

Teaching Front Crawl

Front crawl is the fastest of all the competitive strokes, as it is the most efficient, because of this it is nearly always swum in Freestyle events. There is constant propulsion through the water with the powerful alternating movement of the arms, assisted by the alternating action of the legs, which balance the body by lifting the legs into a horizontal and streamlined position and adding propulsion.

The stroke has, like all the others gone through adaptations throughout the years to create the front crawl style that is seen today.

Front crawl was introduced into the western world in 1844 when Native North Americans swam it during a swimming race in London, where they easily defeated the British breaststroke swimmers. John Trudgen learnt the stroke from Native South Americans during a trip to Argentina but performed it in Great Britain using a scissors kick rather than flutter kick around 1873. The stroke was then known as "The Trudgen ". Australian Richmond Cavill, who was influenced by a Solomon Islander who lived in Sydney, improved on the Trudgen stroke which became known as the "Australian crawl". The American swimmer Charlie Daniels made modifications to a six-beat kick, thereby creating the "American crawl". With minor modifications, this stroke is the front crawl that is used today.

Front crawl is not governed by FINA

FINA Rules and regulations for Freestyle

- **SW 5.1** Freestyle means that in an event so designated the swimmer may swim any style, except that in individual medley or medley relay events, freestyle means any style other than backstroke, breaststroke or butterfly.
- **SW 5.2** Some part of the swimmer must touch the wall upon completion of each length and at the finish.
- **SW 5.3** Some part of the swimmer must break the surface of the water throughout the race, except it shall be permissible for the swimmer to be completely submerged 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.



Teaching Front Crawl Body Position

The body position should be as streamlined as possible. The water should be at the hairline and the heels should just break the surface as the feet kick. During the stroke the body will naturally roll around the long axis.

Teaching Practices - Beginners	Teaching Points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Push and glide using two floats held forward of the head 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face in water • Blow bubbles (hum)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Push and glide using 1 float held forward of the head 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like an arrow • Like a rocket
Teaching Practices – Intermediate/ Advanced	Teaching Points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Push and glide without aids 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legs together • Legs stretched • Arms stretched • Tummy tight • Hum • Arms squeeze ears



Front Crawl Leg Action

The kick begins at the hips, which should be close to the water's surface. The legs work in an alternating up and down pattern. The leg should be anatomically straight, having a very slight bend at the knee during the recovery phase and flexible ankles. The toes are pointed and turned inwards, almost touching as they pass each other.

The depth of the kick is approximately 30cms. The downbeat drives the water backwards propelling the swimmer forwards and the upbeat is the recovery phase. The number of kicks to balance the arm movement may vary from swimmer to swimmer or depend on the reason front crawl is being swum. Distance swimmers may use a 2 or 4 beat leg action while sprint swimmers may use a 6 beat leg action. The more efficient the kick the higher the body will ride in the water, thus making the whole body more streamlined and cutting down on drag.

Teaching Practices - Beginners	Teaching Points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using a woggle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fast kick Speedboat legs Up and down Stretch legs behind Make the water bubble
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using two floats 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using 1 float 	
Teaching Practices - Intermediate/ Advanced	Teaching Points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hands held in front 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long legs Fast, shallow kick Legs straight
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Float tilted upwards 	



Front Crawl Arm Action

The arm action is the powerhouse of front crawl. They move in an alternating fashion, so while one is working to move the body through the water the other is in recovery being lifted clean over the water. The pattern of the arm through the water plays an important part in propulsion. The hand should be firm, but not tense and remains close to the centerline of the body with the elbow held in a high position throughout the propulsive underwater phase. The hand and arm will increase in speed as the hand travels towards the thigh. It may be seen as a semi-circular or “s” shape. The aim is to keep purchase on the water from the catch through to the release and avoid the hand “slipping” through the water.

Teaching Practices - Beginners	Teaching Points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copying the arm action on the land or in shallow water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pull. lift, stretch • Stab a fish, put it in the basket • Brush thigh with thumb
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking through the water practicing the arm action 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single arm action using a float held in the other 	

Teaching Practices - Intermediate	Teaching Points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catch up with float held forward of head 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw a line from above head to thigh • Elbow held high • Hand faces feet
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full stroke – flippers may be used 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full stroke – no aids 	

Teaching Practices – Advanced	Teaching Points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catch up with no float 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hand firm • Elbow high • Catch the water • Hand close to centerline • Follow through to thigh • Feel water pressure on hand
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full stroke using a pull buoy 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full stroke using flippers 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sculling practices to get a “feel” for the water 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full stroke – no aids 	



Front Crawl Breathing

Front crawl breathing should not interrupt the flow of the stroke. Beginners find this very difficult to co-ordinate with the arm and leg action. Breathing may be Trickle or Explosive. Inhalation takes place through the mouth when the mouth is clear of the water. This action must co-inside with the roll of the body , the support of the forward arm and the recovery of the other. Experienced swimmers will take the breath in with the mouth seemingly below the water level as the propulsive momentum of the arm action creates a “bow” wave. In-experienced swimmers who are not creating this “bow wave” may lift the head higher to get the mouth clear of the water.

Teaching Practices - Beginners	Teaching Points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blowing egg flips 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hum through nose Blow down on egg flip Make bubbles Blow and breathe Pull and breathe – stretch and blow bubbles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blowing bubbles 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Humming into the water 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In shallow water bending forward and practicing rhythmic breathing 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In shallow water leaning forward and practicing using arms and rhythmic breathing 	

Teaching Practices - Intermediate	Teaching Points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Float held at top with one hand and bottom corner with the other – kicking and breathing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ear in water Roll head to side Pull and breathe Stretch and blow bubbles Breath 2,3 – blow 2,3 Breath – blow bubbles, blow bubbles, blow bubbles, breath (Bilateral)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Woggle tucked under one armpit other hand holding other end – kicking and breathing 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holding one arm straight in front – may be holding a float, other hand held at side. Roll and breath 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Single arm practices with float 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Catch up with breathing 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bi-lateral breathing with float 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flippers using full stroke 	



Front Crawl Breathing

Teaching Practices – Advanced	Teaching Points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single arm – no float 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll whole body • Relaxed rhythm
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catch up – no float 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bi-lateral breathing – no float 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flippers and full stroke 	

Front Crawl Timing

Legs may beat 2, 4, or 6 beats to 1 arm cycle and breathing should take place comfortably within the stroke pattern of the individual with as little interruption to the stroke as possible

Teaching Practices	Teaching Points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full stroke 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel the balance and rhythm of your own body • Pull and breath – stretch and blow • Fast speedboat legs • Roll into the breath

Front crawl can easily be taught to young learners and they can swim a beautiful style with over arm recovery for short distances - until they need to breathe. Incorporating the breathing is often the stumbling block of many learners and until they have this natural breathing rhythm they will find this stroke difficult to master.

The more the learners play with breathing and rolling the easier it will be for them to fit this into the streamlined front crawl stroke.

Enjoy your teaching!

