



North West Athletics
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Introducing Drills (Skills) for Youngsters

Basic Strategies

1. Read and appreciate “Standard Strategies” and “Why Drills?” .. (attached)
2. A great deal can be achieved with 2-3 x 15-20 minutes each week. There is no age restraint; basic skills can and should be taught as early as possible (with patient progression).
3. Activities should be carefully monitored .. errors are learnt as easily as correct movements;
50 repeats forms a habit thousands of repeats to change the habit
 SO
 learn correctly from Day 1 ... monitor everything with great care
 nothing is unimportant
4. **In general:** introduce a **maximum** of two (2) new skills each session / day.
5. The 3 R’s: **Revise and Review Repeatedly !!!**
6. **Be sure endeavour and progression is recognized;** e.g. skill tags
 Be prepared: recognition of endeavour / progress (e.g. tags) must **never** be delayed.
7. While repetition is important to cement technique, have a variety of strategies to achieve the outcome(s) you are seeking.
8. Don’t over-coach .. better to leave them wanting more, than “*do I have to do it again*”.

Persist Patiently .. Never accept .. “*I can’t do it*”
 I have encountered many (most) youngsters who will not / have not reached elite performance levels, but I have never encountered a youngster, who, with patience and persistence, could not acquire commendable drill execution capability.

As a starting point:

1. **Basic Drills:** A-Skip; (Alternating) Butt Kicks; Fast Claw; (Alternating) Fast Leg; Combinations; Seated Arm Drill; Running-the-Boards; Double A’s; B-Skip;
and
2. **Agility (Ladder) Drills:** Single Step; 2 (Double) Step; Laterals; Ali Shuffle; Ins & Outs; Ickey Shuffle; forwards/backwards variations; coach commands.

The range of drills / skills is limitless
 — sport specific variations are coach/teacher determined
 The **aim** is enhanced **self-esteem**

No plan is wrong .. but, having no plan???



NWA
Quickstep Ladder

Single Step

2 Steps
(Double Step)

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NWA
Quickstep Ladder

**Ickey
Shuffle**

Forwards—Backwards
Coach Commands

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There are literally hundreds of skill tags .. it’s up to YOU if you want to explore the program

Standard Strategies

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A few ideas / strategies that should be considered in the presentation of your coaching session(s).

You will have your own "*coaching philosophy*"; you may make personal modifications; but, keep in mind:
everything you do,

everything you say,
will be dinner table conversation in each athlete's home over the next few days.

Your perception of your performance as a coach or teacher is sometimes the least important consideration.

In each session

- **Speak / demonstrate clearly and confidently.** Athletes are seeking and appreciate leadership.
- Keep your approach **simple** and **consistent**. (Don't complicate things; simplicity facilitates success; demand attention, (*Looking and Listening*), and do not proceed without it; praise endeavour; show confidence in the ability of athletes to achieve the standards **you** set.)
- **Review Skills** from the previous session; 10-20% of time allocated should be associated with this purpose. Do **not** prioritise "skill extension" ahead of "skill acquisition".
- **Continually** and **consistently** reinforce expectations: equipment, punctuality; **do not compromise** standards.
- **Be prepared** .. *Why are we doing this?* Relate activities (drills) to the outcomes you are seeking to achieve.
- **Always** outline (in advance) to the athletes "*what's in it (the session / the drill) for them*"; use incentives and rewards, e.g. cards, certificates, praise at some stage to **every** athlete, but, be sure to **expect the best they can offer** (*no more ... no less ... no excuses*).
- Positive, corrective feedback should prevail. Athletes should walk away from **every** session confident they have enhanced their knowledge and/or skills.
- **Be in control at all times**; e.g. allowing athletes to make decisions is just another way of you being in control. Keep the session moving .. a **minimum** of talk (demonstrate, explain .. but, on a needs basis). Remember, you do not need 4 years of tertiary training to let kids do what they like ... parents are watching; be accountable (a term often used, but less understood).
- Don't be distracted.
- Have a **theme** for each session: e.g. **100% Right is 100% Right .. 99% Right is 100% Wrong; Good is not enough, where better is possible; Be Your Best: No More; No less; No Excuses; You can never be better than you best; It takes more courage to try than to win.**
- **Use care and common sense**, but, don't be afraid to challenge the athletes. Young people love to acquire new skills and have those skills recognised; they enjoy being able to do things others cannot do.
- **Do something positive** and **personal** for **every athlete, every session**; e.g. praise; technique evaluation; special attention; a comment / a joke; personal comments to the athlete in view of the parent; have the athlete demonstrate to the group, lead a drill, or answer (correctly) a question(s).



