



Backstroke

Stroke Coaching Points

Many people like to swim on their back to keep their face dry. The major keys to backstroke are balanced and steady head position, small and high kick tempo and alternate arm action (one arm entering the water as the other one exits). It is important that the swimmer maintains appropriate breathing technique throughout every stroke cycle.

Body Position

- Streamlined – high body position - head remaining still - rotation from shoulders.
- Swimmer should try to keep chest high to ensure water is not causing drag.

Key Points

- Streamlined supine body position, with a slight slope down to the hips.
- Ears are submerged just below the water surface.
- Head remains still, eyes look upward while performing the stroke.
- Hips are kept close to the surface.
- Shoulders rotate along with the stroke.
- Toes pointed and relaxed
- Bent arm accelerated under water

Arm Action

The arm action is continuous and alternating. The arm action provides constant propulsion. Bent-arm pull is more efficient than straight-arm pull. The straight-arm pull may be preferred in the early stages of development.

Key Points

Maintain a good body position, balanced, eyes looking up, straight arm recovery-little finger enters the water first to enable correct catch. Swimmer will need to maintain a continuous kick action.

Entry

The arm should pass by the ear before entering the water, little finger first, between the shoulder line and the centre line of the head.





Pull

- The arm sweeps downward and outward to the catch. This is assisted by a natural shoulder rotation
- The hand is pitched downward and outward by the palm.
- The arm is bent at a 90-degree angle at the elbow.
- The arm pushes through to the thigh, fingers are pointing sideways and the palms are downward.
- The shape of the whole arm action is in the form of an S-Shape.

Recovery

- The hand comes out of the water following the natural rotation of the shoulder
- The arm turns gradually to ensure that the little finger is ready for entry.
- Arm remains straight and relaxed throughout.

Leg Action

The leg action assists in maintaining a horizontal body position and balancing the arm action. It also is an important part of backstroke propulsion.

Key Points

- The continuous up and down alternating action is started from the hips.
- Legs are kept close together and almost straight.
- The knees remain below the surface.
- Relaxed ankles allow the toes to point.
- Feet break the surface
- Six leg kicks to one stroke cycle.

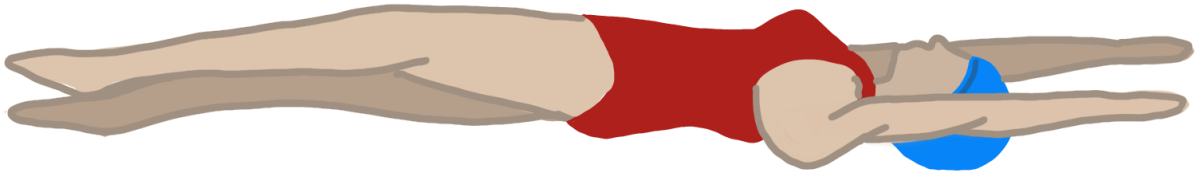
Breathing

- Breathing is natural.
- As a rule, breathe every stroke cycle.

