

## **HOBART MASTERS SWIMMING CLUB SKILLS AND DRILLS NOTES**

### **KICKING**

Active kicking gives you:

- Lower half buoyancy, especially when swimming backstroke
- Stability, by counterbalancing your arm movement
- Forward thrust, especially for butterfly and breaststroke

Kicking tools

- Fins – increase the workload on your legs but mostly slow your kicking tempo. Short blade fins allow a more natural kicking tempo.
- Kickboards – promote poor swimming posture unless held at arm's length. A pull-buoy is better as it is less buoyant. No kickboard or pull buoy is best as it allows good swimming posture, promotes controlled breathing (just like swimming) and gives you a chance to practise sculling with your hands.
- Training snorkel – allows best posture whilst kicking on your front. Try kicking with your hands clasped behind your back.

Kicking types

- Flutter (on your front for freestyle and on your back for backstroke)
- Dolphin (for butterfly)
- Frog kick (for breaststroke, butterfly and double-arm backstroke)

Kick training

- Vigorous kicking is a more efficient strengthening exercise than slow kicking, and more like your kicking tempo when swimming (train as you swim).
- The aim is to promote an active kick that you can use to give you buoyancy, balance and thrust, not a passive kick that leaves your legs dragging behind your stroke. Try swimming with an ankle band on to see the effect of no kick.

Cramp

- It happens to some of us more than others. Kick training may help to improve your neuromuscular connections so cramp happens less often.
- Make sure you warm up your legs before starting kick sets, especially if you have been sitting for an extended period of time before training.
- Transition from kick sets to swim sets gradually, especially if you have been wearing fins.
- Practice kick/swim laps to help condition your body.

## Kicking drills

- Practise with and without fins. Put fins on to increase the load on your legs and make your legs work harder, not to make kicking easier.
- 25 fast then 25 easy or 50 fast then 50 easy. Fast means as fast as you can kick! If you do not feel the burn, kick faster.
- Practice kicking on your front and your back with your arms extended, or clasped behind your back if wearing a snorkel. With extended arms you give your core a workout as well as your legs.
- Practise flutter and dolphin on your back as well as on your front.
- Practise flutter and dolphin on your side with the lower arm extended and the upper arm by your side. This provides constant pressure on your kick as each foot sweeps backwards and forwards.
- Practise dolphin under water from the push-off. See how far you can go under water. This will extend your dive start and your turns for freestyle, butterfly and backstroke.

## Ankle flexibility

- Flexible ankles generate effective kicks. Try kicking with your toes pointed towards the bottom of the pool to see what poor ankle flexibility does to impair your forward momentum.
- Fins will help improve your ankle flexibility. One way to improve the range of movement in your ankles out of the water (if you need to) is to sit on the ground with your knees forward, legs bent, backside on your heels and toes pointed to the rear. Ideally your entire lower legs from knees to toes will be in contact with the ground, and especially through your instep. If not, practise this stretch regularly until complete contact is made. This will also improve the range of movement in your knees. But, do not try this if you have knee and/or ankle issues. Talk to a medical professional first.

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