There are many other issues and strategies; **every athlete is an experiment of one**; you will constantly add to your strategies ... it's called, **experience** (you can't buy it, only acquire it).

But, keep in mind that **teaching is fundamentally a simple process**:

YOU take a group of students / athletes into a classroom / on to a track;
show them, explain to them how to do something;

organise skill acquisition opportunities, providing appropriate feedback;

then, let them have a series of attempts; see how they perform;

reinforce, refine, replicate **the learning process NEVER ends!**

**An Eyeful
is better
than
a Mouthful**

Variety .. very important .. strive to have several strategies towards achieving the same outcome; stimulate enthusiasm by not just doing *the same old, same old*.

Repetition is important, but have options available to retain and stimulate endeavour.

**Knowledge (only) accumulates
quickly in an open mind**



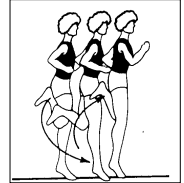
Why Drills?

Russell Parsons, OAM: North West Athletics
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1. To practice **YOU** being in command of your intentions and reactions.
2. To provide interest, variety, and fun.
3. To improve technique: including rhythm and co-ordination.
4. To improve balance and flexibility (drill both sides of the body to equal efficiency).
5. To improve strength and power through ranges of motion specific to your sport(s).

*Self-esteem is developed through confronting challenges ...
and, developing skills to achieve positive outcomes*



6. To focus on and understand aspects of your event; drills are the key to technique improvement and refinement; the establishment of the correct *dynamic stereotype*.
7. To expand your confidence in your potential as an athlete and as a person.

Muscle Memory and Skill Acquisition

When we learn a skill, it requires **repeated** and **continuous practice** before it becomes “**automatic**”.

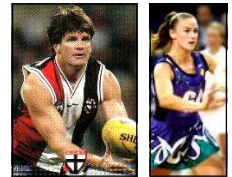
An **automatic skill** is a movement we can do without thought.

Walking is the obvious example. From our early years repeated practice day in, day out, result in our arms and legs eventually co-ordinating into an efficient walking action.

Think about the almost countless arm movement variations you can perform while walking.

Simply: your muscles develop a (correct) “*muscle memory of walking*”. Your (mind and) body is free to focus on other tasks, and, develop a muscle memory of those tasks.

Like walking, running / sprinting / hurdling (examples) are acquired skills that can become automatic when our body develops a “*muscle memory of running / sprinting / hurdling*”. This takes time and is **strongly dependent** on **regular**, ever-improving practice.



“We are what we repeatedly do ... excellence can become a habit”

Learning new skills is FUN !!

But, “Fun” is NOT just allowing young people to do what they like; as coaches—teachers, our responsibility is to provide leadership

