

Swim TO Stay Safe, Swim Safe

Stay, Play, and Learn at Home Swim: Intermediate to Advanced – Lesson Two

Today's Lesson: Whip Kick, Breast Stroke and Elementary Back Stroke

[Build your swim terms knowledge base](#)

[Whip Kick](#)

[Breaststroke Arms](#)

[Breaststroke Breathing](#)

[Breaststroke Coordination](#)

[Elementary Backstroke Arms](#)

[Elementary Backstroke Coordination](#)

Swim Level: Intermediate-to-Advanced

Learn-to-Swim Levels: Ultra 4 to 9, Youth and Adult 2 and 3

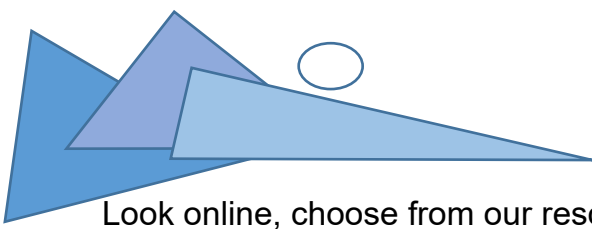
Safety Reminders: Caregivers should ensure that children **are supervised and never left unattended in and around water**. Adults and youth who practice any water activities should, also, **have a buddy close by**. Bathtub and shower **safety measures** should be **adhered to at all times**.

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.

Knowledge Goal: Word Challenge

Front crawl and back crawl are competitive strokes and when performed efficiently a swimmer can move quite fast but they both expend a lot of energy compared to the two strokes that we are focussing on in this lesson. Breaststroke and elementary back stroke allow a swimmer to take a more relaxed approach to movement through water.



Look online, choose from our resource page, or create your own word find, crossword or similar word game using some or all of following words

Pull	Horizontal	Kick
Breathe	Smooth	Together
Glide	Exhale	Whip Kick

What swim stroke are these words describing? Revisit these words at the end of this lesson and see if you were right.

Swim Goal: Whip Kick

Whip kick is often compared to the way a frog jumps except that your knees are kept closer together. It is the kick used to generate forward motion in the breast stroke, a popular stroke with all levels of swimmers.

How to Start:

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

Materials:

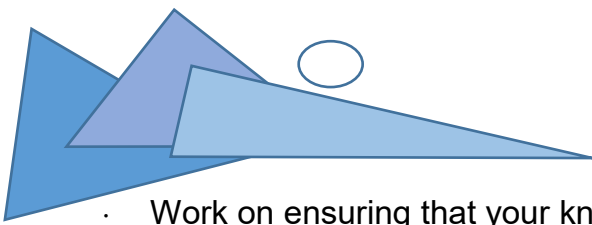
- An area free from obstructions
- Mat (optional)
- Chair (four-legged or sit on the edge of the chair so that there is space between your legs and the chair)
- Bed

Steps:

1. Sit in a chair and extend your legs straight out in front of you. Your legs should be together, feet flexed with toes pointing towards the ceiling.
2. Bend your knees (tucking legs under chair), keeping your legs together and feet still flexed.
3. Make a V shape with your feet by keeping your feet together and pointing your toes outward. Your knees should, also, remain together as much as possible.
4. Whip your feet around in a circular motion, bringing them back to the starting position.

Progressions:

- Work on ensuring that your feet are flexed and your knees are kept close together.



- Work on ensuring that your knees are just outside of your hips when performing the circular motion.
- Work on ensuring that your ankles are just outside of knees when performing the circular motion.
- Work on ensuring that you whip the legs at the same time, and that your legs recover to glide position (legs straight out) at the same time.
- 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:

- To incorporate a core strength workout for youth and adults:
 - Try on the floor on your stomach.
 - Try balancing with the upper part of your body on the bed and the lower body off the edge of the bed. Try on your back or on your stomach.
 - Try balancing on an exercise ball with legs and feet touching the ground, or lifted off the ground. Try on your back or your stomach.
- 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 power and propulsion of the whip kick comes from the in step of the feet pushing back while squeezing your legs.

