

Freestyle

BODY ROTATION

The most important component of a fast freestyle is a strong **body rotation**. When swimming freestyle the body must rotate from side to side on each arm stroke, keeping in mind that the shoulder and hip rotate in unison. Think of your hips as the *engine* that makes your freestyle go.

UNDERWATER STROKE

There are two phases in the underwater freestyle stroke – “**Pull Phase**” and “**Push Phase**”.

The *pull phase* begins when the hand enters the water and ends when the hand passes the shoulder. As the hand enters the water it *catches* the water and begins to pull towards the centerline of the body. At this point you should begin to bend the elbow pulling with the palm and forearm as one unit. Keep in mind, the elbow should remain close to the water surface and the shoulder should be in contact with the side of the face. As the hand progresses through the pull phase, the elbow should remain slightly behind the hand creating maximum pulling power. The hand should be in a relaxed state keeping the fingers slightly separated.

The *push phase* begins when the hand passes the shoulder and ends when the hand exits the water at the lower part of your thigh. The push phase is the more powerful of the two phases. It is important to maintain constant pressure against the palm and forearm as you push through. During the push phase you should keep your hand in close to your body by bending the elbow and keeping the elbow behind the hand once again creating maximum power. The pitch of the hand should be perpendicular to the body.

The most neglected part of the underwater stroke is the **power push**. This is the finishing step to the push phase, the area from the hip to the bottom half of your thigh. When you finish the push phase your thumb should touch your thigh with your elbow fully extended before exiting little finger first. As you develop your power push, you will begin to notice a swirl of water running down over your thighs and onto your shins and feet.

RECOVERY

The recovery begins when you complete your power push with the elbow exiting the water first. When your hand exits the water you should try to bring your hand out above your rear end. As you progress through the recovery, you need to keep a high elbow with your hand over top and close to your body through out the recovery – not out to the side. By doing this you will create *forward momentum*. As the hand and arm begin to enter the water it is imperative that the shoulder remain in contact with the jaw, running down the jaw to the chin. This begins the body rotation. **REMEMBER:** the power in freestyle comes mainly from the hip rotation/body roll.

STREAMLINING

You streamline freestyle by reaching and extending your stroke (*swimming tall*) and at the same time keeping your body perfectly aligned and headed in a straight direction.

KICK

There are several different types of kick used while swimming freestyle, *two beat, four beat, six beat, cross over*, etc. The type of kick you use is dependent upon a number of variables including body type, distance of race, work ethic and so forth. Just keep in mind, when you don't kick, your legs will drop and will result in increased resistance.

Using a flutter kick, kick from the hips, not from the knees and turn the toes in (pigeon toed). The knees and ankles should be relaxed at all times. Don't kick with a straight/stiff knee. Key to a successful flutter kick – *flexibility and relaxation*.

ETC., ETC.

During your hand entry, you must *reach* out as far as you can and at the same time try to push your shoulder out towards the other end of the pool keeping it in constant contact with the side of your face. Don't push your shoulder down away from your face this will create an up and down action (limping), which you don't want. Also, you must fully extend the elbow at the end of the stroke and touching your thigh with your thumb (power push) remembering to recover over top of your body.

A rule to remember is that *wherever your head goes, your body will follow*. Therefore, you must remember to keep your head still with your eyes at a 45-degree angle. If your head moves back and forth - side to side, your body will begin to snake through the water creating more resistance. If your head is too far down, your body will dive down creating more resistance. If your head is too far up, your upper body will go up, dropping your hips and creating more resistance.

DRILLS

- Run thumb down the center of their bodies while swimming (*develop underwater bent elbow*).
- During the recovery, touch the back of your head (*to work on keeping their recovery above your bodies*).
- Skating (*Develop body roll*).
- Kick-Roll (*Develop body roll*).
- Zip-Up (*Develop body roll, keeping arms in close to the body and learning to reach out*).
- Run thumb up along your side into your armpit during the recovery (*high elbow & shoulder roll*).
- Combination of armpit, skating and touch the back of the head
- Flippin' water (*power push*).
- Catch-Up (*Long streamline reach*).
- Catch-Up using a dowel held in front of swimmer (*Long streamline reach*).
- Doggie paddle (*Long streamline reach*).
- Swim w/ water level on mouth/chin (*work on keeping eyes straight ahead*).
- Swim w/ closed fists (*develop sensation of pulling w/ palm & forearm as one unit*).
- Swim w/ a tennis ball in each hand (*develop sensation of pulling w/ palm & forearm as one unit*).
- Ultra-Slows (*develop control over swimmers' stroke*).