

Aquatics Eight-Week Training Plan

Week 1

Warm up –

- March in place with exaggerated arms to increase the core body temperature before stretching.
- Shoulder rolls back, then forward.
- Arm Swings – Standing tall with both arms swinging in a backward circle, carefully increase the speed. Change direction, repeat.
- Arm Hugs – Open arms wide holding them shoulder high, then cross them in front and wrap arms around shoulders, and hold a few seconds. Switch which arm is on top.
- Triceps Stretch – Raise one arm above the head, reach the palm of the hand towards the center of the back, the opposite hand can gently apply pressure below the elbow, pressing downward.
- Push-ups – (3) sets, all athlete at their own level
 - Beginner – Wall pushups
 - Intermediate – Modified on knees
 - Advanced – Full push up(Monitor safety – document how many were achieved)
- Calf stretch – (use wall) rest arms on wall, stand with both feet facing forward, back leg is straight pressing heel into floor.

Pool entry – Water Adjustment

- With new swimmers – shallow water entry - evaluate swimmers ability for safety and level assignment.
- Developmental swimmers – shallow water entry – water adjustment with floatation devices, work on rhythmic breathing using ping pong balls, blowing them across the water. Note: face has to be close to the surface of water allowing for increased comfort.
- Independent swimmers – fun laps – they can cross the pool in any fashion, being acclimated to the water, keeping the body moving.

Warm up - Skill assessment

- Through warm-up laps, evaluate swimmers' strokes and endurance. Demonstrate each stroke, have athletes perform. Document each swimmer's ability.

Skill Instruction -

- Developmental swimmers –
Starts (with floatation devices and person in the water assisting) – practice pushing off the wall with force, holding the body in a stream-line position (body extended with arms over head squeezing ears). Encourage the athlete to keep his/her face in the water and glide until no longer are moving forward. Encourage the athlete to increase the distance with each attempt. Repeat 5-10 times.
- Independent Swimmers –
In-water Start – feet on wall, one arm holding wall behind, the other extended forward- use start command – swimmers push off wall – streamline (bring back hand forward), before forward motion slows begin kick, keeping arms extended and face in the water. Next group goes. Rotate swimmers though 5-10 times.
 - Add rotary breathing and arms – the exhale is underwater, face turns to the side, ear stays in water, inhale and rotate face back in water. Swimmer follows line on bottom of the pool.
 - Arms – elbow is bent on recovery, rotating body, hand extends forward, and a bent arm pull under the body extending completely to the leg before exiting the water.

Competition –

- Ball pass – two swimmers on each team. First swimmer (1) swims across pool with a ball, the swimmer cannot touch the ball with the hands, forcing the athlete to swim with the face in the water, re-enforcing rhythmic breathing. Once the swimmer gets across and touches the wall, the second swimmer continues back across the pool. Discuss relay starts.
- Variations – use different size balls. Smaller balls increase difficulty and work on endurance and strength.

Cool Down –

- Kicking – use a kickboard or floatation device – kick freestyle: begin with 4 x 25 meters with 30-second rests between sets. Athletes circle swim utilizing time and pool space.
- Easy swim – athletes practice starts, glide and kick.

Final Stretches –

- Biceps stretch - Place arm on wall shoulder high, turn body away, hold stretch, switch arms.
- Quadriceps Stretch - Stand facing away from the wall, arms extended behind holding on to the wall. Swing one leg up placing the ball of the foot on the wall, knees are side-by-side, press the hip forward, and heel towards wall.
- Hamstring Stretch (including the gluteus muscle) – face the wall, place one foot on wall, straighten the leg (do not lock the knee), keep shoulders, and hips facing forward. Hold stretch, switch legs.
- Calf stretch – placing heels on the bottom of the pool and toes on the wall of the pool, legs straight, bring hips forward closer to wall. Hold stretch.
- Neck Stretch – Holding shoulders down, drop ear toward shoulder hold stretch, switch sides.

Week 2

Warm-up-

- Alternated knee lifts, add opposite elbow to knee.
- Alternated leg extensions forward.
- Change to side lifts – keep body tall, try not to lean.
- Change to hamstring curls. Do at least 10-15 repetitions before changing exercise.

