



BACKSTROKE

Teaching Progression

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5 Step Teaching Progression

- #1 Body Position
- #2 Kick
- #3 Arms (includes recovery and pull)
- #4 Timing
- #5 Breathing

The teaching progression could take place in one lesson, or depending upon the age and ability of the swimmer, could take weeks to work through.

Body Position

On Land

- Lower spine onto the mat
- Relax shoulders down
- Extend arms down sides of legs
- Don't shrug the shoulders, round the back
- Pull buoy under head (in the water the upper back is deeper than the head)

In Water

- Coach assisted float
- Drop sternum down – ribs in
- Tuck tail point slightly up – pelvic tilt
- Lean into the water from the upper back
- Relax the neck
- Legs will feel light

Kick

On Land

- On mat with a small pull buoy under the head
- Engage the core, kick from the hips, legs straight
- Feet slight turned in and toes pointed



Water's Edge

- Hips on the edge
- Press legs down straight
- Knees bend as swimmer starts to kick up
- Come to full extension while legs are still under water
- Long loose ankles
- Boil water
- Jet propulsion - the Jacuzzi effect

In the Water – 8 Step Process*

1. With board over legs, canoe position
2. Canoe position without a board
3. Kick with sculling
4. Kick with rotation and coach assistance (at this point it is OK to begin teaching the arms, more advanced drills/positions follow)

*Not all positions and drills are used with all swimmers. They are skill level and age dependent, as well as what will meet their specific technique needs.

5. Vertical washing machine drill
6. Length with rotation
7. Side glide
8. Streamline



Arm Action

On Land – Recovery, Rotation and Entry

- Standing half-recovery (quarter turn of the body) with the lift coming from the shoulders
- Standing entry (quarter turn of the body)



In the Water

- One arm backstroke positioning techniques
- Definition of high elbow
- Bent arm pull
- Position of palm throughout the pull and the high thumb
- Body Rotation
- Drill combinations



Pull

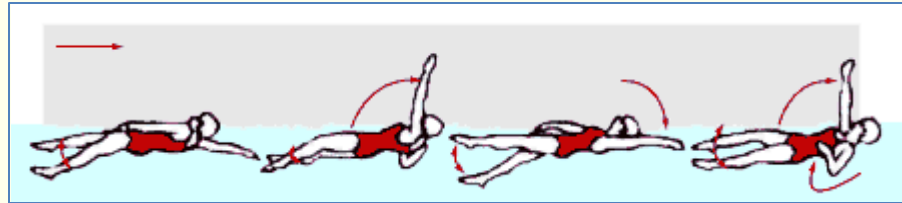
- Start in standing entry position
- Palm turns to face the ground, fingers to the side
- Elbow high and stationary
- Practice catch, with forearm in line with elbow
- Only half pull
- Place board under the palm and forearm

Drills & Techniques for Teaching Bent Arm Pull

- Vertical Double-arm backstroke
- Look and See Drill
- Wall Press
- Anchor the hand
- Strapless Paddles
- Sculling Drills

Timing

- Six beat kick
- Racing
- Long continuous swim
- Right arm enters - left leg has kicked down and right leg just finished the up kick
- Left arm enters - right leg has kicked down and left leg just finished the up kick



Breathing

- Expect to get water in your face
- Breathing feedback
- Right/left...inhale/exhale
- Don't pant
- Dependent on stroke rate of the arms and what matches their need for oxygen



Common Backstroke Mistakes and The Fix

Improper Head Positions

Problem: Chin down too much, back too much and/or elevated

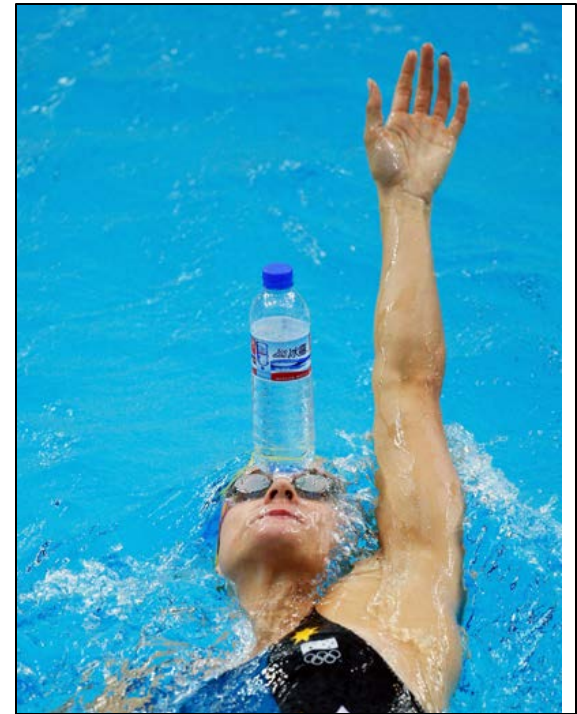
Fix:

- Neck deeper into the water
- Chicken head test
- Water over face is OK
- Avoid saying “head back”
- Position of eyes 45-90 degrees

Problem: Moving the head

Fix:

- Head demonstration
- Video
- Mirrors
- Focus points
- Ropes
- Balancing objects
- Positioning techniques



Problem: No rotation

Fix:

- Kickboard between legs
- One-arm backstroke
- Six-count double pause
- 6-count switch



Entry Mistakes

Problems: Over reaching, wide entry, back hand smash, waitress hands, collapsed elbow and entry pause

Fixes:

- Positioning techniques
- Mirrors
- Drills
- Paddles
- 1 pound weights

Pulling Mistakes

Problems: Straight arm and improper pitch of the hand

Fixes:

- Strapless paddles
- Fist swimming
- Re-teaching the bent arm pull



Exit and Recovery Mistakes

Problems: Little finger exit, palm down exit, hand lift and wide swing

Fixes:

- Positioning techniques
- Half recoveries from hands by side and side glide positions
- Focus points

Improper Kicking

Problem: Swimmers who pump their knees up and down, bicycle movement, knees break the surface

Fix:

- Slow down
- Feel the straight downward motion of the legs
- Fins
- Look and see
- Press down deeper with a straight leg; then the legs must straighten on the up kick, while still underwater

Improper Body Position

Problems: Bending at the waist and dropping the hips, head too far back or chin too far down, head elevated

Fix:

- The head needs to rest in the water
- Balance
- Hips tucked under
- Kicking drills

BACKSTROKE FOCUS POINTS



- ❖ Head Steady
- ❖ Legs Up, Strong and Steady Six Beat
- ❖ Rotation
- ❖ Easy and Relaxed Recovery
- ❖ Aggressive Shoulder and Thumb-High Entry
- ❖ Cock the Wrist, Rotate the Elbow and
Anchor the Hand
- ❖ Feel the Water
- ❖ Aggressive Hip and Thumb Exit