

Introduction

About this class: Each lesson has a main focus: Relaxation, Posture, Breathing, Timing, etc.

Goals: You should understand *how* to swim freestyle (and maybe backstroke!) efficiently. How far you progress towards mastering your stroke depends on how effectively you practice, and how completely you master each of the essential elements of the stroke.

How to Practice: Drill slowly, but practice swimming with flow. Always focus on one thing at a time. Swimming is a movement art that that is best learned in small steps. You can do *nothing but* drills as you master a progression of skills leading to efficient freestyle technique. Or you can mix drills with swimming, incorporating one good habit at a time. Both techniques work.

Optional Tools: Short fins provide the propulsion necessary to learn critical breathing and balance skills. The front-mount Swimmer's Snorkel removes breathing as an issue while you focus on mastering other essential skills (head position, core rotation, etc.). Freestyler Hand Paddles get your hands moving in the right direction (forward!) as they enter the water. The TempoTrainer keeps you moving with rhythm. Later, you will find additional uses for all tools.

Initial Video One length freestyle (optional: one length backstroke)

Fundamentals

Breathing: Begin exhaling through your nose immediately as your face goes into the water. Keep your breathing pattern as relaxed and regular as possible for the speed you are swimming. Use "Bobs" between lengths to rest, and to practice maintaining a steady breathing pattern. To do a Bob: hold the wall, take a breath, dip your head below surface (still holding the wall), and exhale evenly while relaxing every muscle in your body. Repeat three or more times to recover and relax between lengths. (Note: *Bobs* get their name from Bob Busby, a former U.S. Olympic coach.)

Posture Exercises

- **Front Hang:** Hold your breath. Float face down, arms forward but relaxed at shoulder width, legs hanging. Release all tension, everywhere. Bring knees to chest and hold them there. Try to relax every muscle in your body.
- **Front Float:** Hold your breath. Float face down, extend arms at shoulder width, lean on chest, extend legs so body is completely horizontal in the water. Initially you may need to support your feet using a noodle, pull-buoy or a friend!
- **Bottom Float:** Exhale all of your breath. Sink to the bottom and relax. Delay standing and returning to a standing position for as long as possible. Try to quiet your body's natural instincts to flee the water. Trust your ability to get out comfortably.

These can be done with short fins, but remember that these are balance drills, not kicking drills – do not kick hard.

- **Back Balance:** Press back and head into water keeping head neutral on the spine (do not tilt chin up in the air or down toward the chest); water at edges of goggles, chin and forehead; shoulders relaxed – release shoulder blades and lean "between" them. Kick gently (from the hips) for one length.
- **Back Rotation:** Start as above. While keeping head rock-solid still, rotate the torso completely onto one side. Swim several kicks, then rotate completely onto the other side. Your belly button should go wall-to-wall.

Swimming with Good Posture

Feel yourself balanced, relaxed and parallel to the surface of the water. Feel like you are swimming downhill.

Sample Practice Session Following Lesson 1

Posture Exercises

- **Front Hang:** Spend a full five minutes trying to relax completely.
- **Front Float:** Start in Front Hang, extend to Front Float.
- **Bottom Float:** Relax on the bottom

If you have fins, try these with and without them.

- **Back Balance:** Remember that your thighs and fins gently bubble the water as you kick.
- **Back Rotation:** Learn to become equally comfortable fully rotated to each side.

Drill Checklist

- Breathing:** Always relaxed, normal pattern, in through mouth, out through nose

Drill Checklist – Front Hang

- Arms:** Relaxed and dangling towards bottom
- Head:** Facing straight down, water just barely washing over the back of the head (press your chest into the water to keep your head this deep)
- Legs:** Relaxed and dangling towards bottom

Drill Checklist – Front Float

- Arms:** Extended at shoulder width, parallel to surface (not lifted out of the water)
- Head:** Facing straight down, water just barely washing over the back of the head
- Chest:** Pressed deep into the water
- Hips and Legs:** Parallel to the surface, heels just at surface

Drill Checklist – Bottom Float – Sink to the bottom

- Arms:** Extended at shoulder width
- Head:** Facing straight down
- Chest:** Relaxed
- Hips and Legs:** Relaxed

Drill Checklist – Back Balance

- Arms:** Relaxed at sides
- Head:** Deep, neutral on spine (chin or forehead not pointing up) facing straight up, water at the edges of the goggles
- Back:** Press the spine deep into the water between the shoulder blades (release all tension in the shoulders – shrug slightly)
- Hips and Legs:** Thighs and feet boil the surface as you kick down the pool

Drill Checklist – Back Rotation

- Arms, Head, Back, Hips and Legs:** Start as in Back Balance
- Core:** Rotate all the way onto one side; become balanced on side; rotate to other side.
- Upper Arm:** Resting on side, completely dry
- Kick:** When truly balanced on your side, you will be kicking horizontally