



Swim & PLAY BALL

MANUAL



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(HUN)

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A graduate of the University of Physical Education in Budapest, Ildikó has been preparing the youngest generation of Hungarians for water polo for the past 18 years.

Her U9 team, KSI, won medals every time they participated in the HaBaWaBa International Festival: in 2016 and 2019 they took gold, and in 2017 and 2018 bronze.

Ildikó is the author of the *Water Polo Primer*, which has been translated into 7 languages and is used as a water polo teaching tool globally.



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(GRE)

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A successful professional water polo coach since 1983, Yiannis has extensive experience at club level in Greece, Italy, France, and Egypt.

He was head coach of the Greek national men's water polo team in the 1994 FINA World Championships.

After graduating from Athens University as a civil engineer, he went on to qualify as a water polo coach from the Hellenic General Secretariat of Sports.

Yiannis is director of the HaBaWaBa International Festival as well as a FINA lecturer and a member of the FINA Water Polo Development Subcommittee.

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WELCOME MESSAGE



Captain
Husain Al-Musallam
FINA President

It is my great pleasure to present you the **Swim&Play Ball** manual, a well-prepared document aimed at displaying the attractiveness of our team sport to children.

FINA is inevitably linked with elite sport, but the medals, the glory, and the top-level performances are just the tip of a much bigger iceberg: the benefits of the sport for our younger generations. The success of this initiative will then be measured by the joy of the children taking part in it.

This is inevitably a winning strategy for FINA: bringing more and younger people to the sport will raise their physical abilities, improve their health, and make them better citizens.

This **Swim&Play Ball** project reinforces those values, by initiating our younger athletes in the oldest team sport in the Olympic programme, Water Polo. The format and rules of the competition, better adapted to children, bring excitement and joy, allowing at the same time the discovery of the spectacular aspects of the game.

I take this opportunity to sincerely thank and express FINA's gratitude to all those behind the preparation and implementation of this project. Their devotion to Water Polo and the way they transmit their passion for this discipline will certainly be highly appreciated by our young community. Moreover, the methodologies and strategies developed in this manual will help enhance the level of the game from an early age, thus contributing to a better Water Polo in the long term.

Thank you and have fun in the pool!

Captain Husain Al-Musallam
FINA President

FOREWORD



Ratko Rudić

Chairman of the
FINA Water Polo
Development
Sub Committee

x4 Olympic Games
Gold Medalist (Coach)

x3 World Championships
Gold Medalist (Coach)

It is with great pleasure I endorse the **Swim&Play Ball** FINA project and this manual, which present in a simple and comprehensive way the fundamental steps boys and girls should follow when approaching Water Polo for the first time.

It is rather normal for young Water Polo coaches or instructors not to feel confident in their knowledge about what to teach when dealing with kids. Well, I am sure that this manual will help them out in this area. The manual illustrates a methodology consisting of three technical levels, each one associated with selected skills and drills, and is supported by a set of video clips presenting the content in a very clear way. This step-by-step approach, combines the “ball” with swimming techniques specific to Water Polo, and will help instructors, even those with

little Water Polo background, to better understand and explain to kids all the technical elements necessary to play and enjoy the sport.

I personally started my coaching career working with kids, so I consider that teaching young athletes is the best way for self-improvement and a valuable experience on the long way to becoming a good Water Polo coach.

I am confident that the **Swim&Play Ball** project will be a great support and stimulus for all National Federations to plan and implement an ambitious development plan aiming to attract numerous boys and girls to Water Polo and ultimately contribute to the global development of this fascinating and unique Olympic Sport around the world.



FOREWORD



Dénes Kemény

Vice Chairman
of the FINA
Coaches Committee

x3 Olympic Games
Gold Medalist

x1 World Championships
Gold Medalist (Coach)

Often people have asked me what sport their child should do. I always have answered: Water Polo! Of course, they replied, you are a former player and a coach, obviously your choice is Water Polo. I explained to them that Water Polo shall grow a child that is tall and healthy, which is very valuable in life, and that there is one very important advantage: learning “team spirit” that provides a life-lesson in teamwork contributing to objectives beyond the individual.

Children often do not know what their limits are, and Water Polo training sessions can show them that they are much farther that they think. They will learn to fight to reach their targets and beyond, where at the end there is the chance to become a famous champion!

It is important for a child to have 2–3 years of swimming experience as this will increase the child’s ability to improve at a faster rate as swimming is a basic necessity for Water Polo players.

This manual is a tremendous resource for all coaches, many of whom are former players, where all the skills have been simplified for step-by-step teaching. All of the drills are important to get to the end result, giving joy to the children, and helping them to reach their maximum potential.

If the preparation of the child’s development during their early years is effective, they will become strong adult players with the ability to be successful on the international stage and this success is based on the effectiveness of the age group coaches.

As professional Water Polo games are like products to sell out the stadium and television audiences, the end product is based on the dedicated work by the age group coaches. Therefore, if you look after the next generation of Water Polo players, please teach them as much as you can and increase your level of expertise to be part of the final success.



INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES



Swim&Play Ball is a **FINA Development Programme** addressed to all National Federations with the aim to provide a comprehensive road map for the initiation of water polo activities. This development initiative is a step forward following the successful **FINA's programme Swimming for All – Swimming for Life** ⁽¹⁾ launched to propose a universal plan with standard criteria for teaching people how to swim under any circumstance in any infrastructure.

The **Swim&Play Ball** programme forms the introductory/preparatory stage for boys and girls who will go on to join a water polo school/academy and participate in grassroots or age-group water polo competitions. The **Swim&Play Ball** manual and the complementary video material provide basic knowledge and recourses for swimming and eventually water polo instructors in order to assist them introducing basic water polo to children aged 7–9 who can already swim, or those new to the sport, or beginners regardless of age. It is also designed for swimming instructors who are new to teaching the sport.

It presents a combination of selected water polo skills and drills in a simple and progressive way and offers guidelines concerning the teaching principles and methodology, as well direction on how to plan and implement the courses.

(1)

The manual for FINA's programme
"Swimming for All – Swimming for Life"
can be found at
<https://www.fina.org/corporate-events/swimming-for-all>





METHODOLOGY

Let's have a quick look at how this manual works:

While the kids consolidate classic swimming techniques (freestyle, breaststroke, and backstroke), you start by introducing water polo as a sport with great traditions. Familiarize the kids with its basic rules and equipment and the skills needed. Present the associated benefits, such as improving their water safety, communication, and teamwork skills as well as having fun and making friends.

Subsequently, you gradually introduce them to both elementary swimming techniques that are specific to water polo and the basic technical elements of the sport (skills).

Focusing on the proper techniques, the kids repeat a limited number of selected skills many times, with or without the use of a ball.

Ball No.3 is the recommended ball for this group. The ball may be substituted for a kickboard whenever leg work is in the daily schedule.

You introduce a variety of associated drills to practice the new technical elements. The drill format is fun and easy to explain. It gets progressively more difficult and involves all the kids.

As kids range in their abilities in different aspects, you, as the instructor, will have to modify your approach when teaching new skills or introducing new techniques. Always keep in mind that within any group of kids, there will be those demonstrating skills above or below average. Don't focus only on the talented kids; pay equal attention to less skillful kids, too.

Frequently used terms are highlighted in bold italics and defined in the glossary.

