

BASIC STROKE DESCRIPTORS FOR ASSESSMENT AND TEACHING

From Going Horizontal

BREASTSTROKE

First Impression:

Confident, continuous 'timed' movements; smooth steady purposeful forward travel; a narrow but powerful stroke. *(There is a 'narrow', power-packed competitive stroke and a wider, flatter recreational version of the stroke)*

Body Position:

The head stays still and central; shoulders remain 'square' throughout the stroke; face down when arms and legs are extended..

The head lifts, eyes looking forward and down chin pushed forwards during the pull; both enable breath to be taken. The body balances around the short / waist or hips balance line, with an incline from shoulders to keep hips and legs beneath the water for the kick. The body 'flattens' again with arms extended to front in a narrow streamline after the kick...

Leg Action:

Kick is propulsive, simultaneous, symmetrical and continuous; hips stay level. Knees stay behind an imaginary line across the hips; the heels are drawn up to the buttocks with the knees just wider than the hips. **(Recovery)** Both feet are 'turned out (everted) and 'flat' for the kick back.

Propulsion is produced as the feet kick back and slightly downwards, using the soles of the feet.

The legs straighten and come close together at the end of the propulsive phase. Feet are extended and long.

The heels may come close to the surface when legs are extended and straight, in line with the streamlined body.



Arm Action:

There is a relatively short propulsive phase, the pattern is 'circular', simultaneous, symmetrical, and continuous; shoulders stay level and 'frontal'.

PROPULSION

The propulsive phase starts as the hands sweep out and round from the 'glide' or extended position; 'catch' or 'fix' is just wide of shoulders. The elbow bends and palms need to be pressing to thrust the body forwards as soon as possible. The hands and arms maintain a 'high elbow' position during propulsion.

The hands accelerate in a small sweeping circular pathway during the propulsive phase and come together at the chest as they 'release' their pressure or hold on the water.

They remain ahead of an imaginary line across the shoulders, ie in front of the torso as it lifts as the result of the powerful propulsive sweeps.

RECOVERY

At the end of the propulsive phase as both arms come together they recover quickly forward and extend.

Breathing:

A breath taken every stroke cycle as the shoulders rise with the stroke; *there is no deliberate pause.*

The swimmer may use Trickle or Explosive breathing or a combination of both.

Timing:

Pull – Breathe – Kick and 'Glide'

Legs are straight and streamlined during arm- propulsion; arms are straight and streamlined during kick- propulsion.

BASIC STROKE DESCRIPTORS FOR ASSESSMENT AND TEACHING

From Going Horizontal

BUTTERFLY

First Impression:

Continuous, even graceful wave like movement across and just under the water; confident and with smooth steady, purposeful and powerful forward travel.

(The modern stroke is a 'flutter' stroke without diving 'porpoise like' movements; think of a skimming stone...)

Body Position:

The head and shoulders 'lead' the stroke; with the hips/kick they produce the characteristic 'undulating movement'. The eyes look forward and slightly down before the head drops just before the arms enter extended in front.

The body balances around the short / waist or hips balance line as hips and legs rise and fall *beneath* the water.

The body is 'long' and aligned from fingertips to toes and streamlined at full extension.

Leg Action: ("down -up – down – up"; usually called a *Dolphin Kick*)

Simultaneous, rhythmic, and continuous; with powerful down beats and up beats.

Leg action is 'driven' at/by the hips/seat which rise and fall with the forward motion of the stroke

Legs are 'long', with some knee bends, close together but not held tightly ; the ankles relaxed, feet extended; toes often in-toe..

The kick can be significantly propulsive.

The heels may just break the surface after each up beat.

Arm Action:

Simultaneous, timed, controlled, coordinated and continuous; propulsion is powerful.

ENTRY

Hands enter the water cleanly in line with or just outside the shoulders ; try thumbs in first, palms slightly facing out. The arms reach forward after entry, fully extended under the water, hands feel for 'catch' or 'fix.'

PROPULSION

After 'catch' both arms accelerate powerfully and purposefully together at the same time; backwards, under the body, thrusting the swimmer forwards; they extend and straighten back past the hip until close to the outside of both legs.

The elbows are bent /'high' as early as possible on the underwater phase; hands 'holding' and sweeping backwards until they release their pressure as the arms straighten.

EXIT

The elbow exits just ahead of the whole arm extended by the sides.

RECOVERY

Straight arms are 'thrown' forward and wide toward the entry ; recovery action is low over the water; hands loose and 'behind' the wrist until entry.



Breathing:

Trickle or Explosive breathing with chin kept low; either every stroke or preferably every two strokes.

Timing:

The breath is taken early so that the head can be returned the water before the hands enter after recovery

There are two 'down-ups' for each full arm cycle.