

# backstroke

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## Backstroke Technique Made Easy



**backstroke swimming stroke  
broken down and explained**

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The logo for swim-teach.com features the text "swim-teach.com" in a white, italicized, sans-serif font. The text is set against a blue background that has a horizontal gradient and a subtle, wavy pattern, resembling water or a sky over water.

*the number one resource for learning to swim and improving swimming technique*

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## Backstroke technique

This is the most efficient stroke swum on the back and is the third fastest of all swimming strokes. The majority of the power is produced by the alternating arm technique and its horizontal streamlined body position gives it its efficiency. Therefore this is the preferred stroke in competitive races swum on the back.

The nature of floating on the back, face up (supine) can be a calming and relaxing feeling. Also the face is clear of the water, allowing easy breathing and little water splashes onto the face. On the other hand it can be counter productive at first, as it can give a feeling of disorientation and unease, as the person is facing upwards and therefore unaware of their surroundings. The supine body position is flat and horizontal, with ears slightly below the water surface.



The legs kick in an alternating action, continuously up and down to help balance the action of the arms. This stroke has two different arm actions: the which is the most efficient, and the straight arm pull, which is the easiest to learn. Therefore the straight arm pull is best for beginners.

Breathing should be in time with recovery of each arm, breathing in with one arm recovery and out with the other. Ideally there should be 6 leg kicks to one arm cycle. This stroke timing may vary according to the swimmer's level of coordination.

## Body Position

The supine body position for this stroke is flat and horizontal, with ears slightly below the water surface.

The head remains still throughout the stroke with the eyes looking slightly down the body at a point the swimmer is swimming away from.



## Legs

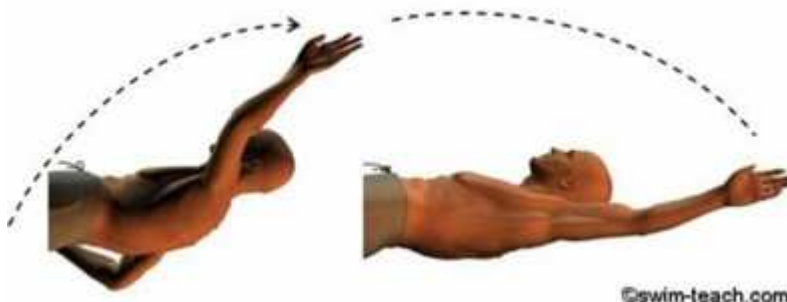
During this stroke the legs kick in an alternating action, continuously up and down to help balance the action of the arms.

Legs should be stretched out with toes pointed (plantar flexed) and ankles should be relaxed and loose with toes pointing slightly inwards.



## Arms

There are two possible arm actions for this stroke. The bent arm pull, which is more effective because it is faster and has greater propulsion, and the straight arm pull used in more recreational backstroke.



## Breathing

Breathing during this stroke should be relaxed and easy, due to the supine body position and face being out of the water throughout the stroke. Most swimmers are neither aware of way in which they breathe, nor the pattern of breathing or point at which a breath is taken.

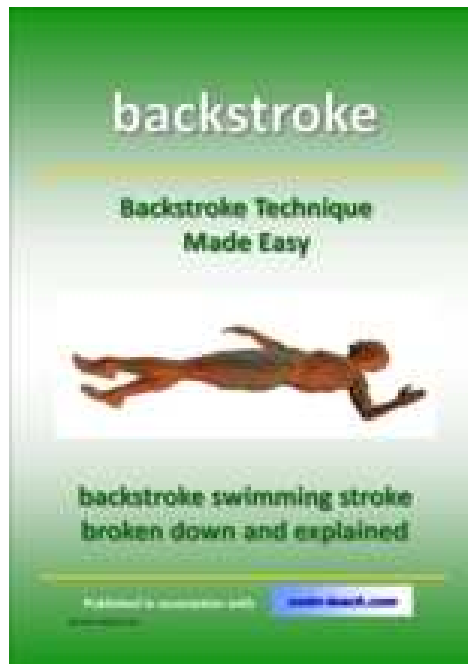
## Timing

The timing and coordination of the arms and legs develops with practice.

Ideally there should be 6 leg kicks to one arm cycle. The opposite leg kicks downwards at the beginning of each arm pull. This helps to balance the body. This may vary according to the swimmer's level of coordination.

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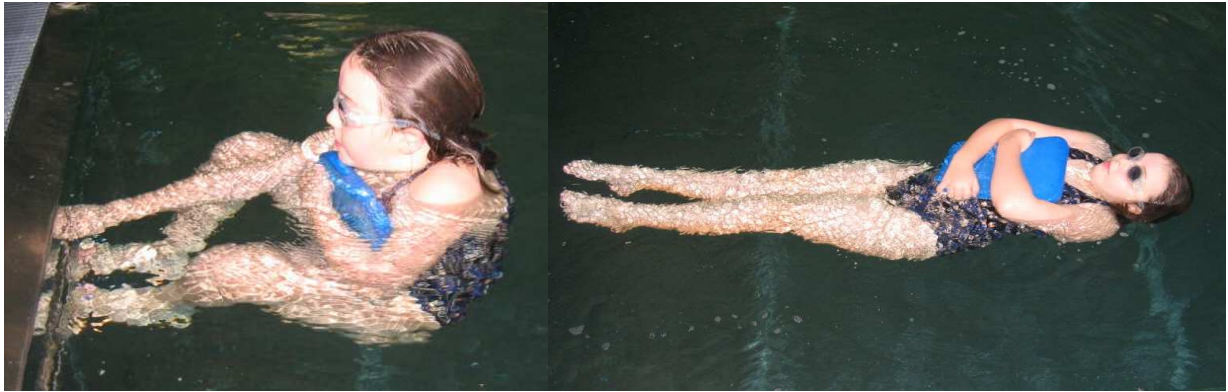


**Bonus exercise**

## BACKSTROKE: Body Position



### Push and glide holding a float



**Aim: to gain confidence and move through the water in a supine position.**

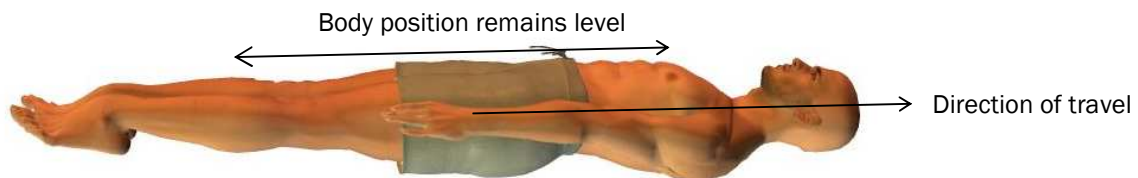
Holding a float gives added security to the nervous or weak swimmer whilst helping to maintain correct body position.

#### Technical Focus

- o Overall body should be horizontal and streamlined
- o Head remains still
- o Eyes looking upwards
- o Hips must be close to the surface
- o Legs must be together

#### Key Actions

- o Relax
- o Keep your head back and chin up
- o Push your tummy up to the surface
- o Look up to the ceiling
- o Keep your head still
- o Push off like a rocket



Float can be placed on the chest or behind the head as in the photos above.

For more Backstroke exercises go to:

<http://www.swim-teach.com/swimming-exercises-bc.html>