



Masters Club Coach Accreditation Program

Sample Drills Handout

Updated April 2015

These drills are samples only provided to assist with basic stroke correction in
Masters Swimmers

Masters Club Coach Workshop – Sample Drills Handout

Drill name	FREESTYLE DRILLS Description	Application & Points to remember
Standing kick	Stand in deep water with one leg on a ledge hips perpendicular to the wall. Hold wall, point toe of kicking leg towards bottom of pool and kick from hips with a relaxed knee and floppy ankle.	Good for swimmers who are kicking from knees and have stiff ankles. Can use fins to exaggerate movement and get greater feel for water displacement.
Streamlined kick	With or without board / fins. Swimmer should “glue” ears to inside of arms with eyes down and hips up. Maintain streamlined position throughout. Stroke to breathe to side or lift head forward to breathe but return to streamline immediately after breath.	Keep shoulders still, kick from hips and brace abdominal muscles. Important to maintain streamlined position with legs up near surface of the water. Good for swimmers who struggle with sinking legs and “full body” kick. Isolate the kick from the hips down.
6 kick switch	Lateral kick with lower arm fully extended and head resting on extended arm. Other arm resting on side. Kick six kicks then dynamic change to other side with one full stroke. Works best with fins.	Excellent for learning to maintain streamlined body position during dynamic movement. Also good for even body roll to both sides. Caution should be taken with swimmers who have lower back injuries as any twisting can aggravate.
Corkscrew kick	Streamlined kick on front for 8 kicks then rotate to back for 8 kicks and continue “corkscrewing” down pool in same direction. Change direction on return lap.	Must keep arms extended and straight in streamlined position ie do not bend arms to turn body. Use shoulders and hips to rotate body. Excellent for learning to use core muscles to stabilise body and rotate during normal swimming stroke.
Single arm	Can be performed with or without a kickboard. Non-stroking arm extended out in front. Slow strokes with single arm incorporating breathing on single side every stroke. Should see a surge with each stroke. Can be performed with fins for beginner swimmers to help maintain buoyancy. Advanced swimmers can use hand paddles.	Excellent drill to ensure stroke balance. Particularly good for unilateral breathers to learn to breathe to non-preferred side. When performed with a kickboard for beginner swimmers it can be a useful drill to learn early breathing timing – cue when hand leaves board body begins to rotate to breathe.
Unco single arm	As above except non-stroking arm remains at side of body with hand on thigh. Breathe to stroking arm side. Advanced version requires breathing to non-stroking arm side. Can be performed with fins to aid buoyancy and speed. This is an advanced drill which beginner swimmers will find difficult to perform but can be useful for those with compromised shoulder flexibility.	Encourages good body rotation to both sides and requires early breathing timing. Strengthens stroking arm and encourages strong pull.
Lawnmower With thanks to Simon Redmond	Rotary movement of the forearms over one another to gain a feel for the water. Best performed with fins to start with.	Head out of water but low, arms bent at elbows with wrists aligned. Scull arms over one another quickly catching the water as you go. Follow up with normal swimming for an instant recognition of the catch phase.

