

the complete guide to

# simple swimming

From terrified to terrific

Everything you need to know from first entering the water, to performing the four basic swimming strokes

mark young



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# contents

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	<b>page</b>
<b>chapter 1: why swim?</b>	5
fun	6
health	7
rehabilitation	7
fitness	8
<b>chapter 2: swimming science</b>	9
buoyancy	10
propulsion	11
resistance	11
<b>chapter 3: swimming aids</b>	13
armbands	14
safety ring	15
buoyancy suit	15
float	16
noodle	17
pull buoy	18
swimfin	19
<b>chapter 4: the non-swimmer—essential basics</b>	21
entry	22
submersion	23
regaining standing	25
<b>chapter 5: front crawl</b>	27
body position	29
legs	29
arms	30
breathing	31
timing	32
<b>chapter 6: backstroke</b>	35
body position	37
legs	37
arms	38
breathing	39
timing	40
<b>chapter 7: breaststroke</b>	43
body position	44
legs	45
arms	46
breathing	47
timing	48
<b>chapter 8: butterfly</b>	49
body position	50
legs	51
arms	52
breathing	53
timing	53

# contents

---

	page
<b>chapter 9: stroke exercises</b>	55
what are they?	57
how to use this section	58
front crawl	59
body position	60
legs	65
arms	71
breathing	76
timing	80
backstroke	83
body position	84
legs	88
arms	96
breathing	101
timing	102
breaststroke	105
body position	106
legs	107
arms	115
breathing	120
timing	123
butterfly	129
body position	130
legs	133
arms	138
breathing	143
timing	145
<b>index of stroke exercises</b>	147
front crawl	148
backstroke	149
breaststroke	150
butterfly	151

# chapter 1

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why swim?

## why swim?

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### health, fitness and fun

It's a well known fact, and years of research back it up, that swimming provides many physical, social and psychological benefits. They include increased cardiovascular fitness , improved strength and flexibility, enhanced muscular stamina and balance, a stronger heart



with increased cardiovascular endurance, and positive changes in body shape and body composition. Apart from this, swimming also works as a fast and effective remedy for healing muscles, due to its zero impact and high repetitive nature.

One of the most important reasons for learning to swim has to be safety. Swimming pools and open water areas such as lakes and rivers are an attractive source of fun and entertainment and as a result quite often the dangers of water can be overlooked.

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### Fun

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The importance for children to learn how to swim cannot be underestimated, and respect for the water should be taught as early as possible. As children grow and develop, their strength and therefore ability to move around in the water, with or without floatation aids, also increases. This in turn opens up a whole world of fun and enjoyment. This brings us to the next most important reason to learn to swim: fun.

Most of us, particularly children, swim for fun. With fun comes health and fitness in the form of exercise and activity, and most swimming pools and leisure facilities are in local areas and are relatively inexpensive.



It is important to note, that children should always be supervised around water, regardless of their swimming ability. The most competent of swimmers can get into trouble at any time and in any water environment. Nobody is drown-proof!

## health

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Swimming exercise also helps to reduce body fat and can relieve your mind from stress and tension, keeping you in perfect shape, physically as well as mentally.

The benefits of swimming are huge for individuals who are obese, or individuals suffering from orthopaedic conditions such as lower back problems. This activity offers some aerobic benefits and unlike other weight training programs, swimming does not put strain on weight bearing joints, as it is a zero impact activity.

Research indicates that pregnant women benefit the most from swimming. It makes their abdominal muscles strong, which are most essential when carrying a baby. In addition, it strengthens the back and the muscles that help post-mastectomy women carry their weight more easily. According to experts, exercising in water can considerably reduce joint stiffness, high blood pressure, and discomfort, which is often associated with pregnancy.

## rehabilitation

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Swimming is a great means of injury rehabilitation and is also a very effective way of recovering after surgery. Muscles and joints need a gentle re-introduction to exercise as part of their rehabilitation process and swimming provides them with just that.

After a woman has undergone breast surgery, doctors often suggest it as part of the recovery process. This is considered to be an advantageous means of exercising all the major muscle groups.

It is advisable that you consult a physician before commencing a rehabilitation program. It is very important to talk to experts as they can confirm which swimming strokes are moderate and which can be strenuous.

There is also a low risk for swimming injuries because there's no stress on your body due to the extremely low levels of impact on the joints and bones. As a safe daily workout routine, swimming is perfect because you can rigorously work out with a reduced chance of injury. Many athletes supplement their training with swimming as it provides effective cardiovascular workouts that make significant increases in cardiovascular endurance.



## front crawl

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body position, legs, arms, breathing and timing

Front crawl is the fastest, most efficient stroke of them all. This is largely down to the streamlined body position and continuous propulsion from the arms and legs.

The alternating action of the arms and legs is relatively easy on the joints and the stroke as a whole develops aerobic capacity faster than any other stroke. In competitive terms it is usually referred to as Freestyle.



The constant alternating arm action generates almost all of the propulsion and is the most efficient arm action of all strokes. The leg action promotes a horizontal, streamlined body position and balances the, arm action but provides little propulsion.

