

Survival swimming is based on low energy principles where the arms do not leave the water on recovery and the head is above the water giving full vision. The object of survival swimming is to reduce energy output to increase chances of survival in any conditions even when fully clothed.

Traditionally freestyle is taught first in association with backstroke and this is often followed by breaststroke. The teaching sequence, regardless of stroke, can be described with the acronym FLAB – Floating in the streamlined position, Legs, Arms and then Breathing.

Even though breaststroke is a competition stroke, it fits within the description of a survival stroke. Other survival strokes include dog paddle, sculling, back survival stroke and side stroke. Back survival stroke can be very useful when kicking away from rocks or for towing a drowning victim to safety.

The teaching processes

This guide is concerned with the basic teaching sequence to develop breaststroke, back survival stroke and side stroke. Information on activities and techniques to refine breaststroke is available from [Swimming New Zealand](#).

A sequence for teaching breaststroke

Breaststroke leg action should be taught dry first. This can be done in the classroom before going to the pool.

- Lying across a chair bring the heels up to the hips – drop the knees
- Turn feet outwards
- Circle feet down and back to glide position
- Hold glide position and repeat

The feet can be manipulated by a buddy while the buddy is talking through the actions. Then the student can do this on their own with the buddy watching and peer assessing.

- In the pool the leg action can be practised at the rail in a stationary position with buddy watching or assisting. The glide should be emphasised
- Repeat while moving across the width with a kick board
- The student practise the same movement on their back hugging the kickboard at first then later moving it down to their thighs helping to keep knees low
- When the action has been refined the kick can be repeated without a kick board with the arms forward in the streamlined position.
- A small sculling action of the hands can be introduced while maintaining a streamlined position with the arms stretched out in front.

The arm action can be taught dry, from the streamline, scull out thumbs down, circle hands down to meet under the chin and stretch forward.

- Repeat arms action when walking in the water with shoulders under water
- Then when lying on a noodle
- Then with legs. The sequence is glide, arm action, glide, leg action, glide, repeat
- Repeat without noodle
- Introduce breathing inhale during scull in to chin and recovery. One breath each arm stroke

- Putting it together for timing encourage self-talk e.g. 'Scull, breathe, kick, glide'

A sequence for teaching sidestroke

Sidestroke leg action should be taught dry first. This can be done in the classroom before going to the pool.

- Lying on one side with straight legs. **Bend** legs, heels to hips, **split** apart or **scissor** open with top leg moving forwards then snap legs **together** (power phase) to meet in the extended position. This can be repeated with a buddy saying the cues in bold
- In the water - lying on side with a kick board held under the leading arm buddy giving cues and peer assessing

The arm action can be taught dry.

- Standing side on to the teacher with the leading or lower arm extended above head palm facing down as if the student was in the water. The upper arm lies along the top leg.
- Sweep the bottom arm down from its extended position. When the hand points straight down, bend the elbow to sweep the hand up to the chest. (This is the power phase of this arm stroke)
- At the same time slide the top hand from the thigh to the chest to meet the other hand (This is the recovery phase of this arm stroke)
- Sweep the top arm back down to the thigh pushing the water towards your feet (power phase) while sliding the bottom arm to its extended position (recovery phase)
- In the water lying on one side in a streamline position – the bottom arm extended top arm on upper thigh while kicking
- Introduce the top arm action and when comfortable then introduce the bottom arm so both arms are working together

The synchronisation of the arms and legs allows power phases to be continuous. The legs snap together at the same time the arms meet at the chest.

A sequence for teaching back survival stroke

The survival back stroke leg action can be first taught dry when sitting on the side of the pool. It can be a useful correction technique for the breaststroke screw kick.

- Sitting on the edge of pool leaning back on straight arms, the legs are held out straight. Drop the heels and move them to the wall, bending at the knees. Circle the feet out and up, back to the start position.
- In the water hugging a kickboard, practice the leg movement.
- Move the kickboard to over the knees to prevent them from rising out of the water
- Remove kickboard and scull with lower arms and hands.

For **details of breaststroke stroke technique** - further developmental practises and corrections for breaststroke can be obtained from Swim Start, down loaded from the Swimming New Zealand web site www.swimmingnz.org.nz Section 3.6 and 3.7.

Other WaterSafe Teacher guides in this series include

- Making Water Move
- Teaching water safety skills
- Equipment for learning aquatic skills