

Swim TO Stay Safe, Swim Safe

Stay, Play, and Learn at Home Swim: Intermediate to Advanced – Lesson One Part B

Today's Lesson: Back Crawl and Flutter Kick

[Back Crawl Arm Positions and Movement](#)

[Back Crawl Pull](#)

[Let's see how back crawl looks in water](#)

[Flutter Kick](#)

Swim Level: Intermediate-to-Advanced

Learn-to-Swim Levels: Preschool 3 to 4, Ultra 3 to 5, Youth and Adult 2

Safety Reminders: Caregivers should ensure that children **are supervised and never left unattended in and around water**. Adults and youth who practice any water activities should, also, **have a buddy close by**. Bathtub and shower **safety measures** should be **adhered to at all times**.

For all skills and drills, ensure that the area is free from obstruction and be aware of objects and people around you at all times. Caregivers should ensure that children are properly supervised at all times.

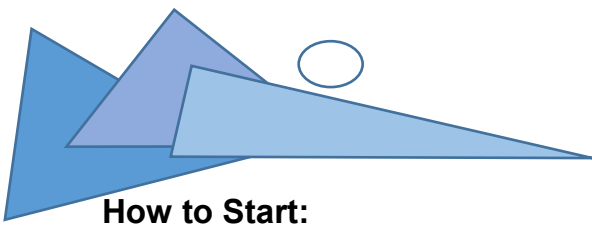
Remember that movement should be comfortable and should not cause any pain or discomfort in the joints or limbs. If discomfort is felt, please modify the movement so that it is comfortable for you. It is highly recommended to stretch prior to beginning any movement exercises.

Swim Goal: Back Crawl Arm Positions and Movement

Back crawl is similar to front crawl, only upside down because it is swum on the back. This makes it easier to breath, but harder to see where you are going. It is the only competitive stroke swum on the back.

Swimmers who begin to learn back crawl are most often already comfortable floating and gliding on their back, and have learned the basic arm movements of front crawl.

To start learning back crawl, we start with practicing the arm movements, focusing on one arm at a time. The goal is to make a large circle with your arms while standing.

**How to Start:**

Complete as many activities below that match your comfort, age and skill level or that of your child's.

Materials:

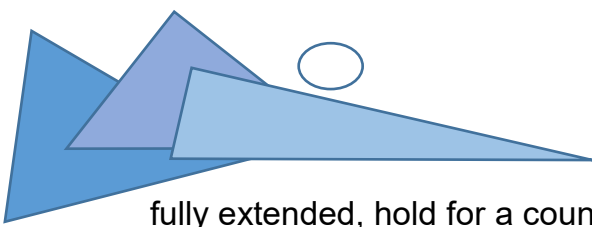
- An area free from obstruction

Steps:

1. Practice moving each arm in a large circle in the opposite direction of front crawl arms.
 - a. Start with your right arm and keep your left arm by your side.
 - b. Standing in an area free from obstructions, put your right arm straight up in the air so that your bicep (the top part of your arm above your elbow) is beside your right ear. Use a mat to assist with balance, if desired.
 - c. Begin making a large circle with your right arm by bringing your arm backwards, then down so that it is at your side and your thumb now touches your hip or top of your thigh.
 - d. Now bring your right arm forward to complete the circle, keeping your arm straight.
 - e. Stop once it is back in the starting position straight up in the air with your bicep beside your ear.
 - f. Switch arms and repeat Steps 1 a-to-e with your left arm.
2. Practice moving both arms in large circles, at the same time.
 - a. Repeat Step 1, moving both arms at the same time, continuously.
 - b. Both arms should be making large circles.
 - c. Ensure that you are brushing your hip or top of the thigh with your thumbs as you pass it.
3. Practice moving both arms at the same time, in windmill motion.
 - a. Repeat Step 2 except try alternating your arms' positions, so that when one arm is up by your ear, the other one is down by your side.
 - b. Try moving them continuously.
 - c. Ensure that when one arm is up by your ear the other is down by your side, like a windmill.