STEP 1

Introduce the skill

Children need to know few things about the skills they learn and why they are learning them. When introducing a new technical skill, keep your explanations short. Keep in mind that young kids have short attention spans. Getting their immediate attention is very important.

When introducing new skills, be sure to name them and stick with whatever name you choose so that the kids automatically match the name with the skill as the weeks go by.



Teaching skills and drills

When teaching new water polo skills to young kids, it's best to follow a step-by-step approach based on the traditional teaching technique moving from easy to difficult, from simple to complex, and from the known to the unknown.

STEP 2/1

Explain and demonstrate the skill

Kids learn more easily when they are given a brief explanation of the skill and at the same time see it being demonstrated. Use simple terms and, if possible, relate the skill to previously learned skills. Use different wording each time you explain it so that the kids really understand the different aspects of the skill.

Using the Whole-Part-Whole teaching method, demonstrate the skill a number of times in full, first at a normal speed and then in slow motion. Don't forget to also demonstrate the skill for players who are left-handed.

Once you have demonstrated the skill in full a few times, break it down into each of its distinct component parts. Emphasize the key teaching points for each part. Tell the kids what to look for during the demonstration and relate the technique to previously learned skills.

Then once again, demonstrate the entire skill, emphasizing the flow from one component of the technique to the next. Help the kids to build a cognitive picture that reflects both the technique as a whole and the various components that must be learned to perform it.



Teaching skills and drills

Keep a log where you write down, in detail, the elements related to the skill to be taught. If the selected skill is within the kids' capabilities and you have done an effective job of introducing, explaining, and demonstrating it, the kids should be ready to perform the skill and start learning new one.

STEP 2/2

Explain and demonstrate the skill

IN THIS FRAMEWORK, EXPLAINING AND DEMONSTRATING A SKILL LOOKS SOMETHING LIKE THIS:

- Demonstrate the skill in full several times, by showing kids how to correctly perform the entire skill and explaining its function in water polo. Remember, why we do something is just as important as how we do it.
- Slow the action down, so the kids can see every movement involved in the skill.
- Perform the skill at different angles so the kids can get the full perspective.
- Demonstrate the skill with both your right and your left arm or hand, if appropriate.
- Complex skills are better understood when they are explained in more manageable parts, helping the kids to gain the confidence needed to perform the skill on their own.

WHEN BREAKING DOWN A SKILL, TAKE THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

- Break down the skill and then point out its component parts to the kids.
- Have the kids perform each of the component skills already taught.
- After the kids have demonstrated their ability to perform the separate parts of the skill in sequence, re-explain the entire skill.



Teaching skills and drills

Remember, **why** we do something in water polo is just as important as **how** we do it.

STEP 3

Practice the skill using selected drills

Keep practices short and frequent when the skill is new. Practice skills using the associated drills and ensure that the kids experience some measure of success at each practice.

Drills take technical skills a step further by putting them into action. Verbally and visually explain the drill before you start practicing. Choose kids more proficient in the skill or those who already know the drill to demonstrate proper execution. Before letting kids practice the skill, it is important to check their understanding of what they are being asked to do, and if needed, encourage them to ask for clarifications.



Teaching skills and drills

Drills take technical skills a step further by putting them into action.

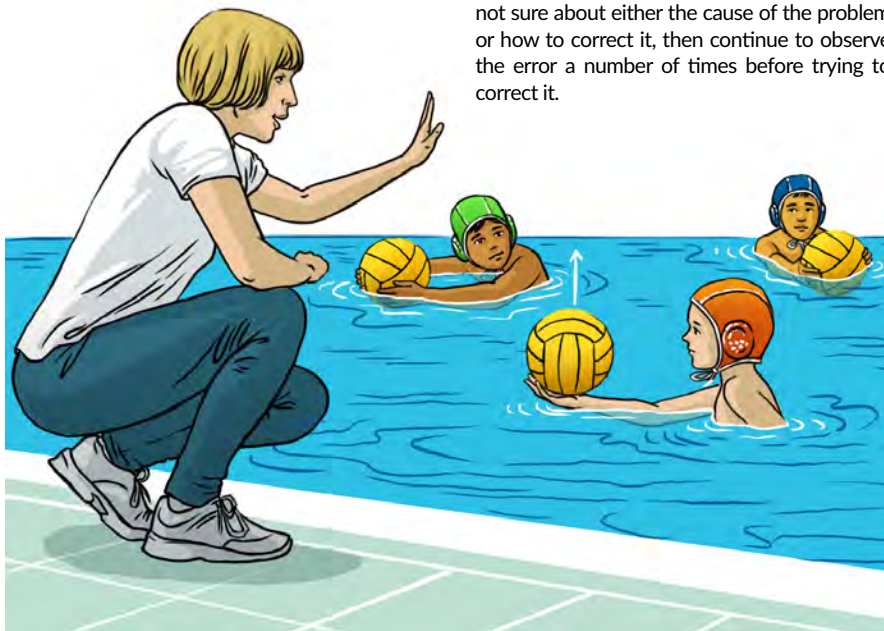
STEP 4

Correct errors

Practice alone will not make kids learn the correct techniques properly. Kids need feedback on how they are performing and how to correct the errors they will inevitably make.

Observe and evaluate their performance to determine what is causing them to make mistakes. This is the biggest challenge in teaching – identifying the cause of poor technique performance.

Don't jump into providing feedback. If you are not sure about either the cause of the problem or how to correct it, then continue to observe the error a number of times before trying to correct it.



Teaching skills and drills

Provide simple, short, precise feedback, correcting one error at a time. If a kid seems to be having difficulty with a skill, correct them on a one-to-one basis. The kids will be more receptive if they are not being corrected in front of the group.

When noticing the same error in several kids, it may be wise to demonstrate the skill again, as they may not have picked up on the key points outlined.

FRAMEWORK

Skill levels

Several basic skills have been selected for each level and described briefly. Their constant repetition with carefully selected drills will facilitate learning and consolidation. All skills and drills evolve progressively from the **Blue Cap** to **Orange Cap** and then to **Green Cap** level.

Following the first time approach to **Blue Cap** level you may proceed to the **Orange Cap** level and as soon all relevant skills are mastered the kids are ready to move to the **Green Cap** level.



Drill levels

For every drill selected per skill level, their degree of difficulty will be indicated as follows:





**BLUE
CAP**

INTRODUCTORY LEVEL



Children may be introduced for the very first time to water polo during their swimming lessons.

With the introduction of a small ball instead of a kick board, combined with a limited number of basic skills such as kicking freestyle and breaststroke legs, swimming with the ball, etc.

During a short period of 3 to 6 weeks you may gradually present the sport, its traditions, and its basic rules.

The **Blue Cap** level contains the very basic elements of water polo which will be repeated partially during the **Orange Cap** level. Considering that both levels move in parallel we will indicate with **Blue Cap** all skills and drills relevant to the equivalent level.

Skills and drills indicated with both **Blue Cap** and **Orange Cap** level skills and drills are common to both levels.

For practical reasons we will proceed with the **Orange Cap** level skills and indicate with the **Blue Cap** drills and skills suitable for both levels.





ORANGE CAP

ELEMENTARY LEVEL



The **Orange Cap** level introduces, the ball within leg-work drills that focus on the type of swimming and kicking specific to water polo.

A limited number of selected skills are combined within an eight-month training season while the kids continue to improve their traditional swimming techniques.

