

COACHING TIPS

PRIORITY NUMBER 1 = BODY POSITION

This is the relationship between the body and the water. The position will either be:

- On the surface or underwater (or in the air)
- Horizontal or inclined or vertical
- On the front, side or back
- Balanced (stable and still) or unbalanced (unstable and moving)

What we want to see in the athletes:

- Body at the surface
- Body is horizontal
- Body is balanced (stability and consistency)
- Head, hands, hips and feet are kept still

PRIORITY NUMBER 2 = BODY SHAPE

This is the posture (or silhouette) of the body in the water (or on land). The shape could be:

- Streamlined, arched (up, down or lateral) or zigzag (line breaks)
- Long or short
- Narrow or wide
- Feet together or apart

What we want to see in the athletes:

- Long neck
- Long body (spine is straight)
- Long legs
- Feet pointed (plantar flexion)
- Long arms
- Waka shape
- No breaks along the line (neck, spine, hips, knees and ankles)

FREESTYLE EXAMPLE

Horizontal body position at the surface with a long and narrow shape with no line breaks and with the eyes looking straight downwards ☺

However, as a coach, you need to be alert and spot the primitive brain or balance reflexes. These reflexes are the opposite of what we are wanting:

- Centre of gravity shifted downwards
- Feet apart
- Knees bent and apart
- Hands wide
- Spine arched
- Head up

So we end up with ... an inclined body position which is mainly underwater and likely to be unbalanced. The body shape is short, angular and wide with the eyes looking forwards ☹

Stroke Tips

Use these for all your different strokes and drills:

The simple stuff 😊

- Horizontal Waka shape on the surface
- Body long and thin
- Head still
- Eyes and face looking straight down
- Eyes and face looking straight up on backstroke
- Long neck
- Keep hips still at the surface
- Long legs with your toes pointing backwards to the wall
- Keep your strokes long, light and with a smooth rhythm

Streamlining 😊

- Push hard off the wall
- Be like a Waka or arrow
- Hands on top
- Arms cover your ears
- Squeeze your elbows tight
- Stretch your body and make it as long as possible



Pushing off the wall 😊

- Start just below the surface
- Be streamlined like a Waka or arrow
- Glide for 2 seconds and then kick
- Always surface beyond the flags

Freestyle Tips



Body Position

- Horizontal Waka shape on the surface
- Head still
- Eyes and face looking straight down

Stroke Sequence

- Rainbow arm swing (recover over the water)
- Smooth hand entry and stretch forwards and downwards
- Anchor hand and pull backwards under the body in a straight line
- Smooth long strokes
- Swing your hand off the hip at the end of the pull
- Hands must always be moving (no pausing or sculling)

Kick

- Continuous, shallow and fast!
- Toes must (only just!) break the surface on the kick
- Keep hips and buttocks still at the surface
- Long legs with your toes pointing backwards to the wall
- Only a very slight knee bend during the kick
- Kick is both up and down within a 'shoe box'

Breathing

- Breathe 1 in 3 arm strokes – thus alternating left and right
- Breathe low - crocodile breathing style
- Hold the same stroke rate when breathing (no slowing down or pausing)

Trouble Shooting the Technique

As a coach you must always be observing the athlete's technique. Ask yourself ...

Is the effort they are putting in resulting in smooth forward propulsion?

High Effort and poor propulsion. No rhythm with heavy and short strokes	High Effort and FAST propulsion. Smooth rhythm and long strokes
Stroke length is low Check their body position and shape and go back to basics Check that their legs are long, head and hips are still etc	Stroke length is long More stroke counting and do less strokes and maintain speed Check that their kick is propulsive and that the arm recovery is relaxed
Low Effort and poor propulsion. No rhythm with short strokes	Low Effort and FAST propulsion. Smooth rhythm with light and long strokes
Stroke length is low Check their pencil balance. Are they relaxed? Check their body position and shape and go back to basics Check that their legs are long, head still etc	Stroke length is long Great! Ask them to stroke count and get their time off the pace clock

What we are wanting is **RHYTHM, LIGHTNESS AND LONG STROKES**.

Observation and Correction

What you see (observe) is the effect. Your goal is to check that the effort is compatible with the forward propulsion. If not, then you need to establish what is causing the imbalance. For example:

Observation

Big effort, low stroke length with head up too high

Correction

Lengthen the legs and kick shallow and fast

As always, look at the body position first, body shape second and work out the main cause for the poor technique that you see