



Northwest Energy Lab Swim Drills

If you are a new swimmer, start with these drills and do them every time you get in the pool. I recommend getting in the pool 4x's per week, even if just for 15-20 minutes, so you can develop a feeling of comfort in the water.

1) Bi-Lateral Breathing Drill with kickboard

Hold kickboard in front of you, face down in the water. Alternate sides when you need to breathe. When you turn your head to breathe, turn your head just enough to get a breath. Be careful of over-rotating your head.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CNtqPkQjs4c>

2) Kick on Back

Lay on your back and hold the kickboard over your head. Kick as you would if you were swimming regularly. Kick from your hips and push your hips up to the surface of the water to keep your legs from sinking.

(See this video, starting at 0:35) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2OsfJdnzGc>

3) Pencil Drill

The focus of this drill is balance in the water - i.e. keeping your body in a perfectly horizontal position, without your legs dropping and causing drag.

Take 3 strokes, and then stop and do the pencil. Are your legs dropping? If so, check your head position - you should be looking straight down at the bottom of the pool, not looking forward.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WqeOdpBFATc>

4) Side Kick Drills

The focus of this drill is rotation to get ready for work on your stroke. You'll also get a feel of breathing with your body in a more active swim position. See this video for a full explanation:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CKGFATUfdkw>

5) Small Catch Drill

This drill isolates the forearm movement of your swim stroke catch. When you do this drill, focus on keeping your elbow in contact with the surface of the water. Your tendency will be to drop your shoulder and elbow to get propulsion forward, but resist this temptation and use this drill to develop the muscles in your shoulders and upper back to maintain a high elbow catch.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=mWaqapTjhjs>

6) Catch-Up Drill

This drill works on your rotation and sets you up for proper hand entry. One of the most common mistakes is for your hand to cross over the middle line of your body when it enters the water. This drill makes sure that doesn't happen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fszey7mJSb4>

Once you are comfortable with the drills above, try out some of these more advanced drills. As you become more experienced, don't neglect your drills. I recommend spending at least 10 minutes a week on all of these drills to maintain good habits.

7) Body Balance Drill

The focus of this drill is balance. It is a little harder than the pencil drill, since you won't be using your arms. I suggest using fins. Don't worry about going fast, you should just try to feel your body position in the water. You can try bilateral breathing on this drill, or do it as is shown in the video and just stop, look up, and then continue.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aGkiUCqmJs8>

8) Fingertip Drag Drill

To do this drill, drag your fingertips along the surface of the water during your recovery until your arm is fully extended, ready for entry and catch. This drill has many benefits: 1) to train the proper body rotation, 2) to establish your high elbow position on your recovery, 3) to get the full extension of your stroke, and 4) to keep your body taught and in line.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XITzpum5lxA>

9) Press-Outs

This is a strength drill more than a technique drill, where you will pull yourself out of the pool (see video). You will develop shoulder and high elbow strength. It is best to do this drill at the deep end of the pool, if available. If you don't have a deep end, then just don't let your legs hit the bottom of the pool when you lower yourself back in.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HBukl2SsH5Q>

10) Skulling

I have found many varieties of skulling drills over the years, from doggie paddle (seriously!) to the one in this video. The purpose of all of them is to feel the power of the catch in the water. Play around with skulling and view videos online to find one that is effective for you. This video shows a top-to-bottom skulling technique.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uDKYVjKZWoa>