The associated drills will help you to design repetitions to consolidate their knowledge of these additional skills.

THE SKILLS THE KIDS WILL LEARN:

- ✓ Swimming freestyle with their head up.
- ✓ Staying in a vertical position using the **eggbeater kick**, which is unique to water polo.
- ✓ Swimming with the ball (**dribble**).
- ✓ Lifting the ball into a vertical position.
- ✓ Combining swimming freestyle or backstroke with breaststroke kicks.
- ✓ Passing the ball in the water.

KICKING FREESTYLE WITH AND WITHOUT THE BALL

OBJECTIVE

The kids improve and strengthen their freestyle kicking. This is one of the most important skills in water polo and a prerequisite for learning a proper freestyle technique.

DESCRIPTION

The kids kick freestyle with their head up while keeping the ball in their hands with their arms extended forward **1**.

THINGS TO CHECK AND CORRECT

- ✓ The kicking movement should be fast and short starting from the hips.
- ✓ Legs should move perpendicular to the surface with knees slightly bent and feet in a pointed position.



KICKING FREESTYLE WITH AND WITHOUT THE BALL

DRILLS



1.1

Get the kids to practice freestyle kicking while holding the ball with both hands and keeping their head above water.



1.2

Next tell the kids to kick with the ball and exhale with their head in the water **2**. When you blow the whistle, they are to lift their head up and continue kicking. On your next whistle, they are to put their face back in the water again. Introduce some competition. Have them race, kicking freestyle, with the ball a short distance in front of them and their head above the water.



1.3

As soon as the kids develop a powerful freestyle kicking, get them to do the same exercise without the ball (i.e., with no support). Make sure they keep their arms straight and their hands together. Or have them use small breaststroke arm strokes with their head above the water.



1.4

Get the kids to kick freestyle for 2 meters with their arms extended forward, hands together, and head in the water. Then they should kick freestyle for 2 meters with their arms extended forward, hands together, and their head out of the water. Keep alternating heads in and out of the water changing every 2 meters.



1.5

With their left arm in front and their right arm close to their body, instruct the kids to kick while exhaling in the water. They should then move their head to their right side and inhale. Have them change their arms so that their right arm is in front and their left arm is close to their body and repeat.

KICKING BREASTSTROKE WITH AND WITHOUT THE BALL

OBJECTIVE

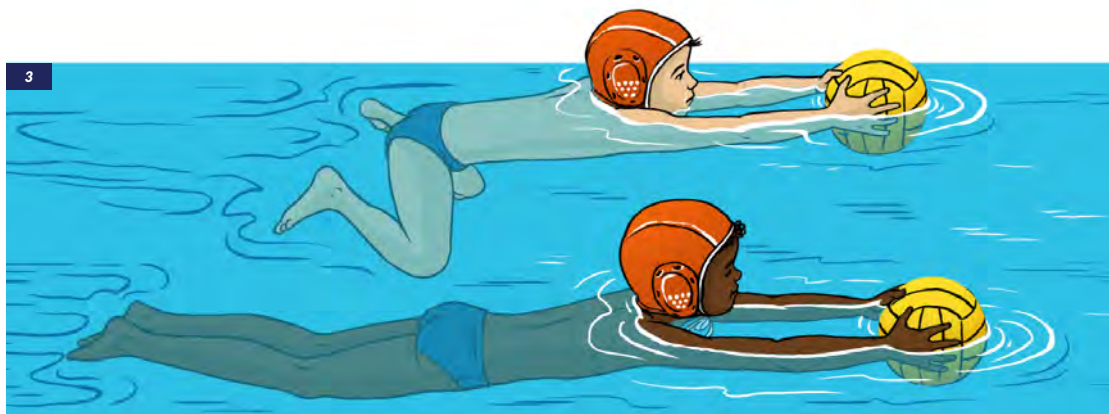
The kids improve and strengthen their breaststroke kick, one of the most important skills in water polo. It is used in many game-like situations and allows players to keep their heads above the water and move in various directions.

DESCRIPTION

The kids kick breaststroke with their head up while keeping the ball in their hands with their arms extended forward **3**. The water polo breaststroke kick is wider than the classic swimmer's breaststroke kick, so they need to pull their knees up more than swimmers do.

THINGS TO CHECK AND CORRECT

- ✓ Feet should be in a flex position during the kick.
- ✓ Legs should kick together.
- ✓ At the beginning of the kick, knees should be almost in line with the hips.
This is what we call the **legs start position**.
- ✓ The kids should pull up their knees slowly to the **legs start position**, and then kick strong and fast.
- ✓ The feet should be closed at the end of the kick.



KICKING BREASTSTROKE WITH AND WITHOUT THE BALL

DRILLS

1

2.1

Get the kids to kick breaststroke with their head up and arms extended forward while keeping the ball in their hands.

1

1

2.2

Next, get the kids to do a long breaststroke leg stroke and close their legs dynamically, letting their body glide forward as far as possible.

1

1

2.3

Then get the kids to do short breaststroke leg strokes, without straightening their legs. They shouldn't stop kicking! Ask them if they feel the difference.

1

2

2.4

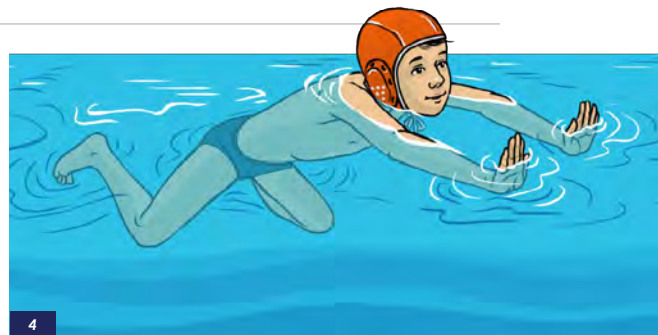
As soon as the kids develop a powerful breaststroke kick, get them to do the same exercise without a ball (i.e., with no support). Their arms should be extended forward and their hands slightly out of the water **4**.

2

1

2.5

When they have mastered the breaststroke kick, get them to alternate 3 breaststroke kicks with 3 meters of fast freestyle kicking – with or without a ball in their hands.



WATER POLO FREESTYLE WITH THE HEAD UP

OBJECTIVE

Kids realize the importance of awareness. Anyone playing water polo should always know what is happening around them so they should keep their face above the water.

DESCRIPTION

The kids swim freestyle with their head out of the water, using short, fast strokes, keeping their elbows high **5**. This is the main difference between water polo and the arms-stretched glide of classic swimming **6**. As the head comes up, the hips tend to go down. Kicking hard is a must so that the legs generate speed instead of dragging.



THINGS TO CHECK AND CORRECT

- ✓ Elbows should be kept high **7**.
- ✓ Head should slightly rotate following the body but not remain still or move to the side excessively.
- ✓ Fingers should be closed and enter the water first with hands entering the water at shoulder level.

WATER POLO FREESTYLE WITH THE HEAD UP

DRILLS



3.1

Get the kids to swim very slowly in water polo freestyle concentrating on using the correct technique, i.e., short strokes with elbows high.



3.2

When they have mastered the stroke, get them to swim quickly in water polo freestyle for 10 meters and then come back slowly.



3.3

Have the kids try water polo freestyle with a kickboard under their stomach.



3.4

Next, have the kids swim in classic freestyle. When you blow your whistle, they should lift their head up and continue with water polo freestyle. Ask them if they feel the difference.