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Catch-up	Can be performed with or without a kickboard. Both arms extended in streamline or onto back end of board. Each arm strokes full stroke back to full front extension position before next arm strokes. Should see a surge with each stroke. Can be performed with fins for beginner swimmers to help maintain buoyancy but kick must be relaxed. Advanced swimmers can use hand paddles.	Encourages full strokes on both sides. Swimmers can breathe every stroke or every second or third stroke but stroke rate should be slow and the emphasis on the catch and pull. Important to relax kick and ensure a surge is felt with every stroke confirming catch and pull are effective. Can also be performed with a fly kick. Head must return to neutral position if breathing every stroke before turning to other side to breathe.
Unco catch-up	As above but start position of arms is at sides as per unco single arm.	Head position is crucial – eyes down. Slow strokes. Great for swimmers who have a pause prior to hand entry or for those with a soft / passive hand entry.
$\frac{3}{4}$ Catch-up	As per normal catch-up except stroke changeover occurs $\frac{3}{4}$ through the stroke ie when the first stroking arm is $\frac{3}{4}$ through its cycle the other starts.	Good drill for swimmers who are swimming like a windmill. Teaches good stroke length and can help establish a stroke rhythm. Think Thorpe or Hackett.
Shoulder breathing	Press your cheek to your shoulder as the breathing arm strokes and “drag” the head out of the water early in the stroke for a full breath.	This is an excellent drill for late breathers ie MOST swimmers! Start by swimming slowly and with a deliberately long stroke. As the breathing arm prepares to stroke “glue” the cheek to the shoulder and as the shoulder opens out the head will follow ensuring early breathing.
Fists	Closed hands in either normal or catch-up stroke cycle. Should feel forearms gripping water.	Makes swimmer aware of importance of the whole arm in the stroke. If arm is too straight or too close to the body in the pull swimmer will not feel resistance along facing edge of forearm. Fists should just be closed not tightly clenched. Emphasis on feeling the water searching for optimum resistance. Progress to one hand in a fist and one open then swap. Finally, open both and feel how powerful your hands and forearms are.
Fist push	Advanced fist drill focussing on the final part of the underwater stroke – the oft forgotten push. Start stroke with closed fist and then open hand at back end of stroke and push out of the water.	This is more difficult than it sounds to get the timing right. Swim slowly to start with and exaggerate the open hand push. As you improve, swim a little faster and open the hand a little earlier.
Finger Drag	Hand recovery traces straight line from thigh along side of body to full extension with floppy relaxed wrist and fingertips dragging along surface of water. Can be performed as a normal stroke cycle or as a catch-up drill.	Should be performed slowly. Encourages high elbow recovery and good awareness of where hand is in recovery stage. Perfect remedy for swimmers who have straight arms or wide lateral recovery strokes. Encourages relaxed arm in recovery stage taking strain off arms and shoulders.

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Drill name	FREESTYLE DRILLS Description	Application & Points to remember
8-3-8	Similar to 6 kick switch except the lateral kick is extended to 8 and interspersed with 3 full strokes without breathing before changing sides. Works best with fins.	Very important to maintain good body position. Eyes down when stroking and head in line with body resting on extended arm when kicking. Great for learning bilateral breathing and for ensuring good stroke length. Also good for swimmers who are lifting to breathe rather than rotating or stroking too early when breathing.
4-3-4	As 8-3-8 but reduce the number of lateral kicks to 4.	Great companion drill to the 8-3-8. Slightly augmented breathing pause which makes it good for the beginner swimmer to feel comfortable and ensuring they get enough breath.
Shark fin / Popov	Lateral body position as per 8-3-8 drill. Upper arm slides up side of body with bent elbow to arm pit then back down. Then full stroke and swap sides. Can be extended to 2 or 3 fins before stroking.	Ensure elbow is aligned with body. Thumb to back, fingers to front. Excellent drill for swimmers experiencing shoulder impingement due to poor arm position in recovery. Also good for swimmers with poor core stability and late arm collapse in the recovery.
Polo	Head up and looking straight ahead. Head should not bob from side to side. Fins make this a lot easier but also possible without if you have a good kick and supple lower back.	Excellent drill for triathletes and open water swimmers to learn to keep swimming while looking for buoys in races. Also encourages wide, aggressive hand entry, flat forearm catch. Not a good idea for swimmers with neck or back injuries.
Speed drill	With fins, fast fly kick with race pace arms. One kick per arm rotation.	Excellent for building race stamina and fast stroke timing. Can only be done with a competent butterfly kick.
6 'n' 2	Dynamic drill best performed with fins to start with then move to without. One arm extended as per unco single arm drill. Kick for six beats then stroke two and breathe to side of extended arm. Head down, flat body position during kick with dynamic body roll during two strokes. Return to same position ie same arm extended. Repeat with other arm extended and breathing to corresponding side. Best performed with fins.	This is an advanced drill. It should be performed at speed and is perfect for fine tuning early and effective breathing timing, rapid stroke changeover, good kick rating, good stroke rating, controlled body roll...in short, this one does it all!!
Position 11 Catch	Start with arms extended at shoulder width (position 11). Complete one full arm stroke and return to pos 11, pause. Complete other arm full stroke pause. Small scull with arms extended and lift head to breathe. Repeat. Do very slowly.	Soft catch, firm pull. There is NO head rotation and the aim is to feel the extended gliding arm received the transfer of power generated from the stroking arm. Feel whether your head is moving – it should stay very still. Feel whether your extended arm deviates off the glide position.