Stretching exercises –

- Hamstring – place the heel of one foot forward, keeping that leg straight, place hands on back leg on upper thigh. Keep feet, hips, shoulders facing forward, back leg is bent. Switch legs.
- Groin – Sitting on floor (monitor athletes heart rate- if too high have them walk before sitting down) place soles of feet together, gently bend forward from the hips, allowing knees to extend towards floor. Do not bounce!
- Hip flexors – while lying on back, start with feet on the floor, knees bent. Cross the ankle of one foot above the knee of the other, gently lift the other leg, hold stretch, switch.
- Abductor exercises – Lying on back, feet on the floor, knees bent. Cross arms in front of body and lift upper body off floor. Cue the athletes to exhale on lift and inhale on return. Use slow counting. Keep head in natural alignment of the body (chin shouldn't be on chest or extended up – imagine holding an orange under the chin).

Warm – up (water)-

- Introduce pace clock – have the swimmers leave when the second hand is at the top. Use staggered starts so that swimmers aren't waiting. 30 second rest between laps. Record how many laps are done during this 10-minute warm up.
- Developmental – Selecting and Using Floatation Devices. Athletes that have the ability should learn to put on their own, always check to be sure they are on correctly.

Skills Instruction-

- Review Freestyle – Concentrate on stroke – not speed. Evaluate and record each athlete's stroke, and area for improvement. Break into groups and refine stroke. Demonstrate correct positioning. Encourage and reward improvement.
- Introduce Backstroke Starts – use official start – have athletes push off the wall into a streamline position, hands over head, ears between arms. Begin kicking. Knees stay underwater, kick comes from the hips.
- Arm enters the water above the head with the little finger first, hand facing away, thumb up. Shoulder rotates and elbow drops, bringing the hand under, the hand catches the water with the palm facing downward pushing the water to the thigh. Little finger exits the water, straight-arm recovery back up to water entry.
- Practice with single arm to refine and correct stroke.
- Developmental - Practice water entry and exits allowing for as much independence as ability allows.

Competition-

- Place swimmers in groups. First swimmer from each group gets into the water with a ball or kickboard. Swimmers race on their backs holding the ball (or kickboard) on their stomachs. They have to start over if they roll onto their fronts. Pass the ball to the next athlete (again re-enforcing relay starts). This strengthens the backstroke kick and increases comfort on the back with an added floatation device.
- Time Trials – begin timing and recording Developmental, Freestyle and Backstroke individual events.
- Set goals for next practice.

Cool down-

- Every athlete has a kickboard and begins laps – every time the swimmer hears a whistle he/she turns over and begins kicking again. When on the front - work on rotary breathing. On the back, work on head position. Keep this fun! Remember this is a cool down.
- Stretches – be sure to cover all major muscle groups.

Reminder-

- Be diligent regarding pool safety, and always have a certified lifeguard on deck with equipment, knowledge of Special Olympics Athletes, medical considerations and potential incidents.
- Be aware of different ability levels. Reorganize groups as you go along.
- Work on technique first, speed and endurance second.
- Constantly monitor and record each athlete's progress, prepare the next practice schedule that will correct and enhance his or her performance.
- At home practice – have athletes walk at least 3 times during the week.

Week 3

Welcome – review Home Work

Warm –up

- Have athletes decide land warm up, be sure warm core body temperature before stretching. Prompt them to stretch each major muscle group, assist with technique
- Push-ups – count how many can be done in 15 seconds. Do 4 sets.
- Dips – on bleachers, make sure athletes don't let their arms go beyond 90%.

Warm-up – (water)-

- Walking in shallow water. Increase speed. Change directions, and speed.
- Biceps /Triceps Using Kick board – holding the sides, push the water forward and pull back. One leg in front of the other for stabilization. Change – push the water straight down then pull up.
- Standing push-ups in pool on the wall.

Skill Instruction-

- Freestyle and backstroke review – set-up stations and rotate through drills.
- Freestyle Drill – Shark Swim – works on proper shoulder rotation and rotary breathing. Swim freestyle with just elbows, hands stay near armpits. Keep face in water until breath is needed. Cue to exhale underwater.
- Backstroke Drill – One arm drill – (see session two)
- Introduction of Breaststroke - demonstrate stroke emphasizing timing (pull, kick, glide). The coordination of breaststroke is more difficult than freestyle and backstroke. Breaststroke is appropriate for higher ability athletes.

