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**the complete guide to**

**swimming**  
**backstroke**

**learn, improve and fine-tune basic  
backstroke technique**

**fully illustrated with  
practical exercises**

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**mark young**

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## backstroke

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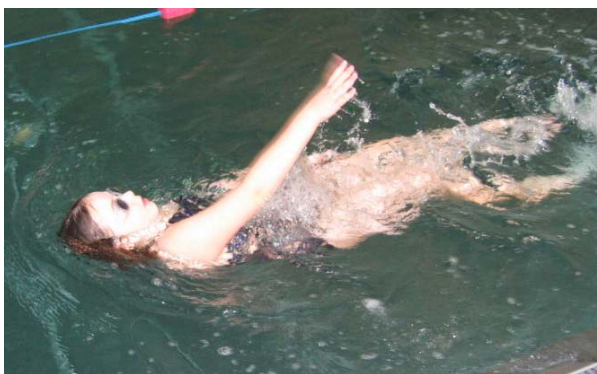
body position, legs, arms, breathing and timing

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.

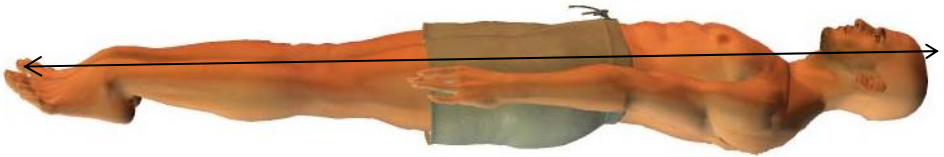
Breathing should be in time with recovery of each arm, breathing in with one arm recovery and out with the other. Ideally there should be 6 leg kicks to one arm cycle. This stroke timing may vary according to the swimmer's level of coordination.

## body position

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

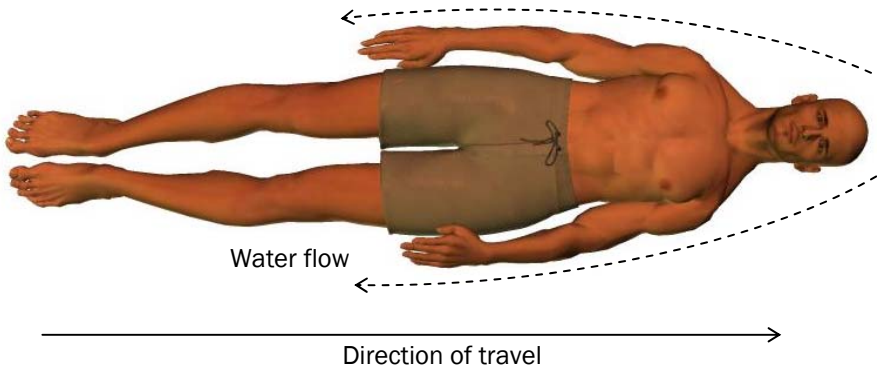
Good floaters will find this position relaxing and relatively easy, whereas poor floaters will find it difficult to achieve a comfortable head position.



Body position remains horizontal and relaxed

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

The head position is important because a raised head makes it more difficult to keep the hips raised in the correct position which leads to a sitting type position in the water.



The hips and shoulders remain at or near the water surface but roll with the stroke. The legs and feet should be extended and remain together to maximise efficiency, with knees remaining below the water surface.

The stroke exercises contained in the following part of this book form a reference section for each aspect of backstroke swimming stroke.

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### **what are they?**

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Each specific exercise focuses on a certain aspect of the swimming stroke, for example the body position, the leg kick, the arms, the breathing or the timing and coordination, all separated into easy to learn stages. Each one contains a photograph of the exercise being performed, a graphical diagram and all the technique elements and key focus points that are relevant to that particular exercise.

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### **how will they help?**

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They break down your swimming stroke into its core elements and then force you to focus on that certain area. For example if you are performing a leg kick exercise, the leg kick is isolated and therefore your focus and concentration is only on the legs. The technical information and key focus points then fix your concentration on the most important elements of the leg kick. The result: a more efficient and technically correct leg kick. The same then goes for exercises for the arms, breathing, timing and coordination and so on.

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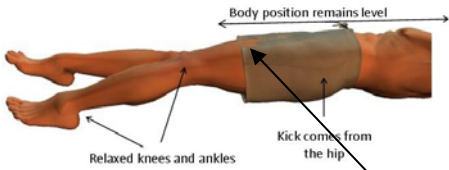
### **will they improve your swimming strokes?**

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Yes, definitely! These practical exercises not only isolate certain areas but can highlight your bad habits. Once you've worked through each element of the stroke and practiced the exercises a few times, you will slowly eliminate your bad habits. The result: a more efficient and technically correct swimming stroke, swum with less effort!

# how to use this section

The page layout for each exercise follows the same format, keeping all relevant information on one page. The aims, technical focuses and key points are all listed with a photograph and graphical diagram of the exercise.

<b>Stroke</b> The stroke being practiced	<b>Stroke part</b> The aspect of the stroke being practiced	<b>Exercise</b> The name and photograph of the exercise being practiced
BACKSTROKE	Legs	Float held behind the head
		
<b>Aim</b> The basic aim of the exercise	<b>Aim:</b> To encourage correct body position as the legs kick. The float behind the head helps to keep the chest and hips high. A variation of the exercise with the float held on the chest, this exercise helps to develop leg strength and stamina.	
<b>Technical Focus</b> Keys parts of the stroke technique	<b>Technical Focus</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Kick comes from the hips</li> <li>o Kick breaks the water surface</li> <li>o Hips and tummy up near the surface</li> <li>o Toes are pointed and ankles relaxed</li> <li>o Legs are together</li> </ul>	<b>Key Actions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Kick from your hips</li> <li>o Kick with floppy feet</li> <li>o Make a small splash with your toes</li> <li>o Keep your legs together</li> </ul>
		
<b>Diagram</b> A breakdown of the key part of the exercise		

## BACKSTROKE: Legs

Float held under each arm



**Aim: to practise and develop leg action whilst maintaining correct body position.**

Two floats provide good support and encourage a relaxed body position, without creating excessive resistance through the water.

### Technical Focus

- o Kick breaks the water surface
- o Hips and tummy are up near the surface
- o Toes are pointed and ankles relaxed
- o Legs are together
- o Slight knee bend
- o Ankles are relaxed

### Key Actions

- o Relax and kick hard
- o Point your toes like a ballerina
- o Kick from your hips
- o Kick with floppy feet
- o Make a small splash with your toes
- o Keep your legs together



Continuous alternating upward kick provides propulsion through the water

The Complete Guide to Swimming Backstroke is the perfect quick-fix for anyone wanting an easy to follow, concise and simplistic guide book. For the complete beginner, this book helps to learn and understand the basic stroke, and for the established swimmer to adjust and improve. The 20 fully illustrated exercises contained in this book cover all aspects of the stroke and can help any beginner to learn and practice, and any swimmer to eliminate bad habits and fine-tune their backstroke.

“A simple, yet highly detailed guide to helping anyone learn, improve and enhance their backstroke technique in easy simplistic steps”

Mark Young – author

**Mark Young** is a well established swimming instructor with over twenty years experience of teaching thousands of adults and children to swim. He has taught countless beginners from scratch and turned many of average ability into advanced swimmers. This book draws on his experiences and countless successes to put together this simplistic methodical approach to mastering backstroke swimming technique.

