



## Stroke Practices or Drills

**INTRODUCTION:** I have put together a collection of practices and drills which I have found variously useful over the years.

It's not exhaustive or definitive.

I have used them at the 'Improver' and 'Development' stages for each stroke and also in the 'Development' Lanes of a small swimming club.

A few are simply 'evergreens', 'standards'; versatile, handy 'classics' which can still have their uses even as swimmers progress to and beyond County standard

Typically, we use them in routines planned around a **WHOLE -PART – WHOLE** ..or **PART, PART - WHOLE** approach.

**Wayne Goldsmith**, in a recent on line presentation suggested we **"over drill and under coach"**; it **goes without saying** that to use drills effectively you have to know your swimmers and you need to know or have to hand your **BLABT [1]** stroke analysis 'descriptors' for each part of each stroke.

Our swimmers need to know **what we are looking for** and understand what is going to **'count as success or progress'**. **Why** does this or that need to change? **How** can we do that?

Those conversations are a great way to set up opportunities for **constructive and positive feedback**. Swimmers too can use them in their discussions with their teachers and coaches.

**BRIEFLY...for all strokes:** (i) 'build' or establish a stable, horizontal body 'platform'; the leg kick will be involved in this; (ii) develop the kick, without over-kicking (iii) develop the arm action, recovery, and propulsive phases (iv) add and develop 'timed' breathing (v) coordinate and 'time' all of the above as the swimmer develops a smooth, balanced, powerful, and efficient stroke.

**Notes:** Talk a lot about 'hip driven' rotation, kicking and arm actions

**Fist and Forearm practices [2]** can be used for all strokes; for Improvers and more 'advanced' swimmers alike. When we want to encourage swimmers to develop and enhance their 'FEEL' for the water during propulsive phase of strokes. [3]

We start with the alternating strokes: Front Crawl or 'Freestyle' and Back Crawl or Backstroke.

**6 and 12 kick 'switch' drills adapted for Backstroke and Front Crawl** can be used at almost every stage of development of both strokes and to reinforce rotation and the drive of the hips to initiate the underwater bent arm- shortening lever – propulsive action- sweeping back to rest back up on the thigh.

**Finger trailing** can also be used in combination with many of the front crawl drills as well as a practice on its own; encourage **loose and relaxed** recoveries....

[1] <https://goinghorizontal.org/b-l-a-b-t/>

Also [2] See *Fists and Forearms* [3] *Swimming is Sensational*

## Freestyle (Front Crawl) Practices /drills

- PG Kick arms extended- sculling ..try mid point scull to increase challenge/ difficulty. (Head down and head up for both)
- Front Paddle
- Head up FC eg to half way, lunge forward, drop down and swim on - whole stroke.
- Side or lateral kicking, "one ear-one eye"- both arms at side/ both arms extended
- As above but face down- breathing Every 6-12 Kicks
- Side kicking with Extended Hand sculling 12 Kicks + 3, 5, 7 Strokes etc (Superhero)
- Standard 'Catch Up' at front
- Catch up at the thigh.
- Halted recovery on each arm alternately with high elbow, drop the arm back and then complete the recovery.
- Finger trailing
- 'Zippers' (with effective body roll to avoid impinging shoulder joint)
- Fists and forearms...
- Single Arm eg alternate 2/3 on left, 2/3 on right...then e.g., whole stroke for 4/5 strokes.
- Stroke count (also stroke count+ time to give a number; discuss strategies to reduce *both* and so reduce total number down and down)
- Kick and 'Swim' Combinations e.g., 9 power strokes which end with both arms extended to front (how far did you get?) and then leg kick rest of length.