Competition/Endurance-

- Lap counting – allow swimmers to swim freestyle 5 minutes, count and record the number of laps completed. Swimmers that are waiting can help with counting. Observe stroke mechanics – work with each swimmer to correct stroke, during rest.
- Repeat above with backstroke.
- Using pace clock – have swimmers sprint 25M freestyle (record time)
4-6 x 25 M with 30 second rest.
- Athletes that swim longer distances; only 2 x 25M, then 4 x 50M
- Repeat above with backstroke, breaststroke

Cool down -

- Pool walk shallow water, great time to chat and see what they learned at practice. Reinforce swimming drills and how they improve their strokes.
- Ball pass – two athletes back-to-back, turn and pass ball to left, and receive ball from right 10 times, change direction.
- Stretches – arms, shoulders and major muscle groups.
- Take home practice – have athletes practice push-ups, record how many they did, and report to team the next week.

Week 4

Warm-up – (repeat week 1) report progress of push-ups.

Warm-up – (water)

- 10 minute swim freestyle. Allow swimmers to swim at their own pace.

Skill Instruction/Drills-

- Kickboards – 4 x 25 freestyle kick
4 x 25 backstroke kick
4 x 25 breaststroke kick (athletes may repeat freestyle/backstroke)
- Pull buoys – 2 x 25 freestyle arms (rotary breathing)
2 x 25 backstroke arms
2 x 25 breaststroke arms (athletes may repeat freestyle/backstroke)
- Introduction of butterfly – even though this stroke isn't for every athlete, the drills increase water awareness, and breath control.
- Dolphin dive – have swimmers, with hands overhead, dive down to the bottom of the pool, push off bottom with their hands and return to a standing position. Continue this down the length of the pool, return.

- Demonstrate whole stroke – allow athletes to imitate. Break down stroke, have swimmers practice parts, then do whole stroke again. Whole-part-whole approach.

Competition/Relays-

- Now that all four strokes have been introduced, begin medley relays. Work on starts, strokes and finishes. Talk about what makes a stroke legal, and what disqualifies it.
- Break up into ability groups and work on relays. 4 x 25 freestyle to 4 x 100 medley relay.
- Change team members and swim order so that athletes know when to start. Practice water starts and diving starts for athletes that have ability.
- Record times and teams. Have athletes indicate what strokes they like and why and what strokes they don't. Remember to enter athletes in events they will have success with.

Cool down –

- Easy swim – any stroke, they can use kickboards or pull buoys.
- Remember to stretch all major muscle groups.
- At home practice -Stair walk – have athletes step-up and down a single step for 5 minutes – rest 1. Repeat with opposite leg leading. Do 4 sets – have family member/guardian count how many steps were taken. Report results to next practice.

Week 5

Welcome – review Home Work

Warm –up-

- Set up 4 stations – jog in place 2 minutes, jacks – 2 minutes, alternate toe touches- 2 minutes, squats – 2 minutes (make sure knee stays over ankles – cue – “you should be able to wiggle your toes when squatting)
- Add arm warm up- shoulder shrugs, circles. Full arm swings.
- Stretches – all major muscle groups.

Warm-up-(water) –

- Easy swim 2 laps, kick 2 laps, pull 2 laps, freestyle then backstroke. Higher level athletes do 4 laps each. Rotate through each drill.

Skill Instruction –

- Stroke evaluation – duration. Starting with Freestyle – have swimmers swim their most efficient freestyle, don't use pace clock. Evaluate Body Position, Arm Action- Propulsion phase/Recovery phase, Leg Action, Breathing/timing.
- Tell swimmers to continue at a slow controlled pace until they have to stop. Evaluate and document stroke and endurance. Repeat for backstroke.
- Have activities for swimmers with less endurance. Fun drills, treading water, games, any activity that will keep them moving in the water increases their breath control, endurance, and comfort.
- Flip turn for freestyle and backstroke. Begin with summersaults, add swimming to a designated spot (not against the wall) then summersault. Work with timing of the summersault into the wall with push off. Work with back stroke timing/turn over.

Competition –

- Time Trials – Goal setting – have athletes try to set their own record. Record progress.
- Begin each race with official start. Start with the longest distance and alternate with the 25M.
- Freestyle and backstroke – with starts and turns.
- Cool down – Game – pick a game that engages all swimmers, be sure to give floatation devices to swimmers that may get tired. Have quiet swimming activities for athletes that need it.
- At home-While doing stretches on deck, talk to athletes about nutrition. Ask what foods aren't good for training athletes, and what foods are good. Have them eliminate one “bad” food and increase the “good” food for the week and report the results at the next practice.

Week 6 - (same as Week 5 using breaststroke and butterfly)

Welcome – review Home Work

Warm –up –

- Set up 4 stations – jog in place 2 minutes, jacks – 2 minutes, alternate toe touches- 2 minutes, squats – 2 minutes (make sure knee stays over ankles – cue – “you should be able to wiggle your toes when squatting)
- Add arm warm up- shoulder shrugs, circles. Full arm swings.
- Stretches – all major muscle groups.