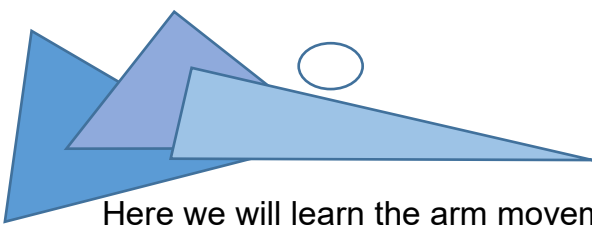
Tips and Reminders

Try and touch your bum with your feet while keeping your knees in line with the rest of your body position.

Flexed feet turned outward on a forty-five degree angle during the whip kick mimics a hydrofoil which allows for greater speed.

Swim Goal: Breaststroke Arms

Breast stroke is the slowest of the four competitive strokes but often the easiest for beginner adults to learn because it allows you to keep your head above water at all times.



Here we will learn the arm movements for breaststroke.

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
- Mat (optional)
- Bed
- Bathtub

Steps:

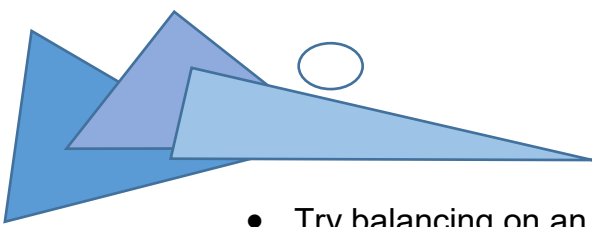
1. Sit in a chair and extend your arms straight out in front of you with your palms together.
2. Turn your hands so that your palms face the floor and bring your hands down towards your body, bending your elbows until your hands are in front of your shoulders.
3. Bring your hands together, close to your body so that your fingertips.
4. With palms together, extend your arms straight out back into the starting position. The arms' full motion should look like a heart or a diamond.

Progressions:

- Work on ensuring that your feet are flexed and your knees are kept close together.
- Work on ensuring that your knees are just outside of your hips when performing the circular motion.
- Work on ensuring that your ankles are just outside of knees when performing the circular motion.
- Work on ensuring that you whip the legs at the same time, and that your legs recover to glide position (legs straight out) at the same time.
- 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:

- To incorporate a core strength workout for youth and adults:
 - Try on the floor on your stomach.
 - Try balancing with the upper part of your body on the bed and the lower body off the edge of the bed. Try on your back or on your stomach.



- Try balancing on an exercise ball with legs and feet touching the ground, or lifted off the ground. Try on your back or your stomach.
- 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.

Swim Goal: Breaststroke Breathing

Although the breaststroke does allow a person to keep their head above water, the most efficient way to perform the stroke is by having the head face down in the water when in the glide position.

How to Start:

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

Materials:

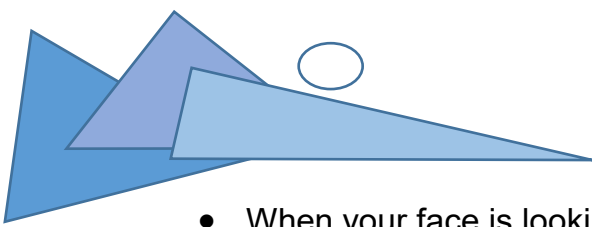
- An area free from obstructions
- Mat (optional)
- Chair
- Bed

Bathtub Steps:

1. Sit in a chair and extend your arms straight out in front of you with your palms together.
2. Bend your upper body so that your face is looking down at the floor and your upper arms (biceps) are by your ears.
3. Turn your hands so that your palms face the floor and bring your hands down towards your body, bending your elbows until your hands are in front of your shoulders.
4. At the same time bring your head up and look forward.
5. Bring your hands together, close to your body so that your fingertips touch.
6. With palms together, extend your arms straight out back into the starting position.
7. At the same time bring your head back down in line with your body so that your face is looking down at the floor again and your upper arms (biceps) are by your ears. The arms' full motion should look like a heart or a diamond.

Progressions:

- Work on breath control:



- When your face is looking at the floor (step 2), hold your breath for 3 seconds.
 - When you bring your head up and your face is looking forward (step 4), take a breath.
 - When you return to the starting position with your face looking at the floor (step 7), exhale.
 - Try practicing breaststroke breathing in a bathtub. Exhale underwater by blowing bubbles.
- 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:

- To incorporate a core strength workout for youth and adults:
 - Try on the floor on your stomach.
 - Try balancing with the upper part of your body on the bed and the lower body off the edge of the bed.
 - Try balancing on an exercise ball with legs and feet touching the ground, or lifted off the ground.
- 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?