Progressions:

- Add in proper body positioning: As you alternate your arms, move your body (if you were on the floor, or in water this would be a rolling motion) so that your left hip is more forward when your right arm is up.
- Focus on the glide: As you alternate your arms, roll your body so that your left hip is more forward when the right arm is up and vice-versa. Each time the arm is



fully extended, hold for a count of 3 and then alternate your arm, holding again for a count of 3.

- Practice back crawl roll: Stand in front of a wall with your arms by your side. Raise your right shoulder to your ear, pull the shoulder back and down, tilting your body to the right pushing your left hip forward a bit and then touch the wall with your right hand. Repeat on the other side, then continuously rotating side-to-side.
- Repetition is the key to ensuring movements become more ingrained and your body is able to perform them more naturally. Repeat all movements at least 10 times before moving on to the next step or progression.

Variations:

- Make smaller circles that do not come right up to your ear, or bend your elbows slightly if flexibility or mobility of the arms are limited.
- To incorporate a core strength workout for youth and adults:
 - Try on the floor
 - Try balancing on an exercise ball with legs and feet touching the ground, or lifted off the ground.
 - Try balancing with the lower part of your body on the bed and the upper body off the edge of the bed.
- For older children, youth and adults, incorporate some knowledge principles to provide greater understanding. See below for some 'Did You Know?' tips and encourage the older learner to expand what they know about the science of swimming by visiting the library or looking online.
- Remember that children learn best through play. Use games and songs to encourage children to copy and interact with a caring adult. Some game and song selections are listed below:

Did You Know?

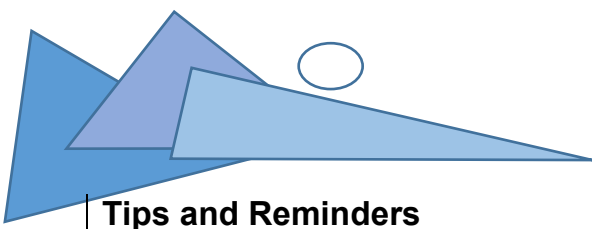
As your face is out of the water for back crawl, you can breathe whenever you want. However, the better your form is the easier it will be to breathe.

Tips and Reminders

Time the rhythm of your breaths to the rhythm of your stroke for a faster swim.

Did You Know?

Like front crawl, the arm movements provide most of the forward motion for back crawl. When your arm is in the water it is working at propelling you forward. If it is behind you, your arm is recovering and getting ready to start working again when it hits the water.



Tips and Reminders

To swim faster, ensure that your arms are always opposite each other so that one arm is working while the other is recovering.

Swim Goal: Back Crawl Pull

Now that we have learned the basic arm movement for back crawl, let's focus on the pull motion of back crawl, to provide better propulsion through the water.

Back crawl arms are often taught with straight arms first to help master the circular, opposite, windmill arm movement. Once you are comfortable with the basic large circle, we add in the bent elbow of the arm pull. This makes the overall arm movement more comfortable and efficient.

How to Start:

Complete as many activities below that match your comfort, age and skill level

Materials:

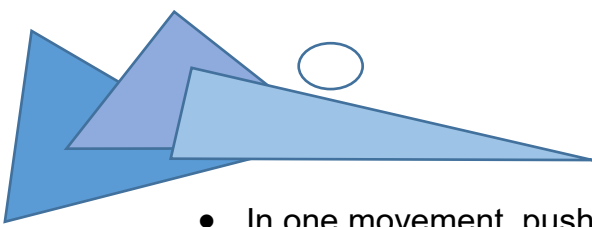
- An area free from obstructions
- Bath tub
- Towel

Steps:

1. Practice the arm pull movement with each arm
 - a. Lie on the floor with your right arm up by your ear and your left arm down at your side.
 - b. Slide your right hand down so that your thumb touches your shoulder and your palm is facing up, while keeping your arm against the floor. Your right elbow will now be pointed out to the side.
 - c. Now turn your hand so that your palm faces towards your feet. Your thumb should still be beside your shoulder.
 - d. In one movement, extend your right arm down towards your feet, so that both arms are now down at your sides.
 - e. Bring right arm straight up in the air and then back to the starting position beside your ear.
 - f. Switch arms and repeat Steps 1 a-to-e with your left arm.

