

How To Swim Backstroke



Mark Young

How To Swim

Backstroke

a step-by-step guide for beginners
learning backstroke technique

Mark Young

Is your backstroke not what you want it to be? Do you find simply swimming on your back a challenge? Maybe you tried to learn backstroke and found that you sink.

This book contains specific exercises for each aspect of backstroke. Each exercise makes the individual parts of backstroke simple and the whole stroke easier to swim.

This is an ideal book for any beginner to accompany their swimming lessons and perfect for average swimmers to learn or improve their basic backstroke.

Clear, concise and easy to follow.

To **download** the full version of this book **including all exercises**, go to:
<http://www.swim-teach.com/how-to-swim-backstroke.html>

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backstroke

an overview

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 swimmer 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 bent arm pull, 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 but the 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.

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

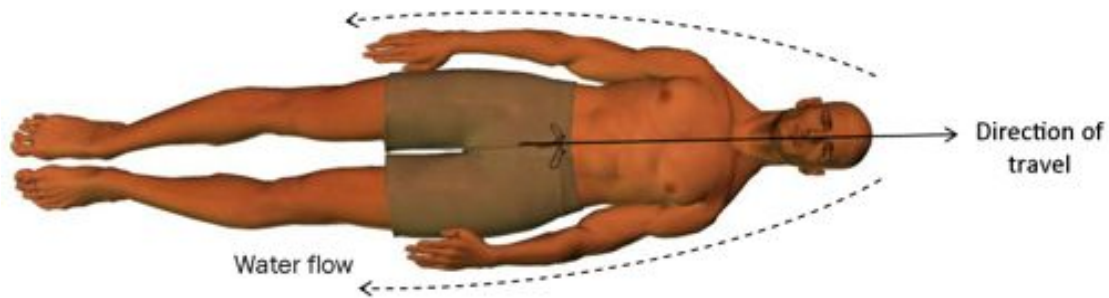


Body position remains horizontal and relaxed

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

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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.

Common body position mistakes

Ever get that feeling that you are sinking when you swim on your back? It is very common to allow the legs to drop and the body position to become angled in the water without knowing it is happening. This is usually caused either by allowing the hips to drop or lifting the head slightly or a combination of both. As the legs drop deeper the whole stroke becomes less efficient and more energy consuming.

Performing a push and glide from holding the poolside is a good way of testing how flat you can remain. Ensure that you look upwards as you push away and stretch out so that your hips, legs and feet rise to the surface. The overall body position is easily maintained with a correct and efficient leg kick.

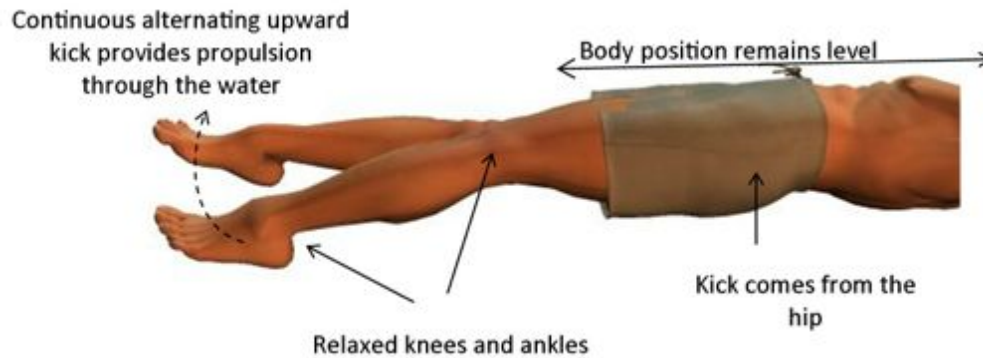
legs

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.

The amount of propulsion generated from the kick will depend on the size of the feet, ankle mobility and strength of the legs.

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The knee should bend slightly and then straighten as the leg kicks upwards. Toes should kick to create a small splash but not break the water surface.

During specific leg practices the legs kick in a vertical plane. However, the arm action causes the body to roll making the legs kick part sideways, part vertical and partly to the other side.

Common leg kick mistakes

The most common fault with the leg kick during backstroke is closely related to the body position, when the swimmer allows their legs to sink below the water surface. The toes should just break the water surface and the legs kick from the hip with a slight bend at the knee.

An easy exercise to help maintain leg kick technique at the correct level in the water is to hold a float or kick board across the chest and perform the leg kick. The float will provide support so that the swimmer can focus on kicking up towards the water surface whilst maintaining a level head and level hips. Only then will the leg kick be at its most efficient.

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backstroke: stroke exercises

beginners to learn and swimmers to improve

The stroke exercises contained in the following parts of this book form reference sections for each aspect of backstroke swimming stroke.

what are they?

Each specific exercise focuses on a certain aspect of the backstroke, 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.

how will they help?

They break down your backstroke 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.

will they improve your swimming strokes?

Yes, definitely! These practical exercises not only isolate certain areas but also 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 backstroke, swum with less effort!

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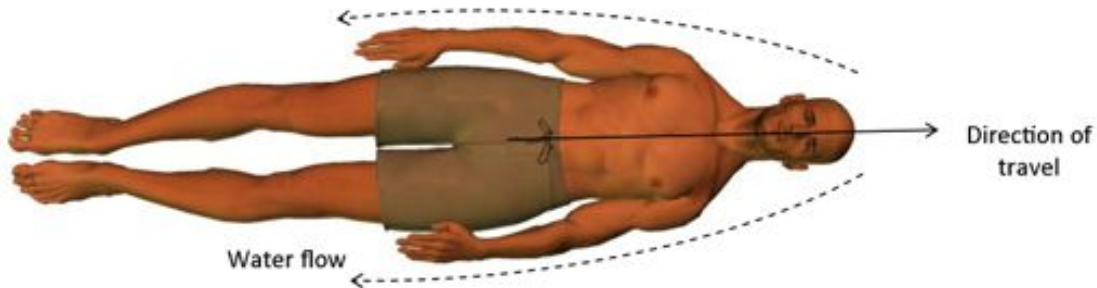
BACKSTROKE: Body Position

Push and glide from the poolside without floats



Aim: to encourage correct body position whilst moving.

The swimmer uses the momentum of a push from the poolside. Arms are held by the sides or held straight over the head in more advanced cases.



Key Actions

- Relax
- Make your body as long as you can
- Push off like a rocket
- Push your tummy up to the surface
- Look up to the ceiling
- Glide in a long straight line

Technical Focus

- Overall body should be horizontal and streamlined
- Head remains still
- Eyes looking upwards and towards the feet
- Hips must be close to the surface
- Legs must be together
- Arms are held by the sides

Common Faults

- Push off is not hard enough
- Head raises out of the water
- Tummy and hips sink
- Failing to maintain a straight line

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BACKSTROKE: Legs

Float held on the chest



Aim: to allow the correct body position to be maintained whilst the legs kick.

This is a progression from having a float held under each arm. The swimmer is less stable but still has the security of one float held on the chest.



Key Actions

- Point your toes like a ballerina
- Kick from your hips
- Kick with floppy feet
- Make a small splash with your toes
- Keep your legs together

Technical Focus

- Kick comes from the hips
- Kick is alternating and continuous
- Kick breaks the water surface
- Hips and tummy up near the surface
- Legs are together
- Ankles are relaxed and toes pointed

Common Faults

- Kick comes from the knee
- Legs are too deep
- Toes are turned up
- Stiff ankles
- Legs are too 'stiff', not relaxed

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