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Drill name	BACKSTROKE DRILLS Description	Application & Points to remember
Streamline kick	With or without fins and with or without board. Option to have hands above head or if using board keeping board over knees. Maintain streamline position throughout.	Keep shoulders still, kick from hips and brace abdominal muscles. Important to maintain streamline position with legs up near surface of the water. Good for swimmers who struggle with sinking legs. Use board if bent knees are a problem. Or if no injuries present try kicking with a pull buoy to ensure the kick is generated from the hips not the knees.
Corkscrew kick	Streamline kick on front for 8 kicks then rotate to back for 8 kicks and continue “corkscrewing” down pool in same direction. Change direction on return lap. Fins handy for weaker swimmers.	Must keep arms extended and straight in streamlined position ie do not bend arms to turn body. Use shoulders and hips to rotate body. Excellent for learning to use core muscles to stabilise body and rotate during normal swimming stroke.
6 kick switch	Lateral kick with lower arm fully extended and head looking up at “dry” shoulder. Other arm resting on side. Kick six kicks then dynamic change to other side with one full stroke. Works best with fins.	Excellent for learning to maintain streamlined body position during dynamic movement. Also good for even body roll to both sides. Must keep head still and in correct position. Caution should be taken with swimmers who have lower back injuries as any twisting can aggravate injury.
Single arm	Best performed with arms starting beside body, hands on thigh. Stroke with single arm ensuring straight arm over water, bent arm catch under water. Can be performed with fins for beginner swimmers to help maintain buoyancy. Advanced swimmers can use paddles.	Excellent drill which focuses clearly on single sides to ensure stroke balance. Aim for shoulder rotation with head remaining still in neutral position ie looking straight up. Shoulder meets chin not the other way round. Can also be done using lane rope grab to work bent arm catch.
Catch-up	Starting position either arms extended over head or both arms by side. Each arm strokes full stroke back to starting position before next arm strokes. Should see a surge with each stroke. Can be performed with fins for beginner swimmers to help maintain buoyancy. Advanced swimmers can use hand paddles.	Encourages full strokes on both sides. Should see shoulder rotation and static head. Arms over head in starting position encourages good catch strength whilst arms by side for starting position encourages good recovery and hand entry. Use in combination for full stroke development.
8-3-8	Similar to 6 kick switch except the lateral kick is extended to 8 and interspersed with 3 full strokes with full body rotation. Works best with fins.	Must keep head still as per 6 kick switch and rotate shoulders with strokes.
4-3-4	As 8-3-8 but reduce the number of lateral kicks to 4.	Great companion drill to the 8-3-8.

