, and dodging a ball. Even so, water polo goal keepers are allowed to touch the bottom of the pool. And acrobatics, extensive periods of breath-holding, perfect timing to music—and smiles—are not required. The range of demands on its athletes makes artistic swimming the “toughest” aquatic sport of the Olympics.



Artistic swimmers make the synchronized acrobatic stunts in their routines look easy.

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1. What is the central claim of the passage?
 - A. Too much is asked of Olympic-level artistic swimmers, who should have less rigorous training schedules.
 - B. Artistic swimmers are better than water polo players because they work harder and smile through it.
 - C. Due to the range and difficulty of what is required, artistic swimming is the toughest Olympic aquatic sport.**
 - D. Artistic swimming does not get the respect and attention it deserves because its athletes are mostly female.
 2. What claim does the author assert in paragraph 3?

The author asserts that it is especially impressive that artistic swimmers perform all the moves of their routine, including flips and tosses, without ever touching the bottom or sides of the pool.
 3. What is the central idea in paragraph 4, and how does it support the author's position?

The central idea of paragraph 4 is that artistic swimmers train more than other Olympic athletes. This supports the author's position that artistic swimming is tougher and requires more skill and work than other aquatic sports.
 4. How is the discussion of water polo in the last paragraph relevant to the author's argument?

The information about water polo allows the author to address and refute a generally accepted, contradictory argument by pointing out the greater range of skills required in artistic swimming compared to water polo.