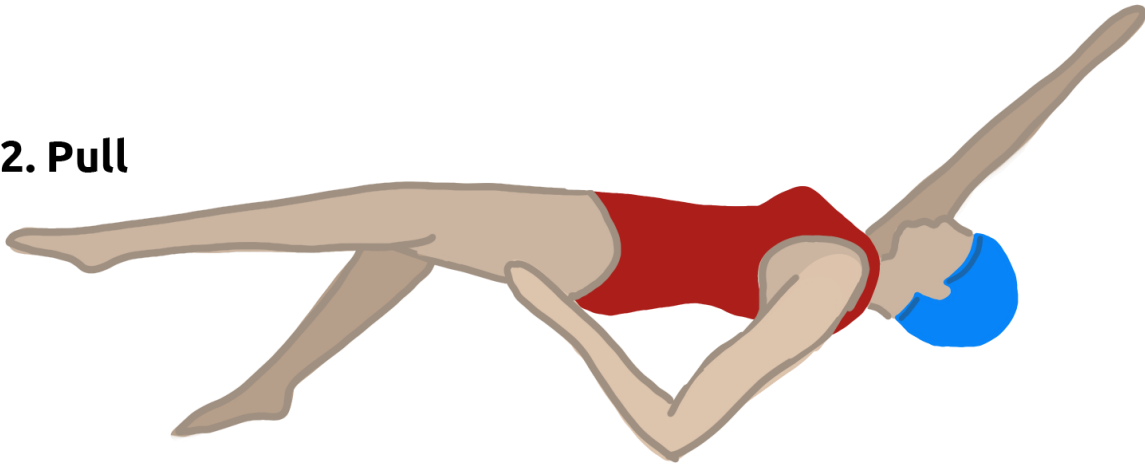




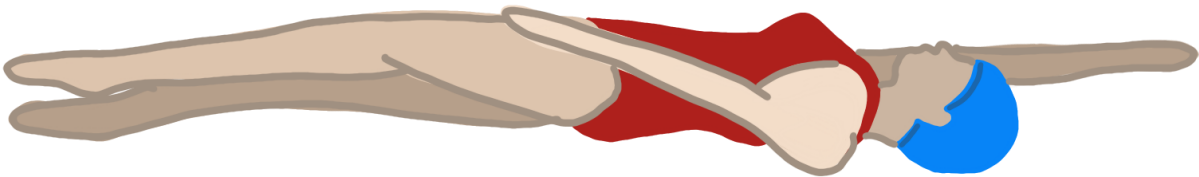
1. Entry



2. Pull



3. Release



4. Recovery

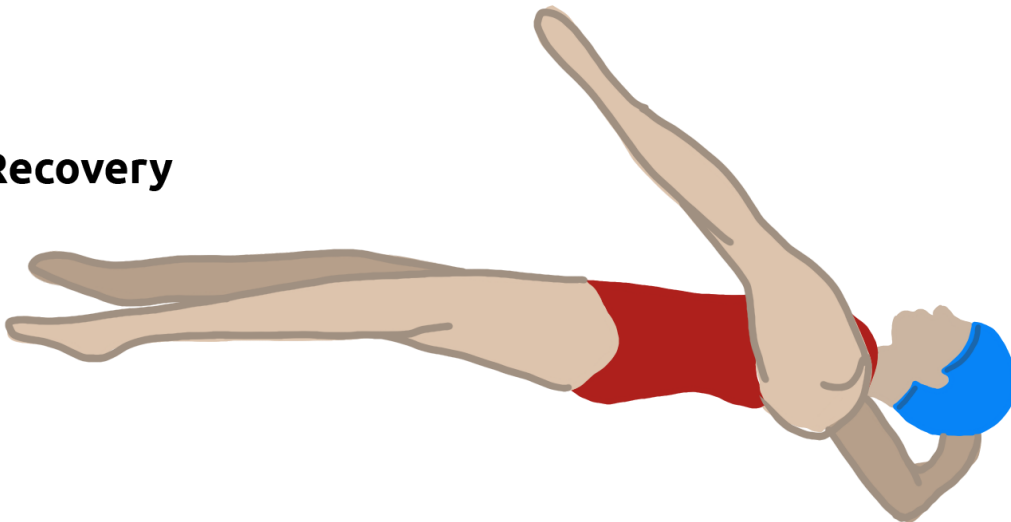


Figure 29: Backstroke

Progressions

- Kick on back with kickboard stretched over knees- (this will assist in reducing bent knee kick action)



- Kick on back without kickboard- hands can initially be at swimmers side then progress to a streamlined position maintaining a high body position. The use of fins may assist in helping the swimmer to understand body position/balance.
- Kickboard- introduce arm action
- Full stroke over a short distance then extend once the swimmer is demonstrating the skill competently

Drills

- With fins - backstroke streamlined kick
- With/without fins- ONE ARM PULL-with one arm at swimmers side – swimmer will stroke using one arm the alternate using the other
- Full stroke over short distance then extend.

Starts

All starts are signaled by the starter who will whistle the swimmers to their start position. The starter will then command the swimmers to “Take your marks.” The swimmers leave the block or end of the pool when the starting signals sounds.

Starting is a very important aspect of competitive swimming, and, in accordance with [Fina rules](#), a one start rule will be enforced; therefore, it is important that the swimmer is given regular instruction in this skill. Be aware of certain medical conditions, which may restrict swimmers from practicing out of water starts. Coaches should be familiar with and comply with both [Fina](#) and Facility rules and regulations regarding diving starts. Remember, when teaching starting, to break down the skill and make it fun.

There is only one type of start permitted in Backstroke in Special Olympics Competition

- In Water (W)

In-Water Start - Backstroke

Practice the backstroke while in the water.

Teaching Points





1. Facing the starting end of the pool.
2. Hold onto the pool edge or end of starting block with both hands (or one hand in the case of a limb absence).
3. Bring both feet up on the wall and bend the knees
4. On the starter's signal, push off with the legs.
5. Extend the arms over the head and kick, using a flutter kick or butterfly kick until the body is streamlined.
6. Swimmer kicks hard until the body is fully extended. The swimmer maintains a constant kick throughout the start and swim.
7. Begin the backstroke once the hands have broken the water surface.