## Backstroke Practices/ drills

- Kicking: with float over centre/ hips/ with kickboard over knees / with arms at side/ with arms extended overhead / with elbows at 90°, fingertips pointing to ceiling.
- Kick 6 kicks arms loosely at sides and head central and 'fixed' – roll and lift left shoulder up towards chin (let the arm 'follow' sliding hand up the thigh)- 6 kicks then roll and lift right shoulder in the same way. Leg may cross over...
- Side lateral kick with extended arm sculling at 'catch' position / 6 or 12 kick 'switch' rotation Drills – maintain 'still' head
- As above using objects on forehead to maintain still head position
- Kick, arms at sides: roll, start arm recovery but halt the recovery roughly halfway then drop the arm and hand back. alternate both arms in rhythm of stroke.
- As above e.g., for half a length before switching to the whole stroke pattern.
- Fists and forearms
- Kick and Swim Combinations. e.g.
- Double arm full recovery stroke with alternating kick/ with dolphin kick...
- Double arm halt mid stroke and push (simulating the final phase of the propulsive stroke.
- Single Arm: with one arm at side/ with one arm extended 2,3 left and 2,3 right
- Catch Up with arms extended and with arms at sides
- Lane Rope Pull (where possible and permitted; swimmer swims close to the rope and at entry grabs the rope underhand and pulls themselves along until hand is passing the shoulder, when they release and initiates the final press of the stroke)



## Breaststroke Practices/drills

### Kick on back:

A 'Woggenoodle' bent round back: arms at side- hands may scull, arms crossed on chest, arms bent at sides and hands lifted clear of water, arms extended underwater both sides, fingers towards heels

### Kick on front:

'Woggenoodle' round chest: arms extended, (pre noodles but still works- two floats held knuckle to knuckle) streamlined, with arms extended and sculling, with arms held back at seat – as if heels to fingertips

- Single arm stroke (alternate) one arm extended.
- 2/3/4 Kicks – 1 Pull (2/3/4K1P)
- Sequence:3K1P- 2K1p- 1K1P
- Arm action + dolphin kick (try with fins).
- Arm action with Pull buoy, high between thighs
- Fists....
- Vertical Kick with/without sculls
- Kick + small 'pull' (6" pizza)
- Kick+ medium pull (12-15" pizza)
- Kick + shoulder width pull (28" pizza!!)
- Distance per kick
- Full Stroke with tennis size ball under chin
- Pull Breathe Kick and Glliiide (hold extension for 1/2/3 seconds)
- Stroke count- continuous stroke.
- (Advanced) Pairs Towing: lead pulls as many strokes as possible, on one breath- partner, keeps head down, holds ankles of lead and kicks gently but cooperatively...
- (Advanced) kicks with a swim/stretch band above the knees.
- (Advanced) Seahorse 1: High turnover kick with arms extended, and head held high.  
Seahorse 2: Swim whole stroke as 1;  
Seahorse Plus: 3 strokes as for 2 and then



lunge forward and under water for 2/ 3 strokes.

## Butterfly Practices/drill's

*(Many of these kick drills are effective and achievable 'early' while wearing fins; also let swimmers practice many of them\* underwater)*

- Beginners: Standing start fly- crouch stance, face looking forward with arms held behind: throw arms round as for fly and 'dive'(hips high) but head must be in before the hands enter...dolphin kick to surface and continue....
- Mix up: try Front crawl arms and dolphin kick – breathing to the front...
- Try Breaststroke arms and dolphin kick
- PG Kick on Back – arms at side / arms extended – streamlined.
- PG Kick on Back – head high/lifted...
- PG \*Kick on Front – arms at sides\*/arms extended, streamlined
- Kick on Front – arms folded in front and forehead resting on arms- snatch breaths
- \*Streamlined Kick on front and sides with arms at sides or extended (more difficult)
- \*Corkscrew kick: slow 360° roll 4 kicks front-, side- back-side.
- Single Arm Fly: with non-pulling arm extended/ with non pulling arm at side
- Combine, single arm left then right- then double arm
- Kick on Front with sculls at catch position / with bent arm sculls under shoulders
- *Biondi* Drill 1- with recovery underwater under body: head down and head up after u/w sweep
- *Biondi* Drill 2 – as for 1 but an over water recovery e.g. after every 4 or 5 u/w recoveries.
- Fists.....
- Vertical Kick in deep
- Whole stroke 3 strokes+ kick to end flags and 3 strokes to the wall. Build number of full strokes.