



Drills to improve swimming

These example drills have been developed for the Balmoral Swim by Charmian Frend (Bronze, Masters and Open Water Coach).

Body Position

Float face down working on a relaxed body position along the water. To get relaxed float, squeeze all your muscles then release and relax all your muscles. You should feel a lift. Unless you are relaxed changing breathing and stroke will be hard.

The idea is to get “good posture” in the water. While floating face down, pull your shoulders back and down. This will help you balance with your torso which leads to good body position. You should feel the water “lifting” you up.

Push off wall or bottom, set your body position and glide as far as you can in the streamlined position.

Arm movement

1 arm drill – isolates each arm movement – can be used to correct most things.

Hold 1 arm straight in front of your body in line with the corresponding shoulder. This arm should be relaxed with no downward pressure on the wrists. Do arm strokes with the other hand breathing every 2nd stroke.

Arm enters the water fingertips first about level with the elbow of the extended arm and then extends straight. To start the stroke, bend the elbow so your fingertips are then pointing to the bottom of the pool / ocean. Pull arm back in a straight line all the way back to extend to your thigh. Lift elbow up and move forward to the front – Repeat.

Swap arms

Catch up Drill and ¾’s Catch up. – Works on glide and not dropping the arm in front while focusing on each arm

Similar to the 1 arm drill but alternating arms. Do each arm individually and touch thumbs out in front before the next stroke begins. Almost like tag team between arms.

¾’s Catch Up is “cheating” Catch up. Instead of waiting for the stroking arm to finish completely – the other arm begins the stroke as the first arm is returning to the front. This is more like the real timing of Freestyle

Fist swimming – works on your **catch** and using all your arm muscles by taking away your “paddles” (hands) to move forward by swimming with your fists clenched. Can be done as 1 arm drill or as catch-up. Also gets you to ensure that your paddle is from the elbow down – not just your hands

Leg Movement

Kicking – Start with your relaxed body position, arms in front. Take the tension out of your leg muscles and kick from your hips with pointed toes, not your knees. Think of yourself as standing on tippy toes. Need to use thighs rather than calf muscles. Kick up trying to flick your big toe out of the water. Try not to “cycle” your legs. When you need to breathe, take an arm stroke and practice kicking when you are breathing.

Side Kicking - Place 1 arm in a relaxed position in front, rotate your body so this arm is on the bottom and the body is in a sideways position, belly button pointing to the side of the pool rather than the bottom. Shoulders and hips are stacked on top of each other. The arm that is on top is down by your side with the palm of your hand flat on the front of your thigh. Head is relaxed with eyes looking downwards. Kick about 6 times in one side, do 3 normal arm strokes to change sides and repeat on the other side. Use the arm strokes to fit in a breath.

Tips for using Drills

When using drills in a session, focus on 1 thing at a time. In a pool you would do 25 drill/25 swim focusing only on what you were practicing with the drill. E.G if you did 25 right arm and breathing to the right when you do the 25 swim you just think about the right arm and also still breath to the right.

Don't over swim the drill. It's better to do a shorter distance of the drill say 25 or 50 and have that be good rather than do 100 and have 50 of it good and 50 of it not good.

Drills don't have to be complicated. Keep it simple and you will get a better result. No matter how good a swimmer you are – doing drills still is of benefit.

All these drills can be used in open water.