

SWIM DRILLS!!!

Pick any of these drills (and by no means are these all inclusive of drills available to improve your swim!)- incorporate them into your workouts and have a great swim!

Breathing Bobs: Hold onto side of pool and practice bobbing under the water while you blow out for a count of three and then lift the head out of the water and breathe in for a count of 2. You do not need to completely exhale all of your air, or completely breathe in to your maximum capacity. Make this rhythmic and smooth. You should be comfortable with this after several efforts. Typically do 2-3 sets of 10 or so bobs.

Push off Wall/streamline: This drill is to help you feel balanced and long in the water- teaching you FRONT QUADRANT swimming (which means your weight is distributed over you chest, not back in the hips).

1. For your first set, push off the wall face down with your arms by your side, no kicking, head looks straight down. Once you feel your legs drop and movement stops then come up and go back to the wall.

2. For you second set, push off the wall, face down with your ARMS STREAMLINED OVERHEAD (squeeze biceps by ears, hands flat on top of eachother). Don't kick. Keep head looking at bottom of pool. What you should notice is 1. that you went farther and 2. that your hips stayed on top of the water for a heck of a lot longer time. Once you need to breathe then pull up and go back to the wall.

Corkscrew: arms by side, kick only and rotate (like a chicken on a spit) from stomach to back and back to stomach. Take your time and rotate slowly so you can focus on your BALANCE in every position in the water. Press into your chest so your body is in perfect alignment. Be patient with your breathing...budget your breath so you don't panic and roll your head first to get some air. That will make your hips drop. Imagine you are on a board and your head is in a brace so it can't move ahead of your body (don't imagine this if it makes you feel claustrophobic!).

Streamline on back: Lay on your back with arms above your head (press your biceps against your ears and reach as tall as you can). Kick only and focus on a long body position and bringing your kick from your hips. If your knees are breaking the surface of the water then you know you are bending your knees too much. If your body is heading below the water then reach OUT instead of down (you are also probably arching your back...)

Kick on side: (K.O.S.) Lay on your side with your arm reaching out and your head on your arm. Your belly button should be facing the side wall of the pool. Key point here is to reach with the extended arm as much as you can. This will help with your BALANCE. You can do a lap with your face out of the water (however your face should be right on the surface of the water so you are in a very long, streamlined position). Or you can also do this with your face looking down at the bottom of the pool (cheek or chin by the bicep/shoulder) and then just roll the head slightly, look up and breath in, and then look back down at the bottom of the pool and blow out. This is a great drill to help you learn to hold your long, balanced body position (SIDE) and also to become more comfortable with breathing without LIFTING your head!

Zipper Up: Do K.O.S. except this time when your face is looking down at the bottom of the pool you will slowly zipper your arm that has been resting on your top leg up your side and bring the fingers out by your arm/shoulder. You should picture your arm as a dolphin fin that is pointing up to the ceiling (fingertips down/elbow up). Stay very loose and relaxed. Be careful to keep the elbow HIGH...I often see people drop the elbow so it is back over their spine behind them. This will twist your body and give you the wrong position for future drills and swimming. Remember you breathe out when your face is down and your arm is zipping up your side. You then KEEP YOUR HEAD DOWN/EAR BY SHOULDER and breathe IN when your arm zippers back down your side and comes to rest on your top leg. DO NOT TRY TO BREATHE IN WHEN YOUR ARM IS UP IN THE HIGH ELBOW/DOLPHIN FIN. You will be lower in the water and it will be hard to get a breath. REMEMBER TO REACH with the extended arm...it will really help you stay balanced and long in the water!!

Kick on Side with 1 stroke (K.O.S.with 1 stroke): Same as Zipper UP except you do not bring the arm back down to your side and breathe in. Instead you bring the arm up to the high elbow and then roll to your front/extend the hand out to meet the extended hand for a very short moment then roll to the other side/kick on that side (with hand resting on top leg) and take a breath (so you are basically now kicking on side with the opposite side). You will then repeat on the other side. Take this very slow and controlled and focus on feeling long and smooth in the water. REACH!!! Remember also to breathe in when the arm is on your side. Don't try to breathe in when you are zipping the arm up the side... it really isn't such a great way to breathe as you are going to be too low in the water! Think of your body as moving as ONE UNIT...Stay on your side except for the moment of arm change.

