

SWIMMING DRILLS

CATCH-UP DRILL

Have you ever noticed how the faster boats are the longer boats (think a rowing team's racing shell versus a fisherman's rowboat)?

The same physics that apply to building a fast racing boat apply to the human body moving through the water. The catch-up drill will help you focus on maintaining a long body in the water.

To do the drill, maintain your non-stroking arm in front of you in its initial extended position. Then wait until the stroking arm "catches up" with your extended arm before taking your next stroke.

This effectively slows down your swimming, and allows you to focus on stroking with one arm at a time. But more importantly, it shifts your center of gravity forward a bit to give you a more balanced body position. In addition, it gives you a longer profile more like a racing shell than a barge.

For swimmers who have a tendency to rush through the initial extension phase, aim for a $\frac{3}{4}$ catch-up while swimming at your aerobic base pace to ingrain this longer body position into your new habits.

FISTS DRILL

Instead of swimming with paddles, the fists drill is more like swimming with anti-paddles. Just as the name implies, close up your hands into fists and swim.

If you feel like you aren't getting very far, remember to keep your elbow high during the pull phase of the stroke. Let your arm seek out the optimal position that grips the water and provides the most power.

If you have a tendency to drop your elbow and let your arm slip through the water, this drill will provide the feedback you need to develop a better 'feel' for proper arm positioning during your stroke.

FINGER-TIP DRAG

This drill allows you to work on the recovery portion of the stroke.

As you lift your arm out of the water for the recovery, imagine a string tied to your elbow. Keep your arm relaxed and let this imaginary string lift your arm by your elbow and carry it around to the entry of your next stroke. This is the basic idea of how the bent-arm recovery should feel.

The finger-tip drag drill provides you with more kinesthetic feedback. To do the drill, let your fingertips skim across the surface of the water during the recovery phase. This will help you gain a better feel for the correct positioning of the bent-arm during recovery.



THUMB TO THIGH BRUSH

The last third of the stroke generates the most power and propulsion. Thus, a good follow-through is crucial to a powerful stroke. This drill helps reinforce full extension of your arm at the end of the stroke.

Simply brush your thumb against the side of your thigh as you finish; this will give you a target for where your hand should be finishing—namely, by your thigh with arm extended (rather than pulling out earlier by your hip).

ROTATING, OR SIDE-TO-SIDE KICK

Freestyle and backstroke are both “side to side” strokes in that the swimmer rotates along the spine of the body. This kick also doubles as a type of drill insofar as it develops body roll along this axis.

The kick is done without a board; fins are encouraged. Start off lying on one side with your bottom arm extended above your head and your top arm at your side. Kick about six times; then take a stroke and rotate to the other side. Repeat.

With this kick, you are effectively freezing your stroke—bottom arm in extended entry position, top arm in extended follow-through position—while you kick. As you take a stroke to rotate to the other side, focus on gradually accelerating from the beginning to end of that stroke. Finish with a nice snap of the hips as you roll the body.

When you are comfortable with the basic rotating kick; then add a sculling motion with your bottom arm (i.e. the arm extended in the entry position). Scull by medially and laterally rotating the forearm. Sculpt the water with your hand. After six kicks, move from the sculling motion into your stroke to roll onto the other side.

FASHION MODEL BACKSTROKE KICK

An effective body roll can also be achieved by practicing backstroke. For this drill, you are kicking on your back with both arms down at your side. Use fins if you have them. While kicking, move one shoulder to your chin, allowing your body to roll to the side. Then do the same to the other side, rotating from side to side along your spinal axis.



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