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Drill name	BACKSTROKE DRILLS Description	Application & Points to remember
Recovery – no stroke	Straight arm recovery either to ½ way or complete arc.	Swimmer does not do underwater catch component of stroke. Good for swimmers who do not have straight arm recovery or are not entering the water at the correct position.
Periscope	This is the companion drill to the “Recovery-no stroke” drill. Straight arm recovery to vertical, back to hip then full stroke and pull, then repeat on other side.	This is done as a catch-up stroke. Swimmers need to concentrate on straight arm recovery and shoulder rotation. Best performed with fins but can be done without for stronger swimmers.
Marching Soldier	Above water strokes only. Complete full arc of recovery with both arms working in opposite directions.	Fins advisable except for very advanced swimmers. Core strength is critical and ensure head remains still. Slap water at top and bottom of stroke.
Naughty Dog	Keep arms in the water and complete only the bottom half of the stroke with an exaggerated slap at the end.	Aim to slap the palm down towards the bottom of the pool. Good for swimmers who finish with an upward push.
8/8	8 strokes freestyle followed by 8 strokes backstroke with no pause in between.	Increases rating on backstroke and helps to build core strength – good in combination with the corkscrew kick. Also good to prevent soft hand entry on backstroke.
Back flip	2 strokes free, 2 strokes back, 2 strokes free with no stopping. Progress to 3 strokes free, 2 strokes back so the direction of the flip changes.	Core strength is vital. The swimmer must think about the direction they are intending to travel rather than the direction of the rotation. Think about a noisy hand entry on the backstroke – no soft entries!
Coupling	Find a friend with clean feet! Fun way to test all elements of backstroke technique. This requires two people, one swimming and one being pushed. Swimmer 1 lies face up in the water with hands by side about a body length away from the wall. Swimmer 2 lines up their head with the feet of swimmer 1 and gently pushes off the wall and then starts backstroke.	Ensures no crossover of arms, good core strength, power in pull, head still, good hip kick and high hips. In short, this is the best all round backstroke drill and it’s fun as well! Try with fins to start with and then progress to no fins.
Speed drill	Backstroke arms with butterfly kick, with or without fins.	Every arm stroke perform a fly kick. Start slow and build pace to as fast as you can maintain. Great for increasing rating and building strength.

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Drill name	BREASTSTROKE DRILLS Description	Application & Points to remember
Kicking on back	Arms either by sides or extended over head. Bring ankles to bottom not knees to chest. Knees should not break surface of the water. Whip kick to straight leg toe pointed glide.	Great for swimmers who are crumpling and bringing knees to chest. Can be done with a pull buoy for swimmers whose knees are too far apart although not to be done by swimmers with any history of knee injury or poor flexibility.
Kicking – 3,2,1	With or without board, arms extended in front eyes down, kick 3 then breathe, kick 2 then breathe, kick 1 then breathe and repeat.	Aim to maintain horizontal body position while kicking and eyes looking straight down even when breathing. Lift shoulders to breathe not head.
Heel taps	Either on back or front, hands on your bottom and aim to touch heels to hands.	Ensures full bend on kick and also good for ensuring ankles to bottom not knees to chest. Knees should remain close together. Can be difficult for older swimmers or those with poor flexibility.
Sculling	Stomach down, arms in front. Continuous sculling motion. Can use pull buoy and/or fins for weaker swimmers.	Determines whether swimmers have an understanding of how to grip the water.
Balls!	Scull hands around imaginary tennis ball then increase size to basketball, then beach ball.	Be conscious of not sweeping arms too wide. For larger balls scoop under the ball rather than round the sides. Ensure hips pop up once the pull occurs.
Breaststroke arms / dolphin kick	Fins to be worn. Two kicks one pull.	Great for establishing correct timing and correct technique on arms.
3,2,1 with pull	As per 3,2,1, kicking exercise but with a full arm pull after each 3,2,1. Repeat.	Ensure correct head position while kicking ie eyes down. Good for breathing timing and building leg strength.
Extended glide	Full stroke holding glide position for count of 2.	Glide position should be hands together, eyes down, feet together and toes pointed. “Canoe position”.
Ankle snap	An additional component to the extended glide. Ensure ankles are snapped together at the conclusion of the kick.	Ensures the canoe position is achieved with the adductors (inner thighs) working hard to draw the legs together.
Separation Drill	Complete a full arm pull and then a complete kick.	For swimmers having difficulty with their timing start off with complete separation of the two components. Complete a full arm pull and return to the straight arm glide position before starting the kick. Once achieved progress to less of a separation with the kick starting just as the hands return to the glide position and then finally to the smooth transition of correct breaststroke technique.

