

Breakwater Freestyle 1

Step 5: Early Vertical Forearm Catch and Pull

During this session we will focus on the catch and pull portion of the stroke.

Setup, Catch and Pull on the Deck

Begin with good swimming posture. Think *belly in shoulders back; neck tall chin back*, and lean slightly forward onto the balls of your feet to keep your core engaged while practicing.

Assume a standing side balance position. Raise one arm straight overhead, fingers pointing to the ceiling and palm facing away from that side. That side is facing the bottom of the imaginary pool, so turn your head 90° to look at the bottom. Your head does not move during the stroke. (But everything else does!)

Setup. Relax your hand and forearm and lift your elbow until your hand is at your forehead. At that point begin to rotate your hips in the other direction, continue extending the arm straight overhead, and begin the catch and pull (below).

Catch and Pull. As the setup hand passes your head, release the hand extended overhead, dropping that hand and forearm onto the top of an imaginary box at the height of your elbow. Then crush the box, flattening it evenly with your forearm and hand by pressing on your wrist.

Perform these movements slowly and smoothly. You are learning movement patterns and sequencing, not speed.

In the Pool

For this practice, you will be focusing on learning correct arm movements, but you will not be providing much propulsion with your arms, so use fins to provide only enough momentum to maintain good balance at the surface.

Review: **bottom dwelling** and **top floating** exercises, **front** and **back balance**, dynamic back balance, extended back balance, extended back-side-back balance, extended side balance and side balance (with swimming breathing); sharkfin, 6-1-6 sharkfin, and sculling.

Kickboard Single Arm Drill: This is a one-arm drill. Hold a kickboard out front with the unused arm. Keep your head above water for this drill. Use fins unless you have a very strong kick. Break the in-water portion of the arm stroke into three stages:

- Setup: point the arm straight forward in front of the shoulder and pause in this position (continue kicking gently).
- **Rock.** Pull back slightly on the kickboard - this will lift your elbow and shoulder on that side, and rock your body slightly onto your extended side.
- **Press.** As you start to rock back toward the kickboard side, get your hand and forearm under your elbow quickly (reach over the barrel), and then press straight back toward your feet.
- Recover: return to the setup position (recover your arm in the air, under the water, it doesn't matter for this drill - we are focused on the catch and pull only).

6-1-6 Fingertip Drag: As your setup hand passes your head, get a quick catch and perform a long pull, breathing and resting the stroking arm at your side at the end. Take a second breath and get balanced before repeating on the other side. Note: We did the 6-1-6 previously with a slight pause in the *sharkfin* position. This time, perform a complete and seamless setup, still dragging your fingertips but not pausing (even for an instant) in the sharkfin position.

Streamline from the Wall Learning Progression

Get comfortable with each step before moving to the next.

1. Stand with your back to wall and practice dropping to your knees on the bottom. Exhale through your nose slowly. You need to calm down any panic response that your body has to "falling" in the water.
2. Lean forward slightly as you sink, and practice getting your body parallel to the surface while bringing your arms to streamline. Sculling with your hands is permitted. Take your time. Some of you will float to the surface, and some of you may sink toward the bottom. It doesn't matter which way your body goes. The important thing is to practice getting parallel to the surface and into streamline.
3. Get your feet onto the wall at shoulder width and at same the depth as your body mass.
4. Now practice pushing off. Your knees don't have to bend very much (think of how little basketball players bend their knees to jump). Push evenly and straight towards the other end of the pool. Glide as far as you can.

You can't always stand on the bottom to start from the wall. In deeper pools, you will push off on your side, as follows:

1. Turned sideways, hold the edge of the pool with one hand, with the other arm extended and ready for streamline.
2. Drop into the water and patiently get into streamline on your side before pushing off from the wall.

More Information

How to practice? See the [Sample Practice Session Following Lesson 5](#).