



# Freestyle Swim Drills For Viewing & Practice

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## Body Position

Your body should be nearly on top of the water with the hips up and the butt cheeks skimming the surface. As you swim, you rotate equally on both sides. Avoid swimming flat (on your stomach) and rotating only to breathe. Proper freestyle requires significant core strength to rotate and generate power (and glide) from that rotation.

## Head Position

Your head should be in a neutral position. Avoid too much head exposed out of the water or burying your head under the water (both cause drag). Eyes are looking down at the bottom of the pool or just slightly ahead of you (about 30 degrees). When you rotate to breathe, be sure that your eyes are looking slightly ahead of you and not behind you to avoid fishtailing.

## Kick

The kick originates from the hips using the powerful gluteal muscles and hamstrings. Avoid kicking from your knees (or "running" or "riding a bike" in the water!). Ankles are relaxed with your feet in a slightly pointed position. If you find that your kick takes you nowhere, chances are you are kicking from your knees or kicking with your feet in a dorsiflexed position. As you kick, your feet should be near the surface of the water. While the kick is capable of generating a lot of power it is costly in terms of energy.

## Breathing

Your breathing should be rhythmic and consistent. During warm up and cool down, aim for bilateral breathing to promote balanced swimming. In faster sets of races it may be more comfortable to breathe every stroke. Remember, in swimming oxygen is good! Avoid holding your breath (though you might go faster while breathing less). After you rotate to your side, take a breath with your mouth as close to the water as possible. Avoid lifting your head to breathe.

## The Catch

Your hands should enter the water in front of the shoulder with your elbow high. The high elbow is critical for a powerful catch. Avoid dropping your elbow. Think about the hand entering the water first with the elbow high. If you hear a "slap" when you enter the water this indicates that your forearm and hand are entering at the same time (and likely that your elbow is dropping).

## The Pull

The pull basically moves your body over your hand. Your elbow stays high and the forearm pulls water. The hand does not pull water. The hand should be relaxed (not cupped, not splayed).

## The Recovery

Follow through with your stroke by engaging your tricep, the elbow exits the water then the hand follows. The elbow is high and relaxed above the hand.

## Swim Video Viewing:

The following videos demonstrate the components of a proper and powerful freestyle swim stroke.

*Efficient Swimming* by Dave Scott: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=sYt8x\\_7uL48](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sYt8x_7uL48)

- Incorporate the resistance band exercise into your weekly strength routine OR before each swim to learn proper elbow position and forearm pull.

*Better Technique* with Karlyn Pipes-Nielson:

Part 1: Hand Placement: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZTQpF\\_mmg44](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZTQpF_mmg44)

Part 2: Fingertip Orientation: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=YsgZX2oD9CY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YsgZX2oD9CY)

Part 3: Power of the Y/Wrist Awareness: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=iqsjnNFUbCw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iqsjnNFUbCw)

Part 4: Umph at the Front: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=kPMFxYDPkqs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kPMFxYDPkqs)

Part 5: Exiting the Stroke: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=sUWAZo-03u0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sUWAZo-03u0)

### **Visual:**

The following link has excellent visuals of the optimal position of your arm under water (swimming over the water, engaging your lats, elbow is high): [http://swim.ee/models/\\_free\\_swim1.html](http://swim.ee/models/_free_swim1.html)

### **Swim Drills Directions:**

Prior to your swim, visit the website to read and view the drill. It may help to print out the drill instructions, place them in a baggie and bring to the pool. At the pool, practice the drill. Think back to how it looked visually, the written directions and hearing the cues in your head from the announcer (ie., "how to do it").

Drills can be done as (25 swim, 25 drill); (50 swim, 25 drill); (50 swim, 50 drill). It is best to focus on one drill for each set or only two drills for the entire swim. Also, take ample time to rest after each drill/swim set to be sure you are not fatigued where form will breakdown.

The drills are listed by part of the stroke they address. From there, they are listed by title. In parentheses you will find the purpose of the drill. Also included are whether you should include or omit any pool toys (fins, paddles).

### **Breathing**

*Exhale Slowly (teaches how to breathe when swimming):*

[www.goswim.tv/entries/5337/freestyle---exhale-slowly.html](http://www.goswim.tv/entries/5337/freestyle---exhale-slowly.html)

*Shoulder Rotation (teaches bilateral breathing & rotation):*

[www.goswim.tv/entries/4418/freestyle---shoulder-rotation.html](http://www.goswim.tv/entries/4418/freestyle---shoulder-rotation.html)

*Vary Your Breathing (teaches bilateral breathing & different breathing patterns):*

[www.goswim.tv/entries/5218/freestyle---vary-your-breathing.html](http://www.goswim.tv/entries/5218/freestyle---vary-your-breathing.html)

### **Kicking & Balance**

*Flutter Kick Basics*

[www.goswim.tv/entries/5749/freestyle---flutter-kick-basics.html](http://www.goswim.tv/entries/5749/freestyle---flutter-kick-basics.html)

*Stun Gun (how to kick, be sure big toes touch as you are kicking to keep kick tight):*

[www.goswim.tv/entries/5171/freestyle---stun-gun.html](http://www.goswim.tv/entries/5171/freestyle---stun-gun.html)