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Drill name	BREASTSTROKE DRILLS Description	Application & Points to remember
1,2,3,ok	All about hands. Start with fists. Then add index finger, then peace sign (2 fingers), then index, pinky and thumb (3 fingers), then three outer fingers and index and thumb in a circle.	Facilitates awareness of hand positioning and ensures correct pull and recovery technique. Alternate each step with a few strokes of normal breaststroke and swim slowly to start with.
High Heels	Slide feet to the surface at the end of the kick and then draw feet into the water in an arc towards your bottom with no splash. No drop splash!	An advanced drill for swimmers who are not getting their feet high enough at the end of the stroke and losing hip height as a result. Very important to remember to draw the feet towards the bottom and ease into the water without producing a splash. Also encourages good use of the muscles in the upper hamstring and bottom region.
Double stroke breathing	Breathe only every second stroke. Non-breathing stroke, eyes should remain down but shoulders still lift. Think about the direction you are aiming to travel down the pool and not lifting to breathe.	Excellent drill for swimmers who are lifting too vertically with an open chest when they breathe. Can progress to breathing every stroke once correct breathing/ body position is achieved. Remember to keep hips high so only lift as far as you can before your hips start to drop. Tailor the lift to suit your flexibility.
Speed drill	With fins, fast freestyle kick with racing pace arms.	Excellent for building race stamina and fast stroke timing.
3 fly , 3 breast	3 strokes fly, 3 strokes breast.	Great for increasing the rating of breaststroke and getting a powerful start to the pull. Also helps with legal and helpful body undulation. Try to keep the rating up. Obviously only possible with swimmers who can do butterfly but conversely it is also a good drill for swimmers learning butterfly who feel comfortable doing breaststroke.
3 free, 3 breast	3 strokes freestyle with straight arms and exaggerated hand entry. On third stroke leave hand out in front and meet with arm of fourth stroke. Lean into the first pull of the breaststroke. Do three breaststroke cycles and return to free.	By swimming with straight arms and throwing the arms into the water you set up the first breaststroke pull with power and an undulation that can be hard to achieve with a push off straight into breaststroke.

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Drill name	BREASTSTROKE DRILLS Description	Application & Points to remember
Band kick	Using a physio band or swim band positioned just above the knees, complete stroke cycle concentrating on keeping knees closer together.	The band needs to be tight enough to restrict knee separation. Swimmer should feel the resistance on each kick cycle and can adjust the tightness of the band to suit. NOT to be used with evidence of knee injury.
Body dolphin	Arms straight out in front, eyes down, small dolphin kick initiated from sternum down to toes concentrating on keeping arms still.	This is an excellent drill for both fly and breast and ensures that the dolphin kick is isolated to the body. Assists with glide maximisation. Can also be done with hand paddles to assist with keeping arms still. Palms face to the bottom of the pool, arms stay straight and high. Think long and strong.
Wall kick	You will need a side lane. Set yourself up so one foot is touching the wall at widest part of the kick. Continue kicking along the wall, reaching your foot to the wall and pushing the ball of your foot onto the wall each cycle.	Best done slowly, with or without a kickboard. Reverse direction and do other foot then move away from the wall and emulate the grip motion with the water.