Freestyle breathing technique requires the head to be turned so that the mouth clears the water but causes minimal upset to the balance of the body from its normal streamlined position.



The timing and coordination of front crawl arms and legs occurs most commonly with six leg kicks to one arm cycle. However, stroke timing can vary, with a four beat cycle and even a two beat cycle, which is most commonly used in long distance swims and endurance events.

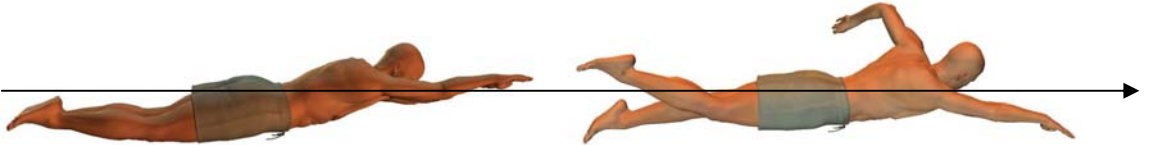
## body position

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The overall body position for this swimming stroke is streamlined and as flat as possible at the water surface, and the head in-line with the body.

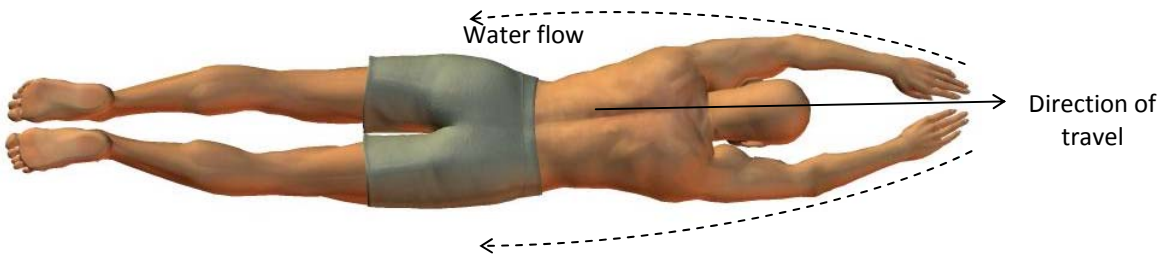
The waterline is around the natural hairline with eyes looking forward and down.

If the position of the head is raised it will cause the position of the hips and legs to lower which in turn will increase frontal resistance.



If the head position is too low it will cause the legs to raise and the kick to lose its efficiency.

Shoulders remain at the surface and roll with the arm action. Hips also roll with the stroke technique, close to the water surface and the legs remain in line with the body.



Streamlined body position minimises drag, allowing efficient movement through the water

## legs

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The leg kick for front crawl should originate from the hip and both legs should kick with equal force.

Legs kick in an up and down alternating action, with the propulsive phase coming from the down kick. There should be a slight bend in the knee due to the water pressure, in order to produce the propulsion required on the down kick.

The stroke exercises contained in the following parts of this book form reference sections for each 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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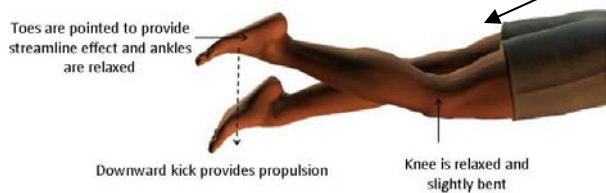
### **will they improve your swimming strokes?**

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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
<p><b>Aim</b> The basic aim of the exercise</p>	<p><b>FRONT CRAWL</b> <b>Legs</b></p> 	<p><b>Float held with both hands</b></p>
<p><b>Technical Focus</b> Keys parts of the stroke technique</p>	<p><b>Aim:</b> To practise and learn correct kicking technique. Holding a float or kickboard out in front isolates the legs, encourages correct body position and develops leg strength.</p> <p><b>Technical Focus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Kick comes from the hip</li> <li>o Kick is continuous and alternating.</li> <li>o Legs are close together when they kick</li> <li>o Ankles are relaxed and the toes are pointed.</li> <li>o Kick should just break the water surface.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Key Actions</b> Key actions of the exercise to focus on during a swim</p> <p><b>Key Actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Kick with pointed toes</li> <li>o Make a small splash with your toes</li> <li>o Kick with floppy feet</li> <li>o Legs kick close together</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Diagram</b> A breakdown of the key part of the exercise</p> 	

## FRONT CRAWL: Arms

### Arm action using a pull-buoy



**Aim: to develop arm pull strength, technique and coordination.**

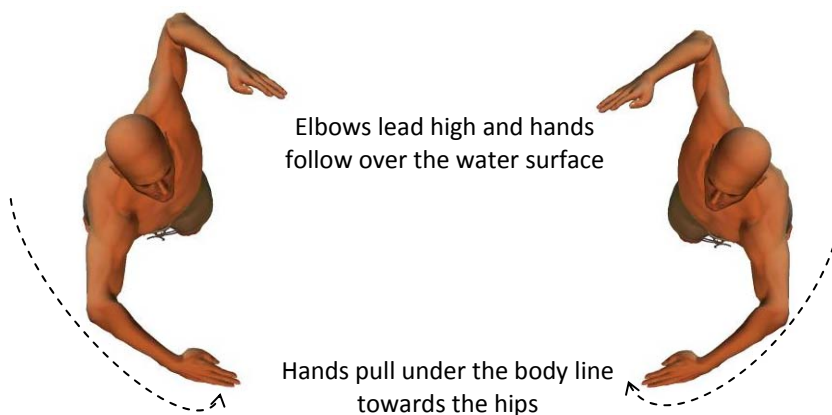
This is a more advanced exercise which requires stamina and a degree of breathing technique.