- **Think** about your sport .. each sport reflects the sum of a series of movements; each movement can form the basis of a drill. Drills enhance movement skills: speed, co-ordination, confidence and self-esteem .. as such they offer opportunities to contribute to improved performance in **ALL** sports.
- The range of drills is almost endless, but pure fun; variety and enjoyment aside, drills should be specific to the movements you wish to enhance. There are **basic drills**, and a multitude of **sports-specific drills**.
- **Drills** should be **precisely planned** and **perfectly executed** .. **repeatedly**. You have to demand precision, but also apply persistence.
- We learn incorrect responses as easily as correct movements. **NEVER-NEVER** practice errors. **Do not compromise on quality** .. aim on **every** occasion aim to practice a drill perfectly.
- While in many instances walking through a drill is a good basic starting point (i.e. teaching the mind and body what is expected), some drills are easier to do at a moderate tempo, e.g. many athletes find A-Skip easier to accomplish than A-Walk.
- Athletes should be encouraged to “**feel**” the **movement**, and associate the correct feeling with the correct movement. Remember, the athlete can “*feel*” the movement .. the coach can only see. But, the coach by providing positive, corrective feedback, can assist the athlete to refine his/her feelings.
- Where appropriate, slow the movement down ... execute with eyes closed ... seek to feel what is right ... learn to read your body.
- **An eye-ful is better than a mouthful** .. demonstrations linked to trial execution linked to immediate feedback (e.g. video/DVD) is the most effective teaching/learning strategy we have. What the athlete sees, he/she can/will refine.
- **End** each training unit with a **successful outcome**, e.g. a perfect drill performance, and, (if appropriate) include the drill into the complete movement pattern to demonstrate your mastery and appreciation of its role in the skill you are refining.
- *You can't put in what God left out* (Chariots of Fire), but **drills** offer us an opportunity to refine and expand skills, and, accumulate self-esteem ... don't miss the opportunity.

(Not every athlete can be the fastest .. but, all can refine their skills: We can't all be winners, but, **we can all be champions**.)

NWA: Introducing Drills (Skills)



North West Athletics

1

Improving my A-Skip

*“Toe Up — Heel Up — Knee Up”
“Step over the support leg knee”*

*Arms: approx 90°; hand back to hip
“Tall” .. be the tallest you can be
Lots of perfect practice .. 10L / 10R*

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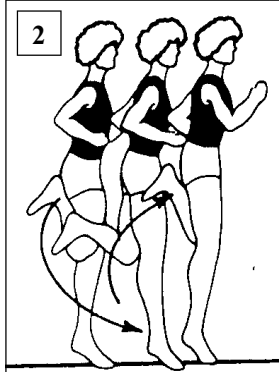


North West Athletics
Improving my A-Skip

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Arms: approx 90°; hand back to hip
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Improvement is my aim

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2

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Butt Kicks

- Right Fast “snaps”; slow forward progress
- Left

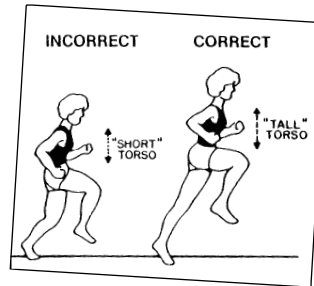
- Alternating Reminders

Tall—Toes dorsiflexed—active arms—snap heel to buttocks

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6



Improving my Running Form

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3

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Fast Leg

- Right Active foot should land just beyond support foot
- Left

- Alternating Reminders
*Tall—Toes dorsiflexed—active arms knee lift until thigh parallel with ground
Jog ▶ FL ▶ Jog ▶ FL ▶ Jog ▶ FL ...*

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7

B-Skip .. A more complex drill

1. *Up* .. heel to buttocks (toe dorsiflexed);
2. *Out* .. toe up (focus on heel extension);
3. *Pull* .. ball of foot to the ground beneath hip;
4. *“Tall”* .. correct posture; very slight forward lean.



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4

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Fast Claw

Maximum of 6-8 calls (repeats)

“Preparation” = Tall — active knee to thigh parallel with ground - toes dorsiflexed - “claw” to ground beneath hips - lift heel of active leg to buttock - fast recovery back to “preparation” position - wait for command. Straight support leg - upright - heel lift. Commands by 3rd party.

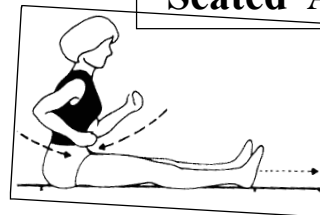
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Seated Arm Drill



- Sit tall; knees together;
- Preserve a 90° arm angle;
- Arm swing should not cross centre line of the body;
- Gradually increase tempo to maximum for 5-6 seconds.