3.5

Get the kids to alternate every 5 meters, first swimming in classic freestyle (breathing every third stroke) and then in water polo freestyle.

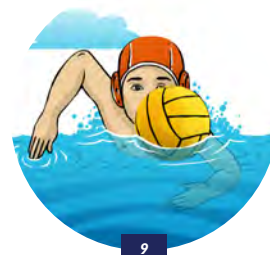
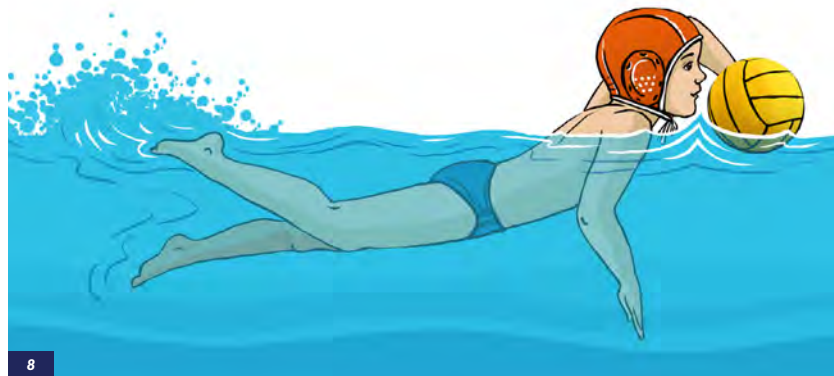
SWIMMING WITH THE BALL (DRIBBLING)

OBJECTIVE

When water polo players swim with the ball, they always need to know what is happening around them so that they can make the best decision before passing or shooting the ball. The kids must learn to keep their face high above the water and move with the ball in water polo freestyle so as not to be caught unawares and allow the defenders to steal the ball.

DESCRIPTION

The balls float on the water. Each kid puts a ball close to their nose. They start to swim with water polo freestyle strokes while kicking with freestyle legs. A small wave is generated in front of their head **8**. Their ball sits on this wave. The kids cannot touch the ball with their hands as it moves in front of them. Instead, they put their hands at each side of the ball creating a protective fence with their arms. This technique of swimming with the ball called **dribbling**.



THINGS TO CHECK AND CORRECT

- ✓ The ball must stay very close to the nose.
- ✓ The head should not move too much. Eyes should always look ahead **9**.
- ✓ Strokes are short and fast with the hands arriving in front and at the side of the ball, not apart and allowing the ball to slip away.

SWIMMING WITH THE BALL (DRIBBLING)



DRILLS



4.1

Get the kids to **dribble** with their head in the water using fast short strokes and strong freestyle legs keeping their elbows high and the ball at their forehead. They may touch the ball with their hands.



4.2

Next, get them to **dribble** with only their eyes above the water. When you blow the whistle, they should lift their face high above the water without touching the ball with their hands.



4.3

Get the kids to **dribble** with a kickboard under their stomach.



4.4

Have them practice **dribbling** by **dribbling** 3 meters with their face in the water, then 5 strokes with their head above the water.



4.5

Get them to first **dribble** with slow strokes and then **dribble** with quick strokes. Ask them if they can feel the difference.

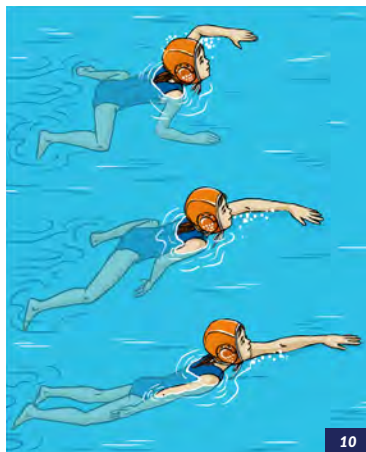
WATER POLO FREESTYLE WITH HEAD UP AND A BREASTSTROKE KICK

OBJECTIVE

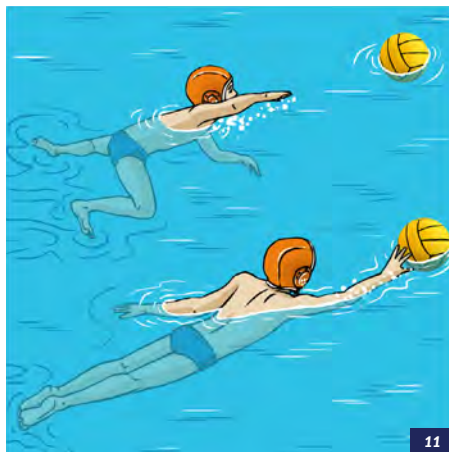
In addition to swimming freestyle with their head up, water polo players often need to stop and start or change direction or reach the ball. Such moves are possible only by combining freestyle with the head up and a breaststroke kick. This is what the kids need to master.

DESCRIPTION

A breaststroke leg kick can be applied every arm stroke or every two strokes while swimming freestyle with the head up. In this case, the arm strokes will be longer, giving the kids the option to change direction or reach the ball more easily **10**.



10



11

THINGS TO CHECK AND CORRECT

- ✓ Kids need to master the proper breaststroke kick before combining it with freestyle swimming.
- ✓ Make sure the breaststroke kick is being correctly executed. They should kick when their arms go forward trying to reach far in front **11**.
- ✓ Elbows should be kept high. Kids should do the movements continuously without breaking or stopping.

WATER POLO FREESTYLE WITH HEAD UP AND A BREASTSTROKE KICK



DRILLS

2

5.1

Have the kids swim freestyle with their heads up and kick breaststroke every stroke.

2

5.2

Next, get the kids to swim freestyle with their head up kicking breaststroke every second stroke.

2

5.3

Then have the kids swim with their head up, keeping their left arm extended forward, slightly bent at the elbow and their left hand out of the water. At the same time, they should do freestyle strokes with only their right arm synchronized with breaststroke legs. At the halfway mark, have them change arms.

2

5.4

Get the kids to swim with their head up, keeping their left arm extended forward, slightly bent at the elbow and their left hand out of the water with the ball sitting on their open palm. At the same time, they should do freestyle strokes with only their right arm synchronized with breaststroke legs. Have the kids swim half distance with their left arm in front and half with their right arm in front. The ball should sit on the palm of their hand without their fingers touching it.

2

5.5

Finally, have the kids swim in water polo freestyle with breaststroke kicks trying to do fewer kicks, thus using longer kicks and gliding.

WATER POLO BACKSTROKE WITH A BREASTSTROKE KICK



OBJECTIVE

The head-up backstroke with a breaststroke kick, i.e., the water polo backstroke, is another way of getting the kids to move through the water and maintain awareness of the ball or their opponent.

DESCRIPTION

While the regular backstroke is performed with the body in a horizontal position, the water polo backstroke is performed with the body in a seated (inclined) position with the head and shoulders out of the water **12**. As the hips are lower in the water, the kids must develop a strong breaststroke kick to avoid sinking. The arm strokes must also be wider and shorter.



THINGS TO CHECK AND CORRECT

- ✓ Arms must be slightly bent at the elbow while the forearms move in a vertical position.
- ✓ Fingers must be relaxed and point ahead.
- ✓ Kids should kick when their arms go forward.
- ✓ Knees should be pulled up in line with hips.
- ✓ Head and shoulders should be out of the water.