#### Technical Focus

- o Fingertips enter first with thumb side down
- o Fingers should be together
- o Pull should be an elongated 'S' shape
- o Pull through to the hips
- o Elbow comes out first
- o Fingers clear the water on recovery

#### Key Actions

- o Long strokes
- o Smooth continuous action
- o Brush your hand past your thigh
- o Make an 'S' shape under the water
- o Elbow out first
- o Reach over the water surface



# FRONT CRAWL: Arms

Push and glide adding arm cycles



**Aim: to combine correct arm action with a streamlined body position.**

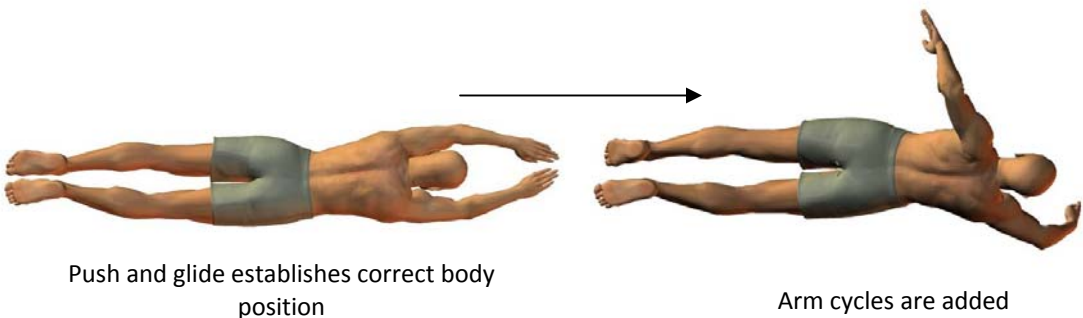
The swimmer performs a push and glide to establish body position and then adds arm cycles, whilst maintaining body position.

### Technical Focus

- o Clean entry with fingertips first
- o Pull should be an elongated 'S' shape
- o Pull through to the hips
- o Elbow comes out first
- o Fingers clear the water on recovery

### Key Actions

- o Finger tips in the water first
- o Brush your hand past your thigh
- o Make an 'S' shape under the water
- o Elbow out first
- o Reach over the water surface



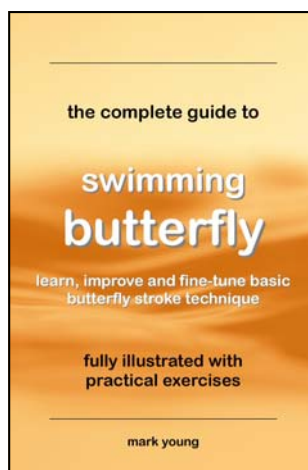
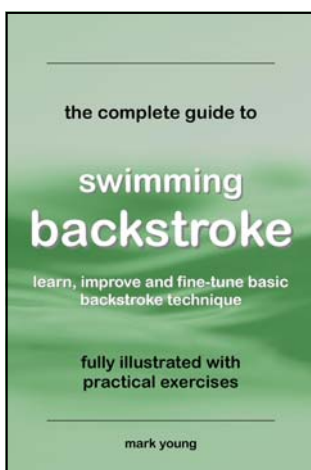
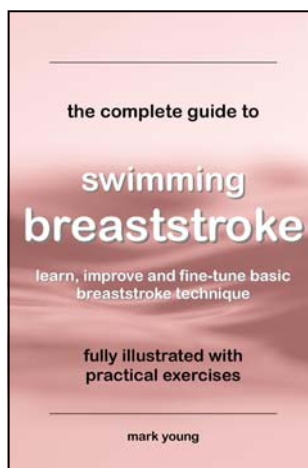
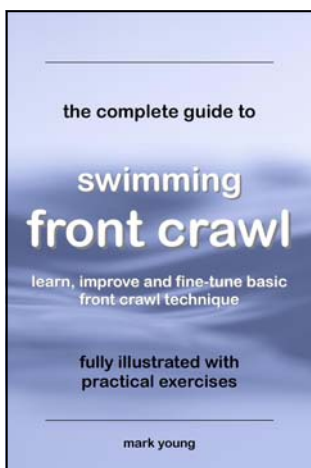
For more information about learning to swim and improving your swimming strokes and swimming technique visit:

[swim-teach.com](http://swim-teach.com)

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