Progressions:

- While lying on your back in the bath tub, practice pushing the water.
 - Start with your thumb by you shoulder with fingers pointed up and palm towards your feet.



- In one movement, push the water towards your feet by keeping your hand moving down your side until it is extended by your side.
- Repetition is the key to ensuring movements become more ingrained and your body is able to perform them more naturally. Repeat all movements at least 10 times before moving on to the next step or progression.

Variations:

- Remember that children learn best through play. Use games and songs to encourage children to copy and interact with a caring adult.
- For older children, youth and adults, incorporate some knowledge principles to provide greater understanding. See below for some 'Did You Know?' tips and encourage the older learner to expand what they know about the science of swimming by visiting the library or looking online.

Did You Know?

The conservation of momentum tells us that the momentum you give your body, going forward, is the same as the momentum you give the water, pulling backward. That implies that you need to pull as much water backward as you possibly can with each stroke to move.

Tips and Reminders

Cupping your hand and keeping your elbow high as you pull back helps your forearm work as a kind of paddle, pulling the water and propelling you forward.

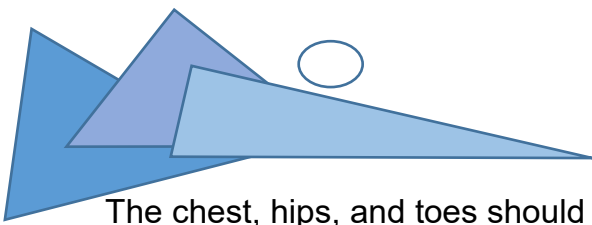
Swim Goal: Let's see how back crawl looks in water

Let's put all the steps from above together and review the back crawl stroke and how it would look in the water.

Figure 1 Body and Head Position



The head should maintain a relaxed position with eyes looking up towards the ceiling.



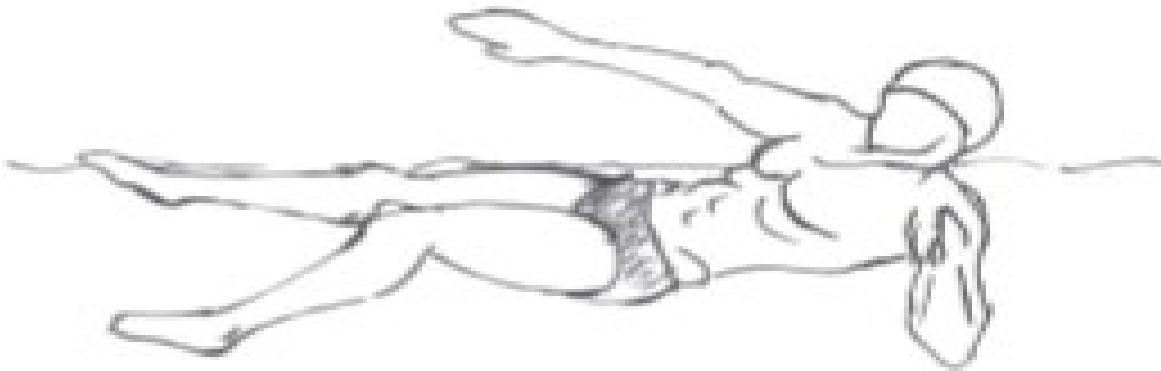
The chest, hips, and toes should be at the surface, and the body and legs should roll along the longitudinal (length-wise) axis.