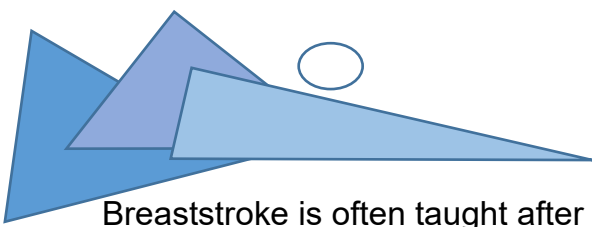
In breaststroke breathing, it is the arm movement combined with the whip kick that provides the power to allow the body to naturally lift out of water to take a breath.

Tips and Reminders

Keep the head and neck in alignment with the spine when taking a breath for maximum stroke efficiency.

Swim Goal: Breaststroke Coordination

Timing and coordination is key to the breaststroke. Now that we have learned the whip kick legs, breaststroke arms and breathing, let's put them all together.



Breaststroke is often taught after front and back crawl to children. It is more difficult to learn for the young beginner because correct timing between the arm movement and kick is essential.

The movement will follow this sequence: Pull, Breath, Kick and Glide

How to Start:

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

Materials:

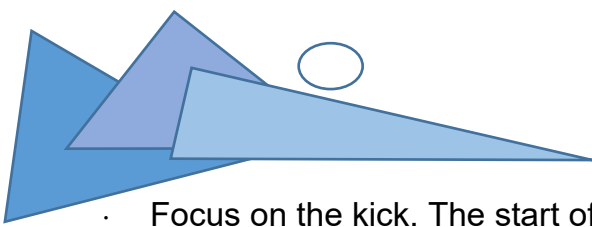
- An area free from obstructions
- Mat (optional)
- Bed

Steps:

1. In an area free from obstructions, lie on your stomach, on the floor in the glide position with arms above your head, biceps by your ear and palms close together, legs straight together, and face looking down at the floor.
2. Slide your forearms along the floor towards your shoulders, and lift your head up at the same time so that you are looking forward. Your forearms should remain on the ground, slightly supporting your body with your hands just under your shoulders.
3. Bring your hands together, close to your body, so that your fingertips touch.
4. Keep your arms and hands in that position then flex your feet and bend your knees to bring your heels up towards your bum. Your legs should still be together.
5. Make a V shape with your feet by keeping your feet together and pointing your toes outward. Your knees should, also, remain together as much as possible.
6. With palms together, extend your arms straight out back into the starting position while you whip your feet around in a circular motion bringing them straight out back in to the starting position.
7. At the same time bring your head back down in line with your body so that your face is looking down at the floor again and your biceps are by your ears. You are now back in glide position.

Progressions:

- Focus on the pull. The pull is when your arms are moving towards your shoulders and you are pulling water towards you providing a natural lift of your head.
- Focus on the breath. Inhale while looking forward when your head is lifted out of water.



- Focus on the kick. The start of the kick motion happens after the arm movement, as the arms are moving through its recovery phase back to the starting position.
- Focus on the glide. At the end of the movement hold the glide position for 3 seconds before repeating. Exhale when looking down at the floor, in water blow bubbles out.
- It can be helpful to repeat the words as you do them: pull, breath, kick, glide, 1, 2, 3. Then repeat.
- 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:

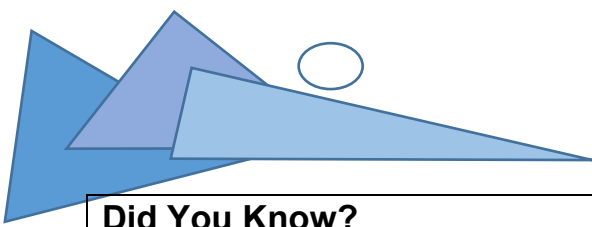
- To incorporate a core strength workout for youth and adults:
 - Try on the floor on your stomach.
 - Try balancing with the upper part of your body on the bed and the lower body off the edge of the bed.
 - Try balancing on an exercise ball with legs and feet touching the ground, or lifted off the ground.
- 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?