*Six Kick & Switch:*

[www.goswim.tv/entries/5533/freestyle---6-kick-switch.html](http://www.goswim.tv/entries/5533/freestyle---6-kick-switch.html)

- With Fins
- Without Fins
- Progress 3 kick switch

*Balanced Swim Kick:*

[www.goswim.tv/entries/5290/freestyle---balanced-swimkick.html](http://www.goswim.tv/entries/5290/freestyle---balanced-swimkick.html)

- With Fins
- Without Fins

*5 Count Switch (to practice kick, glide & balance):*

[www.goswim.tv/entries/5281/freestyle---5-count-switch.html](http://www.goswim.tv/entries/5281/freestyle---5-count-switch.html)

- With Fins
- Without Fins

*10 Kick Flutter Variation (to demonstrate how much energy different kicks cost)*

[www.goswim.tv/entries/5789/freestyle---10-kick-flutter-variation.html](http://www.goswim.tv/entries/5789/freestyle---10-kick-flutter-variation.html)

*Head Up Swimming (to practice timing kick w/hand entry & catch):*

[www.goswim.tv/entries/3802/freestyle---head-up-swimming.html](http://www.goswim.tv/entries/3802/freestyle---head-up-swimming.html)

*Single Arm Freestyle (to practice kick & balance):*

[www.goswim.tv/entries/2528/freestyle---single-arm-freestyle.html](http://www.goswim.tv/entries/2528/freestyle---single-arm-freestyle.html)

## **Head Position**

*Head Play (practice eyes @ 30 degrees for proper head position):*

[www.goswim.tv/entries/5234/freestyle---head-play.html](http://www.goswim.tv/entries/5234/freestyle---head-play.html)

*Eyes Up Catch (proper head position & watching for proper catch):*

[www.goswim.tv/entries/5774/freestyle---eyes-up-catch.html](http://www.goswim.tv/entries/5774/freestyle---eyes-up-catch.html)

## **Body Rotation**

*Six Kick & Switch:*

[www.goswim.tv/entries/5533/freestyle---6-kick-switch.html](http://www.goswim.tv/entries/5533/freestyle---6-kick-switch.html)

- With Fins
- Without Fins
- Progress 3 kick switch

*Catch-Up Drills (but do not use paddles, instead hit hands):*

[www.goswim.tv/entries/2273/freestyle---click-and-go.html](http://www.goswim.tv/entries/2273/freestyle---click-and-go.html)

## **Hand Entry & Catch:**

*Water Polo Wide Catch (to fix crossing the midline w/hands):*

[www.goswim.tv/entries/5446/freestyle---water-polo-wide-catch.html](http://www.goswim.tv/entries/5446/freestyle---water-polo-wide-catch.html)

*Fingertip Drag (how to keep elbows high on recovery & as you enter water):*

[www.goswim.tv/entries/5058/freestyle---fingertip-drag.html](http://www.goswim.tv/entries/5058/freestyle---fingertip-drag.html)

*Wrist Drag (how to keep elbows high during recovery & how hand extends into the water):*

[www.goswim.tv/entries/5647/freestyle---wrist-drag.html](http://www.goswim.tv/entries/5647/freestyle---wrist-drag.html)

*Stun Gun (where to enter hand in water – by head):*

[www.goswim.tv/entries/5171/freestyle---stun-gun.html](http://www.goswim.tv/entries/5171/freestyle---stun-gun.html)

*Practice The Catch (how to keep elbows high & ensure hand pulls alongside body rather than crossing midline):*

[www.goswim.tv/entries/5484/freestyle---practice-the-catch.html](http://www.goswim.tv/entries/5484/freestyle---practice-the-catch.html)

*Head Up Swimming (where to enter hand):*

[www.goswim.tv/entries/3802/freestyle---head-up-swimming.html](http://www.goswim.tv/entries/3802/freestyle---head-up-swimming.html)

*Head Up Quick Catch (where to enter hand & how to catch w/o dropping elbow, requires w/paddles & pull buoy):*

[www.goswim.tv/entries/2891/freestyle---head-up-quick-catch.html](http://www.goswim.tv/entries/2891/freestyle---head-up-quick-catch.html)

*Hand Play (showing incorrect & correct hand position):*

[www.goswim.tv/entries/2630/freestyle---hand-play.html](http://www.goswim.tv/entries/2630/freestyle---hand-play.html)

*Above Speed Catch (to develop a powerful stroke, done w/paddles):*

<http://lari.goswim.tv/entries/5823/freestyle---above-speed-catch.html>

*Catch Up Catch (to focus on early catch & high elbow):*

[www.goswim.tv/entries/5834/freestyle---catch-up-catch.html](http://www.goswim.tv/entries/5834/freestyle---catch-up-catch.html)

*Single Arm Swimming (to balance, strengthen, rotate):*

[www.goswim.tv/entries/4056/freestyle---3l3r-single-arm.html](http://www.goswim.tv/entries/4056/freestyle---3l3r-single-arm.html)

**For a variety of freestyle drills:** <http://www.goswim.tv/entries/c/12/freestyle.html>

**For learning to open or flip turn:** <http://www.goswim.tv/entries/c/24/starts-turns.html>

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