Figure 30: Backstroke Start





Swimming Turns

Backstroke Turns

In a backstroke turn, some part of the body must touch the wall on completion of each length. There are two types of turns commonly used in Backstroke: Pivot and Roll Over Turn. In a pivot turn, swimmers must remain on their back at all times. For safety reasons, Backstroke flags are placed a regulation 5m from the end of the pool. The flags enable the swimmer to identify the distance to finish their race.

Backstroke Pivot Turn

1. Swim backstroke to the wall and touch or grab the wall
2. Bring the knees to the chest and begin to rotate the body.
3. Bring feet to the wall
4. Push off the wall forcefully with both feet
5. Extend both hands over head, returning to a supine, streamlined position.
6. Resume backstroke.

Backstroke Rollover Turn

1. Swim Backstroke towards the wall.
2. Approximately one stroke away from the wall, begin the turn
3. Using a continuous single or simultaneous double arm pull, roll into a prone position
4. Pull knees to the chest and begin to roll over or somersault the body
5. Push off the wall forcefully with the both feet into the supine, streamlined position.

Note: A Backstroke Rollover turn should only be performed when turning from backstroke to backstroke (Not in IM).



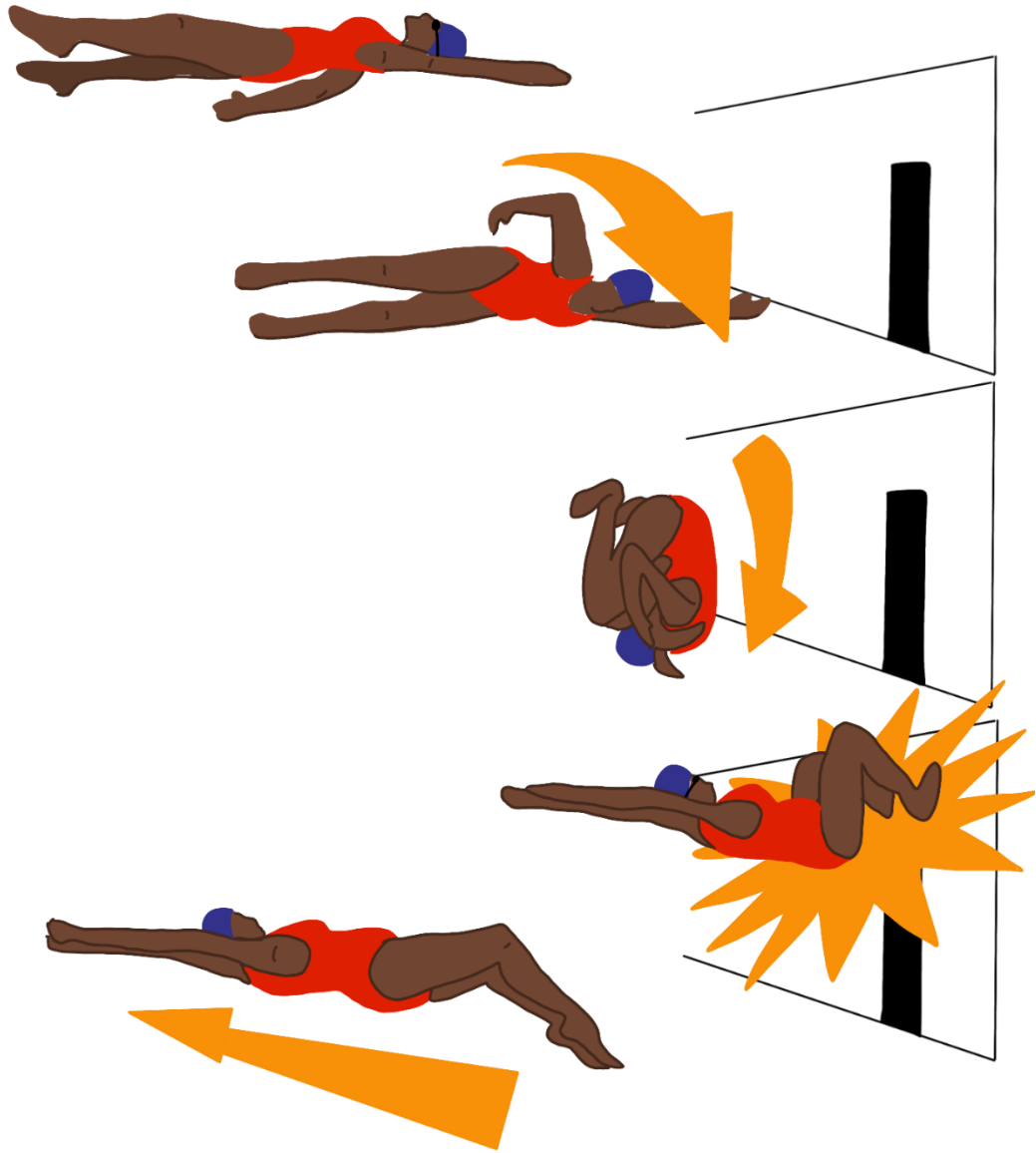


Figure 31: Backstroke Rollover Turn





Finishes

Finish Backstroke

1. For safety reasons, Backstroke flags are placed a regulation 5m from the end of the pool.
2. The flags enable the swimmer to identify the distance to finish their race.
3. Reach backward and drive decisively to the wall without slowing down the down the kick.

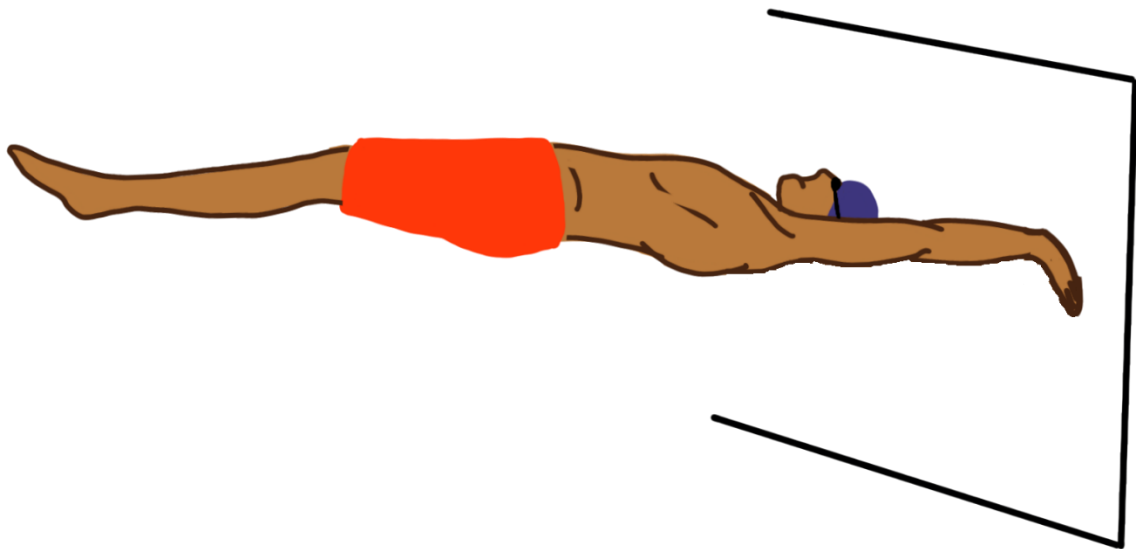


Figure 32: Backstroke Finish