In breaststroke the propulsion comes from the kick but the speed over long distances is highly dependent on an effective glide position. A common mistake in the breaststroke timing is to pull and kick at the same time resulting in very slow forward motion through the water. As competitive breaststroke swimmer do not hold long glides, the coordination of the arms and legs is crucial to maintain speed.

Tips and Reminders

For breaststroke timing, remember to pull, breath, kick, glide, count to 3 and repeat.



Did You Know?

In fluid dynamics, laminar flow states that as fluid, water for swimmers, passes by an object, the molecules split to either side. If the water speeds up or slows down on one side as it passes the object, it will cause uneven pressure on the object.

Laminar flow is smooth.

Tips and Reminders

An efficient glide position with your head face down in the water and your arms extended out in front with hands together will allow water to pass smoothly by. The more streamlined and narrow your body is, the faster and more efficiently it will move through the water.

Swim Goal: Elementary Backstroke Arms

The elementary backstroke is one of the slower strokes and is considered very relaxing because it doesn't use as much energy as the competitive strokes. This stroke allows a swimmer to move through the water while keeping the face relatively dry.

Swimmers who are comfortable floating on their back are ready to learn elementary backstroke. Elementary backstroke uses whip kick and synchronous arm movements to propel the swimmer through water. We will learn the arm movements here.

How to Start:

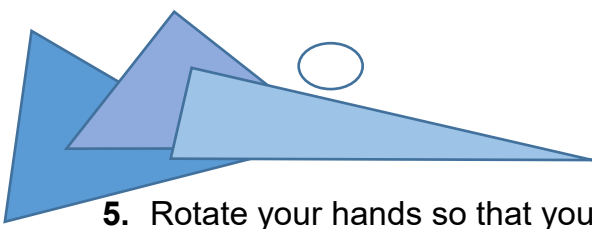
Complete as many activities below that match your comfort, age and skill level or that of your child's.

Materials:

- An area free from obstruction
- Mat (optional)
- Bed

Steps:

1. In an area free from obstructions, stand with your arms by your side with your thumbs touching your hip or the top of your thigh.
2. Trace your thumbs up the sides of your body from your thigh until they are touching your shoulders.
3. Rotate your hands so that your palms are facing forward while keeping your thumbs close to your body.
4. Extend your arms straight up above your head until your upper arms (biceps) are by your ear. You should look the letter 'I' in a glide position.



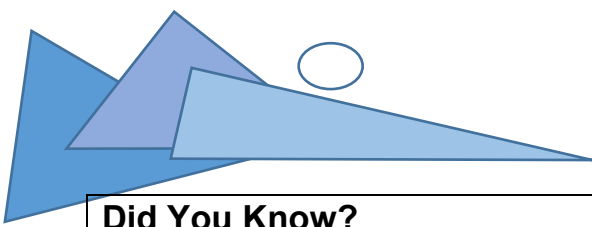
5. Rotate your hands so that your palms face out to each side.
6. Keeping arms straight bring them both down, out to the side and stop when they are level with your shoulders, palms facing the floor. You should look like the letter 'T'.
7. Bend your elbows and bring your hands towards your body until your thumbs are touching your shoulders.
8. Trace your thumbs down the sides of your body as your push your palms down to return them to the starting position, arms by your side, thumbs touching your hips or the top of your thigh.
9. The arm movement should like a key hole or should look like a question mark on each side.

Progressions:

- Practice the exercise lying on your back on the floor.
 - Focus on keeping your arms in contact with the floor as much as possible.
- When performing this movement in water, the goal is keep your arms underwater at all times while keeping your face above water.
- 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:

- To incorporate a core strength workout for youth and adults:
 - Try balancing with the upper part of your body on the bed and the lower body off the edge of the bed.
 - Try balancing on an exercise ball with legs and feet touching the ground, or lifted off the ground.
- 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?

Circular stroke patterns are more effective than back and forth movements. Circular movements don't have to overcome either dynamic or static inertia.

Tips and Reminders

Ensure that your palms face the direction that your arm is moving for maximum propulsion.

