

Freestyle Drills Alan Godfrey.

Here is a description of a few Freestyle drills so that you know what is expected, and can practice them regularly.

Drills, remember, when done properly can be quite hard – they are not just easy swimming; and they **do require concentration**. Michael Phelps (and other champion swimmers) do something like 30% of their training as drills!!! Try to get a “FEEL” for the water. One day, with practice, it will “click”! To begin with many of us should use fins for greater benefit, particularly if our kick is weak.

1. 6 Kicks and Rotate. Usually 6/3/6 = 6 Kicks/3 Strokes /6 Kicks; also 6/1/6

Do 6 kicks on your side – **chest should face the wall**, hips and shoulder **vertical** – face should be facing down, chin on shoulder. Can use a snorkel so that you can concentrate on the stroke. (Or face up, and keep the head still if doing backstroke).

Then take an arm stroke (3 usually, can be 1 or 5) and rotate to the opposite side for 6 more kicks. Again, **chest faces the wall**, hips and shoulder **vertical**. **Keep a streamlined position!** Can be done Free or Back. Note the similarity between the “Long Axis” strokes. Doing Backstroke also helps to strengthen the back muscles, and reduce “Freestyler’s Stoop”

Purpose: - Helps with rotation, streamlining, body position and kicking.

1A. Popov

Done by Alex Popov – 6/3/6 as above in 1 but thumb of Recovery arm before stroke comes up your side to arm-pit then **back down your side** before taking the 3 strokes as normal. Make sure face is looking down before taking that first stroke.

Purpose: Accentuates high elbow recovery, rotation, core, body position.

2. Single Arm Freestyle.

Done with arm to front extended in streamlined position – fingers pointing down. Breathe towards the **active** arm. Pay attention to hand entry, and head position and keep the body rotation. Keep that bottom goggle in the water when breathing. Or use a snorkel and keep the head still. **Note:** Still need to **rotate the hips, both sides**, this drill is not done on a 45 degree angle.

Alternate distances with arms – could be 3 or 4 strokes, 25 m, 50 m etc.

Different to UNCO.

Purpose:- Allows for focus on arm stroke; hand entry; feeling the water; breathing, rotation

3. Catch-up Freestyle.

Push off the wall, keep hands extended. Take one complete arm stroke – leaving other hand extended in front. Wait until thumbs touch in front before taking next stroke with other arm. (Or use a ball and swap hands, or use a kickboard crosswise.) Continue alternating strokes; breathe when necessary – preferably every 3 strokes. Or again use a snorkel. Keep Kicking!!! Weak kickers should use fins. If

using a ball, **ball is in leading** (front) hand. Can be combined with Finger-Tip or Catch-Up drills.

Purpose:- Lengthen stroke, improve distance per stroke, use of kick through entire stroke.

4. 2 Stroke Switch

One arm leads – take 6 kicks kicking on the side (face is in water, eyes looking down, chest and hips vertical, facing the wall, other arm at side.) Take a stroke starting with leading arm and bringing up the second arm and take a breath (on **same side as leading arm.**) Make sure other arm/hand stays up near surface to **start second pull once face is back down.** Try to feel the connection from hand to opposite hip, through the core. Try to work a strong, snappy rotation with the second stroke. End up back on side for 6 more kicks.

Purpose: For rotation, timing, using the core.

5. Head-Up Freestyle / Water-Polo

Swim Freestyle with chin above surface of the water. Keep head **still** and eyes straight ahead. Move arms quickly, watch entry (shoulder width!) – keep kicking (fins if needed.)

Purpose:- Improve overall strength, stroke rate, and follow through, and kicking.

6. Stroke Count / Swim Golf

Usually over the 50m, or 100m – count your single arm strokes. (Should be counting strokes all the time anyway.) To begin with this can often be exaggerated, almost “Catch-Up”. Aim for as low as possible. These numbers following are relative – count depends upon many factors, including; arm length, strength - <30 is excellent; <35 very good; <40 fair; <45 average; 50+ needs work. It is important to aim to bring your own count down.

Swim Golf is Stroke Count with the added component of adding your time to the number of strokes. So say 36 strokes in 36 seconds = 72 (Par); 45 strokes in 55 seconds = 100. Aim to balance your Speed and Stroke Count to reduce your “Golf” Score.

<70 Excellent; <75 (Par); 75 – 85 (Bogey); 85-95 (Double Bogey); 96+ Needs Work.

Purpose:- Improve overall stroke efficiency and “feel”. Find an optimum stroke rate.

7. Finger-Tip Drag

On Recovery, Lift elbow and drag the hand/finger-tips along and through the surface of the water. **MUST** rotate body to perform correctly. Keep hand relatively close to body. Watch entry (shoulder width – do not cross over!) Used often in Warm-Up, Cool-Down to practice and loosen up. Fingers should always be pointing down; Fingers below wrist, below elbow. Palm always faces back wall.

Purpose:- Aims to teach relaxed recovery, and smooth entry.

8. Zipper Drill/ Chicken Wing

Much like Finger-Tip Drag (#6) but you maintain contact between your (extended) thumb and your body up to your armpit throughout the recovery. When your thumb reaches your armpit reach forward and enter the hand in the water. Keep stroke extended; watch entry. **MUST Rotate!!**

Purpose:- Encourages forward momentum in entry that characterizes efficient arm recovery. Also relaxed recovery, and length of stroke.

9. Wheelbarrow / Partner Swimming

We all love this one (not!!), except for the pair who can kick, which probably means we should do this more often!

Swimmers pair up. The swimmer in front swims, pulling the pair. The second swimmer holds the feet of the swimmer in front – and kicks!! Switch each 50. Fins ok!! Pull buoys NO!! Use your core, your stomach muscles to keep yourself flat and level and at the surface. Kicker breathes to the side, or can take one stroke, or use a Snorkel

Purpose:- Improves Pulling / Kicking / and Core strength

10. Long-Armed Dog/ Underwater Recovery

Swim Freestyle making your arm recovery completely under the water. Hands recover under the water. Essentially combining a long-armed dog paddle with the head position and **side breathing** of Freestyle. Reach long on each side and focus on making a good catch; keeping a high elbow and early vertical forearm. then rotate your body past the arm as you focus on lengthening your stroke, and making sure that you **finish the stroke**. (I.E. fully straighten arm and elbow.)

NOTE!! Should only be <= 4 strokes of your Stroke Count!

Purpose:- Lengthen stroke, focus on catch and pull through, rotation.

11. UNCO – One Arm Freestyle Drill

This is different to #2. In UNCO the resting arm is down by your side, as if in a deep pocket. Perform the full stroke with the active arm. Make sure that you keep rotating, **both** sides. As you stroke, breathe on the **opposite** side, on **every** stroke (so if you are stroking with your left arm, you are breathing to your right side). You must concentrate on **rotating** to both sides – moving both shoulders and hips as you rotate while swimming.

Purpose: Body position, core, rotation, breathing, and working catch.

12. “Otter” – Back End Scull Freestyle Drill

This is **to work the back end / (finish) of the Freestyle Stroke**. Use a snorkel or breath to the side. Upper arm and elbow is held tightly by the body – and do not move from the side. Lower arms alternately move from 90 (right angle) to the body to full extension, and then back.

Purpose: Full stroke extension; Body position, and hand feel.