Rules and DQs

Refer to [SQ](#) and [Fina rules](#).

Rules that apply to backstroke will be:

1. Prior to the starting signal, swimmers shall line up in the water facing the starting end, with both hands holding the starting grips. Standing in or on the gutter or bending the toes over the lip of the gutter is prohibited. When using a backstroke ledge at the start, the toes of both feet must be in contact with the end wall or face of the touchpad. Bending the toes over the top of the touchpad is prohibited.
2. At the signal for starting and after turning the swimmer shall push off and swim upon his back throughout the race except when executing a turn as set forth in SW 6.5. The normal position on the back can include a roll movement of the body up to, but not including 90 degrees from horizontal. The position of the head is not relevant.





3. Some part of the swimmer must break the surface of the water throughout the race. It is permissible for the swimmer to be completely sub-merged during the turn, and for a distance of not more than 15 metres after the start and each turn. By that point the head must have broken the surface.
4. When executing the turn there must be a touch of the wall with some part of the swimmer's body in his/her respective lane. During the turn the shoulders may be turned over the vertical to the breast after which an immediate continuous single arm pull or immediate continuous simultaneous double arm pull may be used to initiate the turn. The swimmer must have returned to the position on the back upon leaving the wall.
5. Upon the finish of the race the swimmer must touch the wall while on the back in his/her respective lane.

DQ Codes can be found in [Rules and Regulations section](#).