Swim Goal: Elementary Backstroke Coordination

Elementary backstroke is easier to learn than breaststroke because the arm and leg movements are performed at the same time and in the same direction.

The kick for elementary backstroke is the whip kick performed on your back. Let's put the arm and leg movements together.

How to Start:

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

Materials:

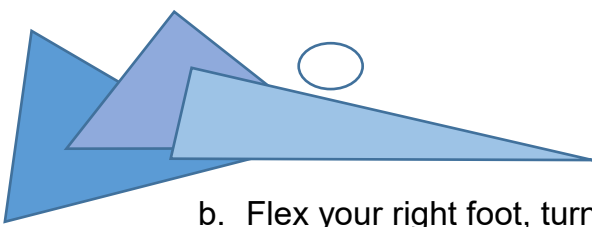
- An area free from obstructions
- Wall or chair
- Mat (optional)
- Bed

Steps:

1. Stand with your left side next to a wall (or use the back of a chair) and place your hand on the wall. Your right arm should be at your side with your thumb at your hip or the top of your thigh.
2. At the same time:
 - a. Trace your thumb up your right side from your thigh to your shoulder and then rotate your hand so your palm is facing forward.
 - b. Bend your right knee and bring the heel of your right foot up to your bum. Keep your knees together.

You should now be standing on your left foot with your right leg bent and right thumb by your shoulder.

3. At the same time:
 - a. Extend your right arm straight up above your head so that your upper arm is by your right ear.



- b. Flex your right foot, turn your ankle so that your toes are point outward on a 45 degree angle and move your foot just outside hip width. Keep your knees together as much as possible.

Your right arm should now be straight up while your right leg is bent with your right foot off to the side of your hip.

4. Rotate your right hand so that your palm faces out to the side.
5. At the same time:
 - a. Draw a question mark shape with your right arm by bringing it out to the side, down in an arch, to shoulder level, towards your body so that your thumb touches your shoulder and tracing your thumb down your right side back to your starting position.
 - b. Whip the right leg around to complete the kick motion and returning your foot back down to its starting your position.
6. You should now be back in your starting position. The right arm and leg should return to the starting position at almost the same time.
7. Try steps 1 to 6 on your left side.

Progressions:

- Try both arms and legs together by lying on a bed balancing your upper body on the bed and the lower body off the edge of the bed.
- 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:

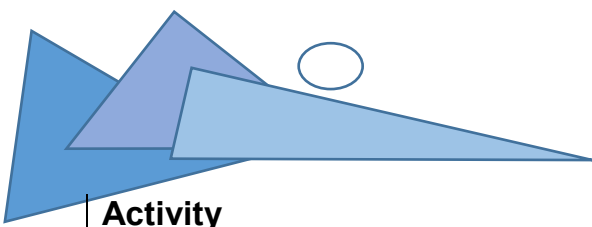
- To incorporate a core strength workout for youth and adults:
 - Try balancing on an exercise ball with legs and feet touching the ground, or lifted off the ground.
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Chicken, Eagle, Soldier

Age Recommendation: 5 years +

Materials

- Bed



Activity

Teach the combined arm and leg movement phases using the float positions that they resemble:

1. Arms at side, legs together and straight = soldier
2. Arms under shoulders, legs bending towards bum, arms moving above head, legs bent, feet turned outward, ankles just outside hips = chicken
3. Arms moving downwards to 'T' position, tracing beginning of question mark = eagle
4. Hands moving down your side, while legs are completing the whip circular motion back to starting position = soldier.

Tips and Reminders

Arms and legs complete the same motion on each side together, and legs move at the same time in the same directions, up, out and down.

Did You Know?

The arm and leg movements of the elementary backstroke are simple, symmetrical and synchronous. It is overall a relaxed stroke performed on your back making it a good recovery stroke.

Tips and Reminders

Since there are moments in the stroke movement where your head is at the point of the forward motion, be aware of your surrounding in water so that you do not hit your head on a wall.

Next Lesson: Sculling, Treading Water and Lifesaving Kicks

Breaststroke and elementary backstroke can both be used as ways to move through water using less energy than the front and back crawl strokes. Both strokes develop excellent arm and leg coordination and provide a more relaxed full body workout. Look for our next lesson that will focus on swim techniques that emphasize maintaining stability over forward motion when in water.

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