WATER POLO BACKSTROKE WITH A BREASTSTROKE KICK

DRILLS

1

6.1

Get the kids to swim water polo backstroke with a breaststroke kick, one kick for each arm stroke.

2

6.2

Next, get them to swim backstroke with a breaststroke kick, one kick every second arm stroke (either when their right arm is out of the water or when their left arm is out of the water).

3

6.3

Then, have the kids swim water polo backstroke with a breaststroke kick, one kick every second arm stroke, trying to lift their body and reach with their hands as high as possible out of the water **13**.

1

6.4

To practice, get the kids to alternate water polo freestyle with a breaststroke kick and water polo backstroke with breaststroke kicks every 2-3 meters or on your signal.

1

6.5

Finally, have the kids swim water polo backstroke with both arms at the same time combined with a breaststroke kick.



13

EGGBEATER KICK IN HORIZONTAL AND IN THE BASIC VERTICAL POSITION

OBJECTIVE

In water polo, remaining stable in the water and maintaining a constant vertical position requires a special kind of legwork the kids will need to master: it's called the **eggbeater kick**. Doing the **eggbeater kick** allows the kids to stay in the **basic vertical position**.

DESCRIPTION

The **eggbeater kick** is a leg, breaststroke-type kick, with a wide kicking base alternating with the kicking motion of each leg (rather than kicking both legs simultaneously). This creates a stable base and allows the player to ride high and stable.

A good **eggbeater kick** requires flexibility in the hips and good foot rotation with the feet in the flex position and knees wide open, close to the hip line **14**.

One leg starts to kick. Before this leg reaches the almost straight position, the kid pulls it back to the start position and starts to kick with the other leg. Toes should point to the side of the pool.



14

THINGS TO CHECK AND CORRECT

- ✓ Kids should know how to kick smoothly in breaststroke.
- ✓ Legs should not be straight during the **eggbeater kick**.
- ✓ Feet should be in the flex position with knees wide open and close to the water surface.



EGGBEATER KICK IN HORIZONTAL AND IN THE BASIC VERTICAL POSITION

DRILLS

1

7.1

Get the kids to hold a ball with both hands, arms extended. They should assume the **legs start position** and then start doing **eggbeater kicks** in a horizontal or prone position **15**.



1

7.2

While lying in a prone position without a ball, get the kids to move like spiders, i.e., move forward using a horizontal **eggbeater kick** while keeping their head above the water and using small breaststroke arm strokes.

2

7.3

With a ball in their hands, have the kids alternate 4 **eggbeater kicks** and 2 breaststroke kicks, then again 4 **eggbeater kicks** and 2 breaststroke kicks. Get them to repeat this drill until they reach the end of the pool.

1

7.4

Get the kids to push the ball under the water and move forward using **eggbeater kicks**. Ask them to keep their shoulders rising out of the water.

3

7.5

Get the kids in a **basic vertical position** with the ball in their hand. On your signal they are to lift the ball above their head and keep their shoulder above the water, doing **eggbeater kicks** for 5–6 seconds. Have them repeat this 5 times.

PICKING UP AND LIFTING THE BALL INTO THE BASIC THROWING POSITION

OBJECTIVE

The water polo ball is bigger than a kid's palm. As they gradually learn not to touch the ball with both hands, they need to learn how to **pick up the ball** from underneath using one hand only.

DESCRIPTION

Kids place their palm under the ball and pick it up from the water keeping their palm horizontal. The ball sits on their palm all the way, like a glass on a waiter's tray **16**. Their fingers are open wide. Their fingertips hold the ball tightly **17**. They may also pick up the ball using another technique, i.e., by using their supporting hand to move the ball on the surface of the water towards their throwing hand **18**. Then they pick up the ball. In the next skill, they will learn how to throw the ball from the **basic throwing position**.



THINGS TO CHECK AND CORRECT

- ✓ Fingers must be wide open and not squeezing the ball! Kids pick up the ball from underneath.

Explain that otherwise they risk taking the entire ball under the water when tackled, thus committing a foul.

PICKING UP AND LIFTING THE BALL INTO THE BASIC THROWING POSITION

DRILLS



8.1

With the kids in a **basic vertical position**, have them do the **eggbeater kick**. The ball floats in front of their right shoulder (for those right-handed). On your signal, the kids should place their palm under the ball and lift the ball into the **basic throwing position**. In the **basic throwing position**, the kids keep the ball higher than the top of their head. The supporting arm and opposite leg are in front. On your signal, they are to bring the ball to the surface of the water and rest. Get them to repeat this several times.



8.2

Randomly choose one kid from the group to be the group leader. Ask them to step out of the group and face their teammates. Instruct the teammates to do as the leader does. Get the leader to **pick up the ball** from underneath. Have them count loudly 1-2-3-4-5 and then bring the ball back on the water. They should repeat the sequence several times with both hands. The other kids should follow their leader.



8.3

Have the kids assume the **basic vertical position** and do the **eggbeater kick** with their arms wide open and their hands far apart. Next, have them use their supporting hand to bring the ball smoothly to their throwing hand and back to their supporting hand without **picking up the ball** from the water. Get them to repeat this several times.



8.4

Still in the **basic vertical position**, doing the **eggbeater kick** with their arms wide open and their hands far apart, have the kids use their **supporting hand** to bring the ball smoothly to their throwing hand and then **pick up the ball** with their throwing hand from underneath, **lifting the ball** like lifting a tray. Have them assume the **basic throwing position** for a second and then put the ball back on the water. They should then carry the ball back to their **supporting hand** and lift the ball with this hand. Have them repeat this several times.



8.5

Finally, get the kids to carry the ball with their **supporting hand** and pick up the ball from underneath. They should assume the **basic throwing position**, count 1-2-3-4-5, and give the ball back to their supporting hand at water level. Have them repeat this move several times.

LEARNING HOW TO KEEP THE BASIC THROWING POSITION

OBJECTIVE

As soon as they have mastered the breaststroke and **eggbeater kicks**, the kids are ready to learn how to keep the **basic throwing position** so they can keep the ball in their hand, pass, or shoot **19**.

DESCRIPTION

For the kids to assume/keep the **basic throwing position**, both their shoulders should be high above the water and their hips under their body. While their legs do the **eggbeater kick**, their supporting hand is in front of their chest and their throwing arm raised behind their body, slightly bent at the elbow. The ball sits in the palm of their hand, higher than their head, and their elbow higher than their ears **20**. The faster the kids move their legs with the **eggbeater kick**, the higher their body rises above the surface of the water.



THINGS TO CHECK AND CORRECT

This is one of the most basic skills and takes kids time to absorb all the information and apply appropriately.

- ✓ Ensure correct body position, arm position, hand orientation.
- ✓ Take time to observe each kid and correct even minor mistakes.

LEARNING HOW TO KEEP THE BASIC THROWING POSITION

DRILLS

1

9.1

Get the kids to do the **eggbeater kick** and start to use their supporting hand in front of their body. For a right-hander, the supporting hand is the left hand which remains in the water and supports the body while the right arm (their throwing arm) holds the ball on the water surface with their palm under the ball. Then get them to lift their throwing arm and keep the ball in the **basic throwing position**. They should use their supporting hand to keep the vertical position.

2

9.2

Have the kids lift the ball in the **basic throwing position**. Let them move to the left, to the right, forwards, and backwards on your signals.