Warm –up- (water) –

- Easy swim 2 laps, kick 2 laps, pull 2 laps, breaststroke then butterfly. Higher level athletes do 4 laps each. Rotate through each drill.

Skill Instruction –

- Stroke evaluation – duration. Starting with breaststroke – have swimmers swim their most efficient freestyle, don’t use pace clock. Evaluate Body Position, Arm Action- Propulsion phase/Recovery phase, Leg Action, Breathing/timing.
- Tell swimmers to continue at a slow controlled pace until they have to stop. Evaluate and document stroke and endurance. Repeat for butterfly
- Have activities for swimmers with less endurance. Fun drills, treading water, games. Any activity that will keep them moving in the water increases their breath control, endurance, and comfort.
- Turns for breaststroke and butterfly, two-hand touch.

Competition –

- Time Trials – Goal setting – have athletes try to set their own records. Begin each race with official start. Start with the longest distance and alternate with the shorter distances.
- 4 x 25 – 15 second rest
2 x 200 – 30 second rest
4 x 50 – 30 second rest
1 x 400 – end (athletes that have ability)
- Breaststroke and Butterfly – with starts and turns.
- Record progress.

Cool down –

- Game – pick a game that engages all swimmers, be sure to give floatation to swimmer that may get tired. Have quiet swimming activities for athletes that need it.
- At home activity – With parent/guardian assistance set up three stations – Push-ups, sit up, step workout. Do 8 pushups, 8 sit-ups, 8 step up/up/down/down left leg lead, 8 step up/up/down/down right leg lead. See how many set they can do. Remind them the importance of warm-up and cool down before and after exercises.

Week 7

Welcome – review Home Work

Warm up – 10 minute, include stretches

Warm up-(water)- Modify for each athlete’s ability

- 1 x 100 Freestyle
1 x 100 Backstroke

1 x 100 Freestyle
1 x 100 Breaststroke
1 x 100 Freestyle
2 x 50 Butterfly (or 4 x 25)
50 easy

Skill Instruction –

- Stroke refinement – evaluate every athlete’s strokes, review notes.
Set-up 4 stations. Freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly.
Begin the progression for each stroke – proper starts, stroke, turns and finishes.
- Athletes spend 10-15 minutes before rotating to the next stroke.

Competition-

- “Putting it together” – 4 X 100 Individual Medley – 15 second rest between sets
- Athletes with higher ability 4 x 200 IM and above.
For athletes no ready for IM’s
2 x 25 – Freestyle - 15 second rest
2 x 25 – Backstroke – 15 second rest
1 x 50 – Freestyle – 30 second rest
1 x 50 – Backstroke – 15 second rest

Cool down – Game-

- Rules – everyone swims, everyone is safe. Incorporate a game that challenges each swimmers ability, while working on endurance.
- Cool down walk – long lunges in shallow water, arms swing by side, full range of motion.
- Stretch all major muscle groups.
- At home workout – Walk, jog, run. (athletes vary according to ability)
15 minute easy walk, 5 minute jog, 1 minute run Encourage athletes to do this 3 times, have parent/guardian measure distance

Week 8

Review at home workout – remember to reward effort, and encourage everyone to try.

Warm-up –

- Athlete led (monitor correct body position)
- Check athletes’ progress – Sit-ups, push-ups, squats, dips
- Stretching

Warm-up-(Water) –

- Athlete led – allow for “fun” warm up.

Skill Instruction –

- Review all strokes
- Evaluate – check progress /report
- Have athletes coach the coaches. Have coaches swim and the athletes evaluate their strokes. Appropriate for Higher-level athletes, but group athletes together with assistant coaches. This helps them “see” what the stroke should look like.
- Determine what events are appropriate for each athlete for competition – allow athletes to have input
- Have progress reports for the athletes showing their increase in performance, fitness and stroke improvement.

Competition – Set up a Mock Swim Meet – Invite other areas/swim teams to compete.

- Run a swim meet from staging to awards.
- Use official starter, stroke and turn judges and timers – if possible.
- Put results on Progress Report to show accomplishments.
- Have as many events as possible. Only have four events staged, athletes that aren't competing or waiting are practicing.

Cool Down – Fun Cool down –

- Athletes swim any stroke, any distance, with coaches.
- Get in groups according to ability.
- Final Stretch – Coach does a stretch – athletes have to say what muscle is being stretched.