7-3-7: This is basically seven kicks with your elbow high in the dolphin fin position (so no zipper, just get the elbow up (don't let it droop))- then take 3 regular freestyle strokes (breathe twice during these strokes if needed) then do seven more kicks with elbow high. Remember to stay on your side...don't let your body rotate onto your stomach as that will make it hard to keep the elbow up as well as it will create much more drag through the water.

Catch Up: This is a regular freestyle stroke except you are going to focus on keeping the extended arm out until the other arm reaches out to it. So...picture that you have a pencil in one hand and you cannot take a stroke UNTIL you have exchanged the pencil to the extended arm (yep, the arm that is REACHING as far as it can to keep you balanced!). I have also had you do this with the "Magic Sticks; Spirit Sticks" and other affectionate terms.

Fist Swim: Freestyle swim EXCEPT you close your hand to make a fist. You are focusing on using your forearm and maintaining a high elbow on your stroke portion of the swim. This is to help you learn how to use as much surface area as possible to move you through the water. It should also help you realize if you are dropping your elbow in the water as well as if you are stroking too early. ENJOY!

Fingertip Drag: Freestyle swim EXCEPT you are going to drag the fingertips through the water and then enter at the area of your head. This drill is going to help you with your high elbow, body rotation and general stroke mechanics. I have seen many people either swim with a straight arm on their recovery, or over rotate onto their backs during the recovery (with a drooping elbow that is coming behind their center). This drill really helps correct that form flaw. Go slow and focus on feeling the fingertips gently drag through the water.

Single Arm Drill #1: (R/L S.A. #1) This is done with both arms out in front of your body, but only one arm will do the stroke. You will want to focus on one side only as the arm will extend out in front of (with the other already reaching out), then take one stroke and as the arm recovers roll to your side and take a breath (so, if you are stroking with the Right Arm you will also breath to the right as the arm comes around). Be careful not to windmill the arm...instead focus on extending the stroking arm and getting an extra bit of reach and roll to the opposite side before you stroke again. So slow and deliberate!

Single Arm Drill #2 (R/L S.A. #2): On this drill you will do the single arm motion, but this time you will keep the non-stroking arm down by your side. So, if you are stroking with your right arm then your left arm will be down by your side. You will extend the stroking arm out and then stroke, roll, recover and extend. You will BREATH on the opposite side this time from #1. If your right arm is stroking and your left is by your side you will be rolling and breathing to your left while your right arm is extended. So, you will roll onto the right arm and extend and keep the ear down on the arm (DON'T lift your head to breathe!) Find a rhythm and keep as hydrodynamic and smooth as possible. If you find you are bobbing up and down on either version of this drill it is most likely because you are lifting your head to breath. So, keep it down-you will be glad you did!

Thumbscrape Drill: Your focus on this drill will be scraping your thumb by your thigh at the end of your stroke. This will help prevent premature rolling during your swim as well as keep your alignment to the front. This will also help your swim become more powerful because you are finishing your stroke instead of pulling out too early by your waist.

A couple of notes:

You may use fins on all these drills except the FIST drill. You need to feel the water on that one...so go without fins.

If you are having a hard time with your stroke, try counting 1,2,3 for each extension before you stroke. Many times I see people struggle because they are getting in a rush and not letting their bodies glide between strokes for a moment. Enjoy the movement and relax!

If you are struggling with your breathing then try focusing on the exhale portion of the stroke and make sure you are getting air out as well as in. You do not need to breathe EVERYTHING out of your lungs. Just try and find a steady rhythm and stick to it. Don't do sporadic breathing patterns-breathe every 2 or every 3 strokes. That seems to work for most people!

More than anything, BE PATIENT and kind to yourself!! This is a new skill you are learning that is very complex and challenging! Be proud of yourself for pursuing something that is out of your comfort zone and taking you to a new level of fitness and ability! If you are consistent and patient and consciously work on making every lap a purposeful one (by focusing on ONE thing at a time) you will improve and maybe even just come to LOVE swimming!! I have confidence you can all accomplish your goals!!