3

9.3

Instruct the kids to hold the ball in the **basic throwing position** and move forward with **eggbeater kicks**. On your signal, have them turn and swim back **dribbling**. Right-handers should turn on their left side. Left-handers should turn on their right side.

3

9.4

Get the kids to **dribble**. On your signal, they should stop, turn back, stop, and assume a vertical position while correcting the position of their body to obtain a perfect **basic throwing position**. As previously, right-handers should turn on their left side and left-handers should turn on their right side.

3

9.5

Finally, get the kids to assume the **basic throwing position** at the beginning without a ball in their hand. On your signal, they should turn 180 degrees clockwise and assume the basic position bringing their legs under their body and correcting their body position. On your next signal, they should turn counterclockwise and assume the basic position. As soon as they do the movement correctly, they should try to do the same drill with a ball in their hand.

PASSING THE BALL IN THE WATER WHILE IN THE BASIC VERTICAL POSITION

OBJECTIVE

As kids can't catch the ball in the air because their hands are so small, the learning process of passing among teammates starts with passing the ball to each other at water level while standing in the **basic vertical position**.

DESCRIPTION

Kids pass the ball to their teammate at arm's length. After assuming the **basic vertical position**, they pass the ball using their throwing arm, slightly curved, to their teammate's supporting hand **21**. Step by step they will learn how to pass as precisely as possible.

THINGS TO CHECK AND CORRECT

Making a precise pass means passing the ball as close as possible to their teammate's hands.

- ✓ The kids should be careful when passing on the water, since the ball often bounces away, so they must pass the ball a bit closer to the point they want it to go.
- ✓ The pass should be rather slow and always follow a curved line.



PASSING THE BALL IN THE WATER WHILE IN THE BASIC VERTICAL POSITION



DRILLS

1

10.1

Have the kids form pairs with one ball per pair. Have one stand on the pool deck and the other stay in the water. The kid on the pool deck should pass the ball to the supporting hand of the kid in the water. The kid in the water has to move the ball on the water surface with the supporting hand and bring it to their right hand. The kid has to pick up the ball from underneath and lift the ball into the **basic throwing position**. Then they should pass the ball to the kid on the pool deck. Have the kids repeat this 6 times and then change roles.

2

10.2

Again, have the kids form pairs with one ball per pair. As before, one kid stands on the pool deck while the other stays in the water. Using their throwing hand, the kid on the pool deck passes the ball first to their teammate's left hand. The kid in the water receives the ball and then passes it back to their teammate, with their left hand. They should repeat this 10–12 times with alternating hands, i.e., once with their right hand and next time with their left hand and then change roles.

1

10.3

Have the kids form pairs with one ball per pair, but this time, they face each other in the pool. The one with the ball lifts the ball up into the **basic throwing position** and passes the ball on the water towards their teammate's supporting hand. Their partner then does the same and passes back the ball.

1

10.4

The kids again form pairs with one ball per pair and assume the **basic vertical position**. One of the kids picks up the ball from underneath and lifts it to assume the **basic throwing position**. They count from 1 to 5 and then pass the ball 2–3 meters from their teammate who swims to the ball and repeats the exercise.

2

10.5

Finally, the kids form pairs with one ball per pair. One of the kids **dribbles** the ball while the other stands. On your signal, the kid with the ball stops, moves the ball from their supporting hand to their throwing hand, assumes the **basic throwing position**, counts 1–2–3, and passes the ball on the water in front of their standing teammate. Have them change roles and repeat on your signal.



GREEN CAP

FOUNDATION LEVEL



As soon as the kids have learned and consolidated the fundamental skills within the **Orange Cap level, they will be ready to move to the **Green Cap** level. You will introduce new skills during your weekly sessions using a series of appropriate drills.**

With the introduction of the **Green Cap** level elements along with all **Orange Cap** elements, the kids are ready to play water polo.

Playing a game of water polo is not the objective of this preparatory phase but from time to time let the kids play and observe how well they are absorbing the different skills. This will also help you see where they need further work.

WHAT THE KIDS WILL LEARN

- ✓ **Sculling** the water with their hands and jumping out of the water vertically or at the sides.
- ✓ Changing direction to their right or left, both with and without the ball.
- ✓ Turning 180 degrees, front to back.
- ✓ Gliding in a **semi-vertical position** with the ball in their hand or gliding with the ball at their back.
- ✓ Passing the ball to a teammate with their wrist while they are **dribbling**.
- ✓ Passing the ball high in the air to their teammate's hand. This is known as a **"dry pass"**. Passing on the water is known as a **"wet pass"**.
- ✓ Shooting the ball.



SCULLING OR MOVING WITH THE USE OF THEIR HANDS



OBJECTIVE

There are situations when the kids will not use classic swimming styles to move in the water. By using their hands under the water as paddles, like synchronized swimmers do, they learn to make a movement called **sculling**. **Sculling** helps them to change horizontal and vertical positions, to start and to stop.

DESCRIPTION

While **sculling**, the arms are perpendicular to the body. They are bent at the elbows so that the water is pushed with the hands. When pushing water in towards the body, the thumbs must be pointing up; when pushing water away from the body, the thumbs must be pointing down. To move in a lateral direction the kids must angle the back of their hands to face the direction they would like to move in, thereby pulling more water in a specific direction.

To make a lateral movement, they should slightly adjust the way they do the **eggbeater kick**. Their hips must be slightly angled in the opposite direction of the movement they want to make. Hand movements also help to lift the body higher. Shoulders should always be out of the water 22.



THINGS TO CHECK AND CORRECT

- ✓ Fingers should be closed.
- ✓ Elbows should be bent.
- ✓ Palms should be not too close or not too far from the kid's body.
- ✓ Check that legs are never straight during the **eggbeater kick**.
- ✓ Feet must be in a flex position with knees wide apart.

SCULLING OR MOVING WITH THE USE OF THEIR HANDS

DRILLS

1

1.1

Have the kids move forward or backwards while sitting on the ball, **sculling** with their hands **23**.

1

1.2

Get the kids moving to the right or left while sitting on the ball, **sculling** with their hands.

1

1.3

While the kids are sitting on a ball, have them turn around in both directions, with their shoulders above water. Mix these three drills and get the kids to follow your directions.

2

1.4

Get the kids to assume a vertical seating position without a ball, knees closed, no **eggbeater kick**. They should **scull** with only their palms supporting their body and move to the side (right or left, forwards or backwards, or alternating).

3

1.5

Finally, have the kids move in a horizontal position backwards, with their legs extended in front, by **sculling** their palms appropriately **24**.



STARTING OFF WITHOUT PUSHING OFF FROM THE WALL



OBJECTIVE

Unlike swimmers, kids in water polo must swim, stop, and then swim again without using the wall of the pool to push off. To do this, they must learn a basic technique we call the **start-off**.

DESCRIPTION

To do the **start-off**, kids should place their left arm in front and their right arm next to their body. The body should be slightly turned to the right, lying on the water surface with the legs in an eggbeater mode. When they start off, they kick a breaststroke kick and make a strong pull with their left arm under their stomach. Their right arm starts to swim forwards **25**. The same technique is used with the body turned towards the other side.



THINGS TO CHECK AND CORRECT

- ✓ Observe the horizontal body positions.
- ✓ The kids should have one arm in front and the other at their side.
- ✓ Heads should be up.
- ✓ **Start-off** should be very quick.

