

Swimming Posture – Dynamic Balance

Kicking gently, you will rotate your body 90° in the same direction, four times as described below. Do not move to the next position until you are balanced and comfortable in the current position.

Begin in back balance position (face straight up, arms at sides, kicking on your back)

1. Rotate your body 90° onto your side, rotating your head 180° to face straight down.
2. Rotate your body 90° onto your belly (keep facing down).
3. Rotate your body 90° onto your *other* side (still facing down).
4. Rotate your body 90° onto your back, rotating you head 180 degrees to face straight up.

Breathe! Take at least two breaths and get re-balanced and re-focused in back balance position. Then repeat the sequence, but this time rotating in the other direction.

Review: One-Arm Kickboard Paddle Stroke, and Fingertip Drag and Drive

Swim slowly with gentle, rhythmic kicking.

Beginning Freestyle

It's basically the fingertip drag and drive, taking you hand out of the water during the recovery, and then pulling straight back, elbow high in the water, as in the one-arm kickboard drill.

Open Turns

As you touch the wall with one arm extended, tuck your legs (knees to chest), drop on your back and into the water, streamline and push off evenly, about a foot below the surface. Glide to the surface on your side, and begin stroking again (first stroke is with the lower arm).

When practicing, begin doing two-length repeats (with an open turn between).

Suggested Workout following Lesson 5

What's a "workout"? See the next page for guidelines for creating your own.

Warm-Up

4 x 50 Freestyle: Each 50 slightly faster than the last

Main Sets

4 x 50 Dynamic Balance Drill

2 x 100 Freestyle: Maintain the same stroke count for all four lengths

2 x 50 Fingertip Drag and Drive Drill

2 x 100 Freestyle: Maintain the same stroke count for all eight lengths

Warm-Down

1 x 200 Freestyle: Swim quietly

Plan Your Workouts

Learn to structure your practice sessions.

Have a Plan: Know what you are going to do before getting into the water. If you don't have a plan, you have no way to evaluate your progress, no map to follow. Ideally, you should write out a complete plan before going to the pool. It should contain warm-up, main set, and cool-down segments as described below. Relaxation and loosening up at the start, and stretching at the end, should be part of every workout – you will not need to write those components down. In the real world, you may not always have time to write a workout. When that happens, get in the water with a single technique focus in mind, and stick with it for the duration of your swim. For example, you might decide that today you are going to focus on keeping your head down – swim every length with that focus – don't worry about all of the other stuff.

Loosen Up: Before getting into the pool, loosen up and lubricate your joints one at a time by moving your ankles, knees, hips, torso, shoulders, and hands in small circles. I do not recommend stretching cold muscles – that can cause injury.

Relax: Put all of your non-swimming problems in the locker, then close it and lock it. (They will still be there when you are done... or maybe not.) Relax by lying face-down on the bottom of the pool or by balancing at the surface. Let go of all of the stress of the day and become completely involved in your swimming practice.

Warm Up: Start slowly, become calm, establish a normal breathing pattern. Work on getting relaxed and loose. Start with long, slow strokes. Continually lengthen your stroke or do whatever helps you to feel that you are gradually getting your whole body involved in the stroke. Allow at least five minutes for this.

Main Sets: Use a variety of drills and swimming sets. Try to have a single technique focus for the main sets, regardless of drills and swimming you include in this segment. Note that all technique focus points will not be appropriate for all drills. When planning the main sets, be sure to leave at least ten minutes for cooling down and stretching at the end of your workout.

Very Important Note: Spend at least half of your time doing drills. You know what you need to work on – focus on one drill until you feel it is mastered. Keep cycling through all of the drills you have learned, beginning with the drills in the first lesson. Each time you work on a drill you will begin to understand it at a deeper level. All of the drills you have worked on in this program are used by elite swimmers, not just by beginners.

Cool Down: Swim slowly – flush out the lactic acid. Do not skimp on this part of the workout. Try taking a stroke off your stroke count on successive laps. Swim quietly. Swim compactly.

Stretch: Out of the pool. Stretch all of your major muscle groups, using the following guidelines: No extreme or painful movements. No bouncing or sudden movements. On each stretch, apply gentle pressure and then ease off. Repeat each stretch at least three times, stretching a little further each time.

Take Notes: What worked or didn't work? Maybe sketch out the next workout while this one is fresh in your mind.

Dryland Exercises for Better Streamlining

Streamlining is *the* most important aspect of efficient swimming technique. Here are some dryland exercises that will help.

Exercise 1: Strengthen Your Core Stabilization Muscles

You need some core strength to hold your body stable in streamlined position. Build to one minute in each plank position:

- Front plank: body supported by elbows and toes, head neutral on spine looking down
- Left side plank: body on left side, supported by left elbow and side of left foot, right arm resting on right side, head neutral on spine
- Right side plank: same as above, on right side

After you are comfortable in the above positions for one minute each, begin doing the planks with a very gradual, very controlled rocking motion, rotating around your spine.

Exercise 2: Straighten the Curves

At home or on a pad on the deck. Begin by lying on your back, knees raised, feet on the floor, arms relaxed at sides. Hold each of the following positions for 60 seconds.

- Press your lower spine flat on the floor – eliminate the lower arch.
- Keep the lower spine flat. Now press your neck flat on the floor (at first, this will be impossible for most people over about 15 years of age – get that neck as flat as you can).
- Maintaining the position described above, slide your feet forward to lower your legs onto the floor, trying to relax your legs so that your core muscles are doing the work.
- Extend your arms straight up towards the ceiling, and for the remaining time alternately lower one arm, then the other, straight back (overhead) to the floor.

Exercise 3: Sit Up Straight!

Whenever sitting, sit up straight. Do not lean back in your chair. Avoid chairs with seatbacks and arm rests. Most of you can be exercising your core stabilization muscles all day long!