

# How To Swim Butterfly



Mark Young

# How To Swim

# Butterfly

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

**Mark Young**

Butterfly is arguably the most difficult and challenging swimming stroke of them all.

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

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-butterfly-stroke.html>

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# butterfly

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an overview

Butterfly stroke is the most recent stroke, developed in the 1950's, and it is the second fastest stroke to Front Crawl. The stroke evolved from breaststroke as it also contains a simultaneous leg action and simultaneous arm action. The stroke requires a great deal of upper body strength and can be very physically demanding; therefore it is a stroke that is swum competitively rather than recreationally.

Buoyancy is very important because the arms are recovered over the water and the head is raised to breathe, therefore good floaters will achieve this far easier than poor floaters.

The timing and coordination of the stroke is usually a two beat cycle of leg kicks to one arm cycle.

The undulating action of the body and the legs create great demands of the spine, therefore there are many alternative exercises and practices that can be used to make learning the stroke easier and less physical.

Breathing is an explosive exhalation and then inhalation in the short second that the head and face are above the water surface.

The timing and coordination of butterfly is usually a two beat cycle of leg kicks to one arm cycle. One leg kick should have enough power to assist the upper body out and over the water surface and the second leg kick to assist the arms as they recover just over the surface of the water.

## **body position**

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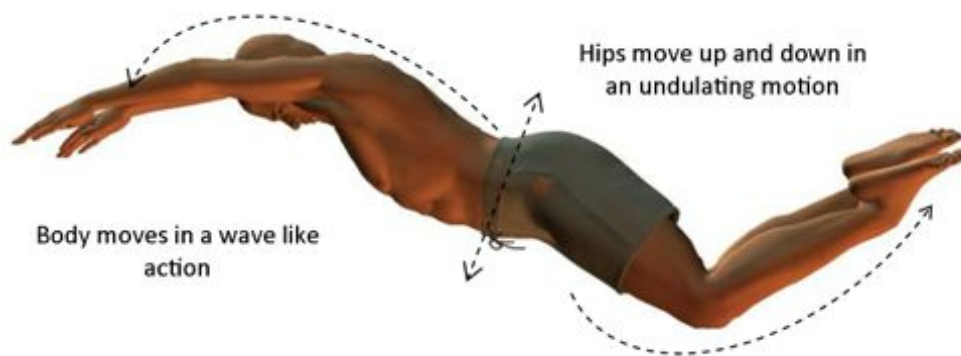
The body position varies through the stroke cycle due to the continuous undulating action. The body should undulate from head to toe, producing a dolphin-type action.

Although undulation is unavoidable, the body position should be kept as horizontal as possible to keep frontal resistance to a minimum. Intermittent or alternative breathing will help to maintain this required body position.

The body should be face down (prone) with the crown of the head leading the action.

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The shoulders should remain level throughout and the head should remain central and still, looking down until breathing is required.

Hips should be inline with the shoulders and should remain parallel to the direction of travel.

### Common body position mistakes

The most common mistake made when performing the undulating movement is an excessive movement up and down. As the movement originates from the head there is a tendency to over exaggerate this movement, causing the wave movement through the rest of the body to excessive and over pronounced. The swimmer then puts more effort and energy into moving up and down instead of actually swimming forwards.

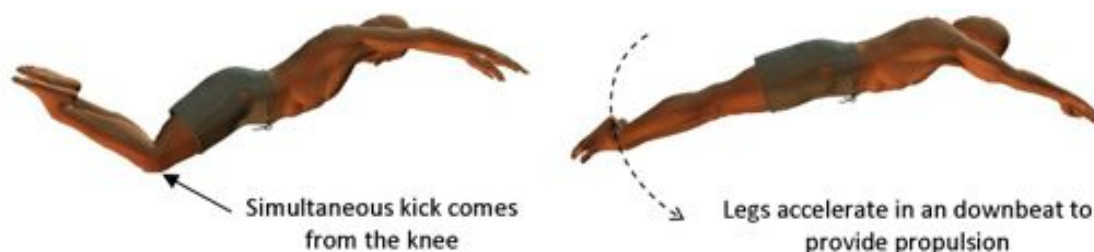
A simple push and glide exercise from the poolside followed by a gentle undulating movement across the surface of the water helps to eliminate any excessive body movements.

If the swimmer places the effort on using the undulation to move forward then this will provide a solid base from which to build and perfect butterfly stroke.