STARTING OFF WITHOUT PUSHING OFF FROM THE WALL

DRILLS

1

2.1

Have the kids assume the **start-off** position. On your signal, they should do a strong breaststroke kick and change the side they are looking to.

1

2.2

Again, have the kids assume the **start-off** position. On your signal, they should do a strong breaststroke kick and swim water polo freestyle with their heads up for 3 meters before stopping and repeating.

1

2.3

Have the kids assume a **start-off** position. On your signal, they should do a strong breaststroke kick, turn onto their back and swim backstroke with breaststroke legs for 3 meters before stopping and repeating.

2

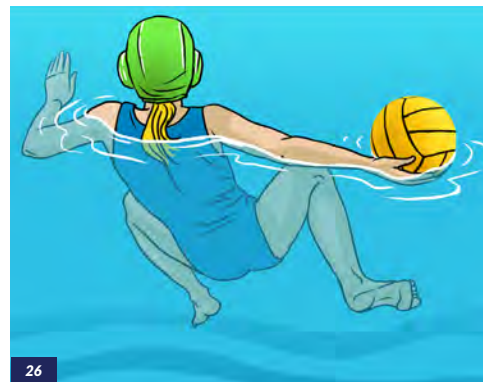
2.4

Again, have the kids assume a **start-off** position with a ball sitting on their palm. On your signal, they should start **dribbling** by pulling with their arm close to their hips combined with a breaststroke kick. They should **dribble** the ball in front of them for 3 meters keeping their head continuously above water **26**.

3

2.5

Have the kids assume a vertical position with both arms out of the water and their legs doing a strong **eggbeater kick**. On your signal, they should change to a **start-off** position. And again, on your signal, they should come back to a vertical position.



26

CHANGING BODY POSITION

(VERTICAL - HORIZONTAL) / WITH A BALL OR WITHOUT



OBJECTIVE

In water polo, players often need to change their body position from vertical to horizontal and vice versa. The aim is to start and stop as soon as possible and reach the vertical or horizontal position quickly **27**.

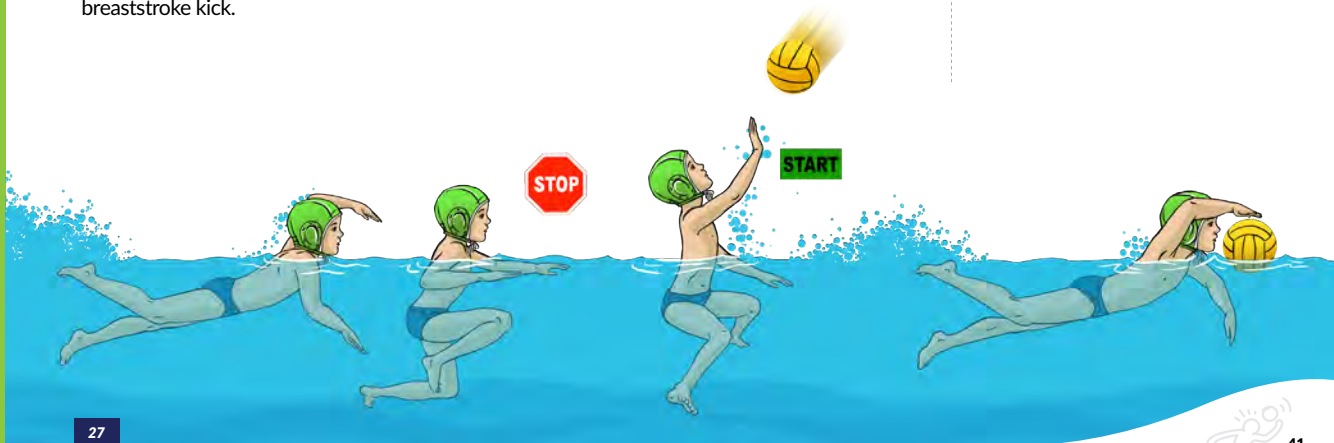
DESCRIPTION

HORIZONTAL TO VERTICAL POSITION: While swimming in a horizontal position, the kids stop by pulling their legs under their stomachs and pushing the water with their supporting hand. As their body moves to a vertical position, they keep their knees high, up to the surface of the water, while their legs do **eggbeater kicks** to support their body vertically.

VERTICAL TO HORIZONTAL POSITION: While the kids stand in a vertical position, they can move their body forward to assume a horizontal position. To do so, they pull their supporting hand under their stomach and with their other hand they do a freestyle stroke combined with a strong breaststroke kick.

THINGS TO CHECK AND CORRECT

- ✓ When the kids stop, they must always pull up their knees and do the **eggbeater kicks** at once.
- ✓ They must start swimming with a strong breaststroke kick.



CHANGING BODY POSITION

(VERTICAL - HORIZONTAL) / WITH A BALL OR WITHOUT



DRILLS

1

3.1

Have the kids assume the **basic vertical position** and go forward doing **eggbeater kicks** while pushing the ball with their hands. On your signal, they should start swimming with the ball using a strong breaststroke kick. On your next signal, they should stop in the **basic vertical position** and go forward doing **eggbeater kicks** with the ball in front of them.

2

3.2

Have the kids assume a **basic throwing position** with a ball in their hand. On your signal, they should start **dribbling** the ball. On your next signal, they should stop and stand up in a **basic throwing position**, doing **eggbeater kicks** with the ball again in their hand.

2

3.3

Get the kids to lie on their back, with a ball at their chest and kicking 5 times with breaststroke kicks. Then have them stop, move to the **basic vertical position**, lift the ball up above their head, and do **eggbeater kicks** for 5 seconds. Have them repeat this.

1

3.4

Instruct the kids to follow your signal. When they see you raise up one arm, they should SWIM. When you raise up both arms, they should STOP. The first kid who starts to swim or stops gets a point. See who can collect the most points.

1

3.5

Finally, instruct the kids to follow your signal. Now, when you raise up one arm, show the kids which direction they should start to SWIM. When you raise up both arms, they should STOP. The first kid who starts to swim or stops gets a point. See who can collect the most points.



CHANGING DIRECTION

WITH OR WITHOUT THE BALL

**OBJECTIVE**

During a water polo match, players constantly change direction without pushing off from the bottom or the sides of the pool while looking at ways to receive the ball and avoid defenders. Defenders move constantly and change direction, following their opponent's moves closely. Step by step, the kids learn the correct use of their arms to facilitate a vigorous change in direction.

DESCRIPTION - WITHOUT THE BALL

To change direction while swimming, the kids at first must pull their legs under their bodies. Without stopping their stroke, they pivot (turn) their trunk toward the side they wish to go. Their outer arms take a wide stroke and help pull their body in the new direction. Their inner arms pull underwater across their body and with an explosive breaststroke kick, they move and change direction **28**.