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5

Combinations

(Alternating)

Fast Leg / Butt Kick
a complex drill

Tall throughout - toes dorsiflexed - active arms - knee to thigh parallel with ground - snap the butt kick

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20

The Big Test: Drills Circuit

10 Drills

(20-30m area .. coach commands)

(Drill 10-15m ▶ Jog)

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Some General Movement Skills and Agility (Ladder Drill) Tags

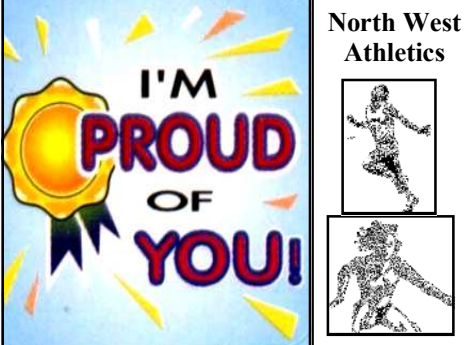
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Intro to Agility Drills



Be the best YOU can be

North West Athletics



I'M PROUD OF YOU!

There are many, many more tags to recognize skill progression.

NWA Quickstep Ladder

Single Step

2 Steps (Double Step)

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10 Drills Challenge



WELL DONE

NWA Quickstep Ladder

INS & OUTS

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NWA Quickstep Ladder

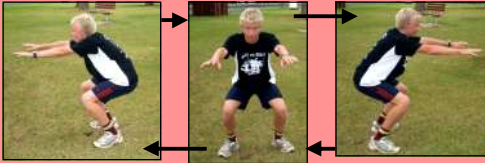
Laterals

Left Leg Lead + Right Leg Lead

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NWA: Quarter Turns



5 x Front ▶ Right ▶ Front ▶ Left ▶ Front
Stabilised bound posture; coach commands

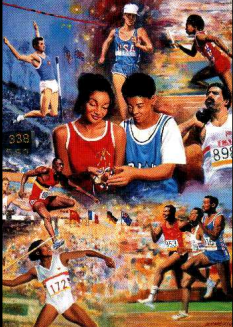
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Drills & Skills

Today, I did my best

Well Done !!

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We can't all be winners
but
We can all be
CHAMPIONS



There are simple Skill Tests (usually multiple choice) and a very wide range of skill-based achievement tags. Some of these are to be found on the NWA web site: www.nwaswimaths.com .. PROGRAMS / PRESENTATIONS


A few of the Introductory Skill-Focused Tags available to swimmers



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Introduction to Swimming Skills

**Learning New Skills
is
FUN**

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NWA Swimming

**Poolside
Breaststroke
Drills**

*I know the cues, and
I can do the drills*


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**Bomb -
Pin Drop
Award**

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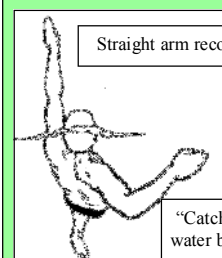
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DIVING

**I
can
do that**



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Straight arm recovery

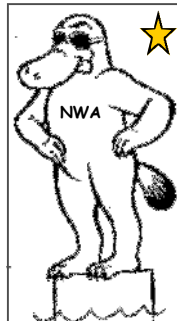
**NWA
Swimming**

Backstroke
Reminders

2

"Catch" .. throw the
water back at your feet


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***I'm a
Junior
Legend***

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Freestyle

When do I breathe?

***Roll your head;
ear on upper arm***

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Skills I have mastered

F/S Kick with kickboard
with and w/o fins

B/K with kickboard
with and w/o fins

Lateral F/S Kick
with board and fins

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Bi-lateral Breathing (3/5): helps balance your stroke

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Tags — Awards — Tests

There are **many, many more tags** and **simple test sheets**.
Junior and Intermediate swimmers receive tags that
recognise their endeavour and skill progression.

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***Today
I
was a
Star***

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**It's not how fast (you swim) ..
It's how well**