### legs

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The main functions of butterfly stroke leg action are to balance the arm action and help to provide some propulsion. This action then generates the undulating movement of the body position as the swimmer moves through the water.



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The upbeat of the kick should come from the hip and the ankles should be relaxed with toes pointed. The legs move upwards without bending at the knees and the soles of the feet press against the water vertically and backwards.

Knees bend and then straighten on the downbeat to provide propulsion. The legs should accelerate to provide power on the downbeat.

### **Common leg kick mistakes**

A breaststroke type leg kick can sometimes be performed by mistake, due to the simultaneous nature of the kick itself. Most swimmers that are able to perform breaststroke fairly well will naturally kick their legs in a small circle when attempting butterfly leg kick for the first time.

Another common mistake is to place an emphasis on the arm pull for butterfly and therefore lose all power from the leg kick. The legs just go through the motions when in fact they are needed to assist the body to rise out of the water so that the arm pull and recovery can be completed with minimum effort.

A powerful butterfly leg kick is vital and performing the kick whilst holding a float or kickboard out in front with straight arms will help develop the technique and power required for this movement.

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# butterfly: stroke exercises

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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 butterfly swimming stroke.

## **what are they?**

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Each specific exercise focuses on a certain aspect of butterfly 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?**

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They break down your butterfly 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?**

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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 butterfly stroke, swum with less effort!

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## BUTTERFLY: Body Position

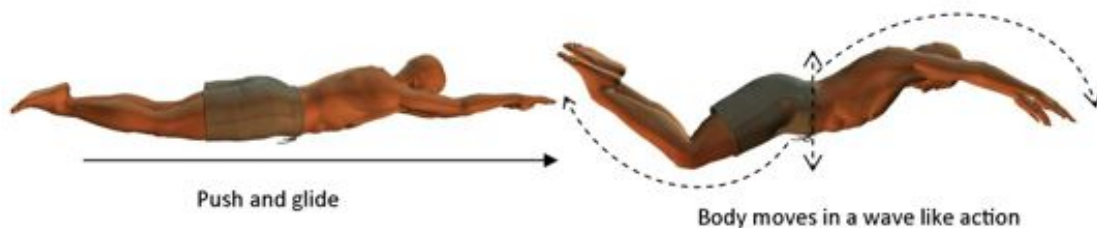
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### Push and glide



**Aim: to practise and develop an undulating action whilst moving.**

The swimmer pushes from the poolside into a glide and then begins the undulating action from head to toe. This allows the swimmer to experience the required undulating action whilst moving through the water.



### Key Actions

- Make the top of your head lead first
- Keep your shoulders level
- Keep your hips level
- Make your body into a long wave
- Pretend you are a dolphin swimming

### Technical Focus

- Head remains central
- Shoulders and hips should be level
- Body is horizontal with an undulating movement
- Wave-like movement from head to toe
- Legs remain together

### Common Faults

- Body remains too stiff and rigid
- Shoulders and hips are not remaining level
- Leading with the head looking forwards

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## **BUTTERFLY: Legs**

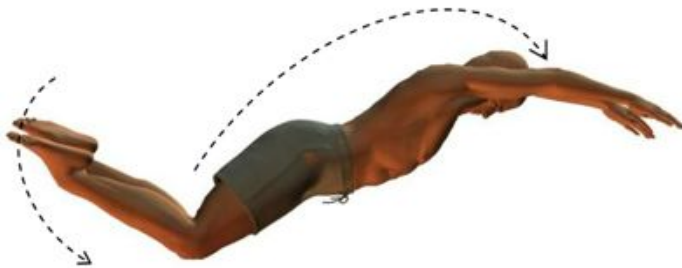
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Prone holding a float with both hands



**Aim: to develop the leg kick using a float for support.**

This practice allows the advanced swimmer to develop leg kick strength and stamina as the float isolates the legs.



Powerful leg kick provides propulsion and help the body to undulate

### **Key Actions**

- Kick with both legs at the same time
- Kick downwards powerfully
- Keep your legs together
- Create a wave-like action through your body
- Kick like a mermaid

### **Technical Focus**

- Simultaneous legs action
- Knees bend and kick in downbeat to provide propulsion
- Legs accelerate on downbeat
- Toes are pointed
- Hips initiate undulating movement

### **Common Faults**

- Leg kick is not simultaneous
- Toes are not pointed
- Overall action is too stiff and rigid
- Kick is not deep or powerful enough

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