

## Underwater Kicking: The Fifth Stroke

Over the past couple of years, a number of coaches have promoted the idea of “five stroke swimming,” which emphasizes the importance of kicking underwater. Underwater kicking is the secret weapon of many an elite swimmer. The most obvious recent example is Michael Phelps, who has the uncanny ability to

annihilate his competition with the best walls in the world today.

At Academy Bullets Masters, we have taken this approach to the Masters level by incorporating underwater kicking drills into our workouts. These drills get impressive results for all of our swimmers, from sprinters to distance-and-stroke

swimmers to triathletes. This workout incorporates underwater kicking into a mostly shorter distance routine to give swimmers that little something extra they need to finish out their races. Because of the intensity, we often do a workout like this on a Tuesday morning and use our Wednesday workout for recovery.

### the workout

#### warm-up

- 300 swim
- 300 IM drill (swimmer’s choice of drills)
- 200 kick (board optional)
- 200 pull choice

#### Warm-up set

- 8X50 drill/swim on 50/1:00/10 sec. rest  
Do 2X50 of each stroke, IM order, working on good push offs. We’re not focusing on the distance off the walls quite yet, since we’ll be doing a lot of that later.

#### Focused swim

- 500 (400) free with 6-to-10 underwater dolphin kicks off each wall.  
Focus specifically on the walls here. This is a breath-holding exercise as much as an exercise in discipline. The goal is to make all 20 walls the same. By the 400, lungs and legs will be burning, so keep up the focus and keep the walls as long as possible.
- 100 easy

#### main set

(Choose one group, A, B, or C):

##### Group A: swim 8X around:

- 50 free on 45 with 6-to-10 dolphin kicks off each wall: make the interval
- 25 FAST choice (fly, back, or free) on 30 with 6-to-10 dolphin kicks off each wall
- 25 easy on 1:00 choice

##### Group B: swim 6X around:

- 50 free on 55 or 1:00 with 6-to-10 dolphin kicks off the 2nd wall: make the interval
- 25 FAST choice (fly, back, or free) on 35 with 6-to-10 dolphin kicks off each wall
- 25 easy on 1:00 choice

##### Group C: swim 4X around:

- 25 free on 40 with 6-to-10 dolphin kicks off each wall: make the interval
- 25 FAST choice (fly, back, or free) on 40 or 45 with 6-to-10 dolphin kicks off each wall
- 25 easy on 1:00 choice

- 200 easy swim down choice

Try to get LOTS of air while swimming down (as well as on the easy 25s above). The recovery here is as or more important than the repeats themselves because of the challenge presented by the anaerobic nature of the work. Take the rest on the easy 25s, and be sure to swim easy to work out the lactate produced by the underwater kicking.

#### total

- Yardage: Group A: 3,100; Group B: 2,800; Group C: 2,500