Figure 2 Breathing



Breathing is rhythmic and relaxed.

Figure 3 Arm Pull



The arm extends straight up when it is out of the water.

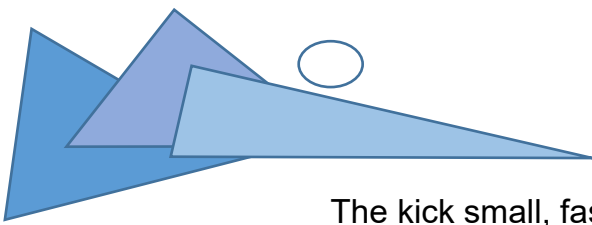
The alternate arm is pressing downwards towards the feet as the body rotates during each stroke.

One arm should come out of the water at about the same time as the other enters it.

Figure 4 Kicking



The kick is a rhythmic kick which originates from the hips.



The kick small, fast and near the surface of the water.

Swim Goal: Flutter Kick

In front and back crawl, the primary purpose of the flutter kick is to stabilize your body making it easier to keep the body close to the surface of the water to rotate with the stroke.

How to Start:

Complete as many activities below that match your comfort, age and skill level or that of your child's.

Materials:

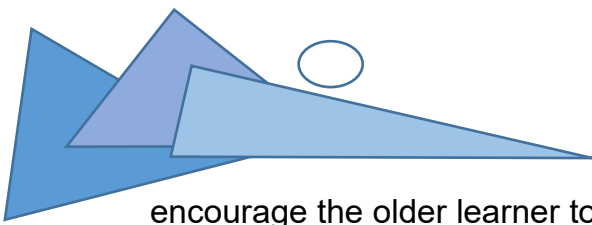
- An area free from obstructions
- Chair
- Bath tub
- Towel

Steps:

1. Practice flutter kick sitting on chair.
 - a. Sit on a chair and extend your legs straight out in front of you so that your legs are touching one another.
 - b. Relax the muscles in your legs and feet.
 - c. Begin by moving your legs as one unit up and down one at a time, alternating them.
 - d. Legs should naturally bend a little bit, but are generally straight.
 - e. Kick up and down for 30 sec to a minute then repeat
2. Try step 1 with toes pointed.
3. Sit in a bathtub filled with water and try the exercise. Focus on keeping toes and knees under the water while kicking. Experiment with slow and fast kicks.

Variations:

- Try making big kicking motions, then try making smaller one. Which type of kick do you think will keep your body more stable when swimming?
- To incorporate a core strength workout for youth and adults:
 - Try it on the floor, first on your front and then on your back.
 - Try balancing with the upper part of your body on the bed and the lower body off the edge of the bed.
 - Try balancing your core on an exercise ball using your hands to stabilize the upper body.
- For older children, youth and adults, incorporate some knowledge principles to provide greater understanding. See below for some 'Did You Know?' tips and



encourage the older learner to expand what they know about the science of swimming by visiting the library or looking online.

- Remember that children learn best through play. Use games and songs to encourage children to copy and interact with a caring adult. Some game and song selections are listed below:

Did You Know?

The water at the surface of water is less resistant than the water below, so swimmers are more buoyant at this level. To maintain their buoyancy, swimmers should keep their hips and shoulders level by slightly pressing their upper body down. The upper body is naturally more buoyant than the lower, because of its greater surface area and it's where our lungs are located.

Tips and Reminders

Keep flutter kicking continuously to help keep your hips level with your shoulders and to stay at the surface of the water allowing you to swim faster.

Next Lesson: Elementary Back Stroke, Breast Stroke, Whip Kick

Front crawl and back crawl combined with flutter kick are the most well-known techniques used to propel yourself through water. Look for our next lesson to learn more swim techniques to move through water and the advantages of knowing varying swim strokes.

Continue to follow us on the path to learning how to swim.