

SWIM WALES DRILL PROGRESSIONS FRAMEWORK- BACKSTROKE

NO	DRILL TITLE	COACHING EXPLANATION	TOOLS
1	KICK – ARMS BY SIDE (Rotation)	The eyes should be looking up and slightly towards the feet. The swimmer should kick from the hips with minimum knee bend. Ensure that the swimmers head is not too far back that the ribs flare, in turn loosing connectivity through the core. When adding the rotational element keep the shoulders down and rotate from the hips maintaining head and body position.	Fins, Plastic cup on Head *Early stages* hold float hands at the side above hips
2	STREAMLINED KICK (Rotation)	When the swimmer elevates the hands beyond the head ensure that the ribs do not flare. This is an endurance training drill as well as a skill. The main focus is kicking from the hips generating a large propulsive force maintaining a constant pressure throughout the kick. It is essential to include the rotational element in practices.	Hard rubber Fins encourage power, Soft plastic fins can encourage ankle flexibility
3	KICK – HANDS BEHIND HEAD	Always start this drill with arms by their side and progress into position. The flexibility required for this drill is also essential to performing backstroke swim to perfection. If this drill cannot be performed the catch of the full stroke will be compromised.	Soft fins
4	DOUBLE ARM BACKSTROKE	It is important when performing this drill to maintain body position, at no point must the face submerge and no undulation should occur on hand entry. Encourage a little finger entry just outside shoulder width, pressing with the fingertips and accelerating through the propulsive phase, gliding at the end. Replicating the movement of a rowing boat.	Finger Paddles, Hand Paddles, Pull bouy.
5	SINGLE ARM KICK (R/L)	Promote the swimmer to elongate their bodies from fingertip to toe. Rotate hips the shoulders into a 45deg angle. Ensure that the swimmer maintains head and body position and does not allow the shoulder out of the water to lift towards the chin.	Soft fins
6	SINGLE ARM KICK & CATCH	This drill is a direct progression from drill 5 and all of the above principles should apply. The elbow remains in a fixed position with the fingers pressing on the water and the palm of the hand facing the feet as early as possible. Return the hand by facing the palm down and reaching back into the elongated body position.	Soft fins, Finger Paddles, Hand Paddles
7	½ RECOVERY DRILL (Fingers to ceiling)	Timing is critical on this drill and the swimmer should follow the pattern 'Hips / Shoulders / Hands'. The hand should recover thumb first in a relaxed state. Throughout this drill maintain a continuous rotational kick.	Soft fins
8	SINGLE ARM PULL	Do not allow short cuts of the above movement patterns on this drill. Always allow the Hips / Shoulders / Hands to complete their full sequence. This drill must be performed slowly with perfection and not rushed.	Pull bouy, Finger Paddles, Hand Paddles Inc Drag e.g. parachute
9	CATCHUP (AT HIPS)	All of the above considerations apply. Important to coach the individual errors, looking at body position, head position, Timing (Hips, shoulders, hand) Catch position (High elbow) Distance per stroke	Soft fins, hard fins, Finger Paddles, Hand paddles.
10	VERTICAL CATCHUP (FINS)	Always perform with FINS. Emphasise a strong leg kick is necessary. At the swimmers hand entry the vertical hand MUST reach up to the ceiling to promote and assist the swimmers rotation, otherwise the body position will remain flat throughout and the hips are more likely to sink.	FINS, Finger Paddles
11	SLOW MOTION SWIM	In slow motion common faults are exaggerated and should be more easily identified by the coach, pay particular attention to individual athletes on this drill. All of the previous considerations and principles apply. This drill should not be done with equipment as this aids their performance.	No equipment
12	POWER ON / OFF DRILL	Encourage the swimmer to apply power in the propulsive phase whilst also throwing the recovering arm forwards and down the pool to assist distance per stroke and forward momentum. This area is too often neglected.	Finger paddles, Hand paddles

There are variations and progressions of all of these skill elements. I would encourage everyone to explore, challenge and check within your coaching communities. This framework aims to guide and outline principles of how to achieve world class technique with club development and performance swimmers ensuring the quality of the technique helps smooth transitions through growth and athletic development. The swimmer should be encouraged to understand the relationship between swimming technique & land conditioning. This is not meant to be a measure of how good someone is, just a framework to assess your readiness to train Backstroke