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Drill name	BUTTERFLY DRILLS Description	Application & Points to remember
Vertical kick	With fins and body upright in water. Start small and gentle and work up to a larger more powerful body undulation starting at the sternum.	Legs together, arms by side either extended along surface of water or by side of body. Kick generated from chest down not just from knees. Think about a wave flowing down the body from the chest to the toes.
Sternum “kicking”	Learn to initiate the dolphin kick from your sternum or chest not your knees. A drill for all standards but a must for beginner. With fins.	Push off the wall, eyes down and arms by side and press gently down on your chest. As your chest lowers your hips should start to rise and as your chest rises back up your hips then follow down and the wave continues down the body. Keep the “frequency” or height of the wave small. Introduce breathing without disrupting the rhythm. Progress to “Kicking 4, 3, 2” drill below.
Kicking – 4,3,2	Standard dolphin kick with arms extended in front eyes down, kick 4 then breathe, kick 3 then breathe, kick 2 then breathe and repeat. With fins for beginners, more advanced swimmers can do without. Kick should be initiated from chest and not from knees.	Aim to maintain horizontal body position while kicking and eyes looking straight down except when breathing. Try and keep relatively still and isolated from the undulation of the rest of the body.
Kicking – front, side, back	As above but changing from front to side to back to side etc With fins for beginners, more advanced swimmers can do without.	Ensure streamline is maintained in various positions and kick always starts from chest.
Zombies	Dolphin kick on back with arms raised straight up out of the water. Fins a must!	Push off the wall on back and arms in streamlined position above head. Do a few dolphin kicks to get started then raise arms above water directly above shoulders like a “zombie”. Kick fast and hard to keep your head above water. If two arms up is too hard you can do it with one arm and build stamina before doing two arms. Hard work but very rewarding.
Dolphin kick on back	Arms extended above head, head in correct streamline position. Knees together and dolphin kick underwater. Works best with fins.	Good for building abdominal strength and for start and turn practice.
Butterfree	Two beat dolphin kick with single freestyle arm stroke. Breathe to the side as per freestyle. Can be done as a single arm drill to start with and then progress to both arms.	This is a transitional drill for those learning fly that can really help to cement the timing of the two kicks – one at the hand entry and one at the hand exit. Once established move onto the single arm fly drill below.

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Drill name	BUTTERFLY DRILLS Description	Application & Points to remember
Single arm fly	Two beat dolphin kick with single arm throw and catch. Breathe to side as per freestyle although ok to breathe to the front as per fly. Non-stroking arm extended out in front. More advanced swimmers can keep non-stroking arm by side or for swimmers with reduced shoulder flexibility.	Good for building strength and timing kick with arms. Do <u>not</u> proceed to double-arm stroke until timing has been established.
4,3,2 with pull	As per “Kicking 4, 3, 2” drill but with a full arm pull after each 4, 3, 2. Repeat.	Ensure correct head position while kicking ie eyes down. Good for breathing timing and building leg strength and stamina. The final two kicks in each cycle should be timed with the arm cycle ie one at the hand entry and one at the hand exit.
Butterfly 2-2-2	With a two beat dolphin kick stroke with one arm twice breathing every stroke, then other arm x 2 then both arms together x 2. Good with fins.	Breathe every stroke with single arms then head down no breath for both arms together. Excellent for learning to breathe every second stroke and build general fly timing and strength. Be conscious of not over sculling the stationary arm in the single arm phase and keeping it high in the water. Progress the drill to 3-3-3, 4-4-4 etc
Thumb drag	Repeat the butterfly 2-2-2, drill but with a thumb drag throughout the recovery phase.	This drill helps with low and wide recovery arms keeping the overall undulation compact and the recovery faster, smoother and more relaxed. At the start of the recovery phase reach towards the lane ropes with your middle finger and drag only your thumb through the water so your palms are facing backwards. Only drag your thumbs and not your palm or other fingers.
Dive fly	Throw arms under water at start of stroke ie out in front and kick for 2-4 beats underwater, surface for stroke and dive back underwater at end of throw. Best with fins.	Great for ensuring full body undulation and for getting head to enter water early ie before hands enter water, at end of recovery.
Speed drill	With fins, fast freestyle kick with race pace arms.	Excellent for building race stamina and fast stroke timing. Experiment with breathing every 1, 2, 3 strokes.
Sally’s Aerobic Fly	For those who want to swim long distances but can’t maintain a high rating. Two quick, one slow.	Complete two strokes fly at “normal” rating followed by one long glide fly stroke.