THINGS TO CHECK AND CORRECT

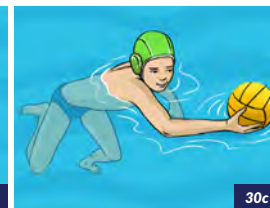
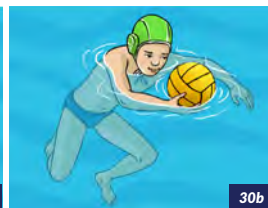
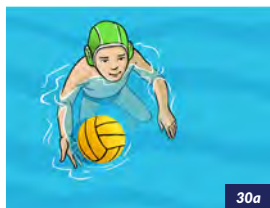
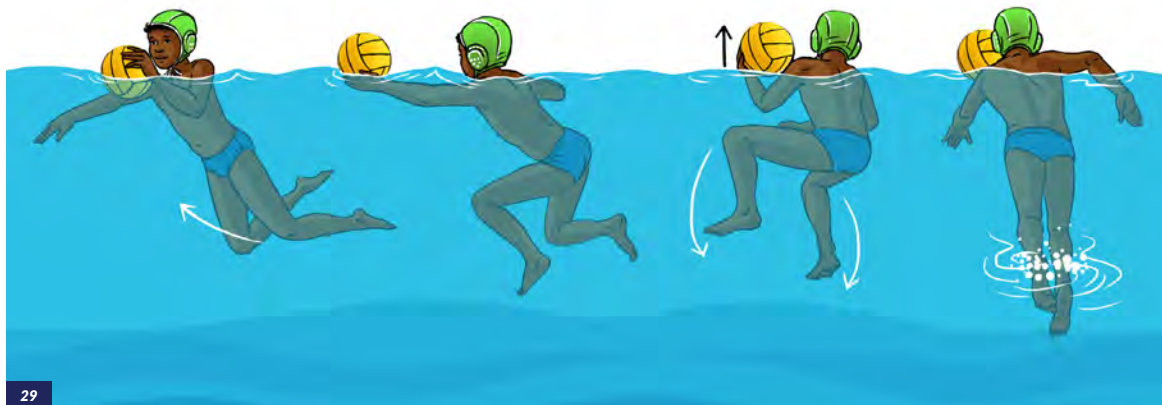
- ✓ Heads should be out of the water.
- ✓ Legs should be brought underneath the body.



CHANGING DIRECTION WITH OR WITHOUT THE BALL

DESCRIPTION - WITH THE BALL

When the kids are **dribbling** and want to turn to the right side, they place their left hand under the ball, bring their legs underneath their body. With the ball sitting on the palm of their hand, they bring the ball to their right side **29**. They do the same with the opposite arm when they need to move to the left **30a** **30b** **30c**.



THINGS TO CHECK AND CORRECT

- ✓ Heads should be out of the water.
- ✓ Legs should be brought underneath the body.

CHANGING DIRECTION WITH OR WITHOUT THE BALL

DRILLS

2

4.1

Have the kids line up in the water in groups of 3 or 4 without a ball. One group at a time, have them swim with their head up and on your signal, turn to the right. After few meters and following a new signal, they should stop and change direction, this time moving first to the left and then back to the right, swapping from left to right until they reach the other side of the pool. As soon as the first group finishes, get the next group to perform the drill on your signal.

2

4.2

Give each kid a ball. Ask them to place their left hand under the ball and move to the right side, with a strong breaststroke kick. Then they should place their right hand under the ball to move to the left. They should continue changing direction, i.e., zig-zagging, without swimming. Make sure they always move with their head up and use a breaststroke kick to change direction to the left or to the right **31**.

3

4.3

Again, have the kids line up in the water in groups of 3 or 4, this time with a ball. One group at a time, have them swim with their head up and on your signal, turn to the right, **dribbling** the ball. After a few meters following a new signal, they should stop and change to the left and then back to the right, swapping from left to right until they reach the other side of the pool. As soon as the first group finishes, get the next group to perform the drill on your signal.

3

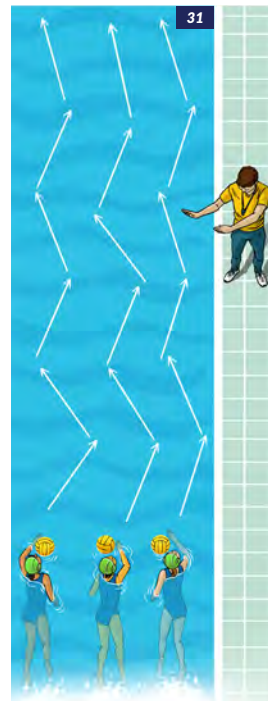
4.4

Have the kids, each with a ball, line up in the water in groups of 3, one in front of the other, 2 meters apart. On your signal, the last one in line should swim with their head up and change direction zig-zagging around the other two kids standing in front. As soon as that kid arrives at the front of the line, the kid now in last place should start swimming, zig-zagging around the other two to reach the front. The two not zig-zagging should stand doing **eggbeater kicks**.

3

4.5

Finally, get the kids to line up in groups of 3 in the water. The 2 kids at either end of the line share a ball. They are the attackers. The kid in the middle is the defender. The attackers must reach the far side of the pool, passing the ball between them carefully, so that the defender cannot steal it. At the end kids rotate positions so another player goes in the middle and become defender.



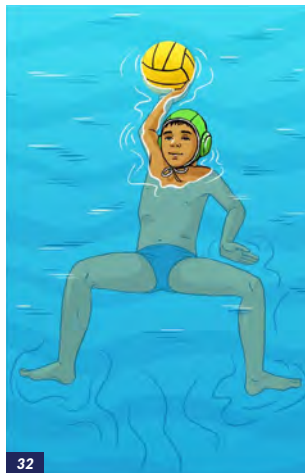
DOING A BREASTSTROKE KICK ON THE BACK WITH A BALL IN HAND

OBJECTIVE

Players often need to move on their back while preparing to pass the ball under pressure from their opponents. These skills require the kids to do a strong breaststroke legwork while in a supine position.

DESCRIPTION

Kids lay on their back with their arms extended backwards. Elbows are slightly bent, and their fingers are open wide with the ball sitting on the palm of their hand. Their supporting hand pushes underwater to help them move backwards. They kick backwards with breaststroke kicks, keeping their knees wide open **32**. When they are not under pressure, they come to the **basic vertical position** and lift the ball into the **basic throwing position** **33**.



THINGS TO CHECK AND CORRECT

- ✓ Heads should be out of the water.
- ✓ Legs should be brought underneath the body.

DOING A BREASTSTROKE KICK ON THE BACK WITH A BALL IN HAND



DRILLS

- 1

5.1

Have the kids lie on their back with a ball in both hands, arms extended backwards, and kicking breaststroke.
- 1

5.2

Have the kids lie on their back with a ball in one hand, their throwing arm extended back on top of the water. Their other arm should be close to their body. Have the kids do breaststroke kicks.
- 2

5.3

Get the kids to lie on their back while kicking breaststroke with a ball sitting on their palm. Their throwing arm should be extended back on top of the water. They should then use their supporting arm – with elbows bent – **sculling** with their hand to push their body backwards.
- 2

5.4

Again, get the kids to lie on their backs with a ball sitting on the palm of their throwing hand. Then they should kick backwards with breaststroke kicks. On your signal, they should change position and assume the **basic throwing position**, correcting their body position appropriately and repeat on your signal.
- 2

5.5

Finally, get the kids, without a ball, to assume a sitting position with their back in a vertical position. They should move backwards kicking with breaststroke kicks while their arms in the water support their body by **sculling** or pushing backwards with simultaneous movements.

GLIDING FORWARD WITH BREASTSTROKE KICKS WHILE HOLDING THE BALL BEHIND

OBJECTIVE

When approaching the attacking zone with the defender well ahead or far behind, rather than swimming with the ball, the kids may slide in a **semi-vertical position**, keeping the ball behind, while using breaststroke kicks to advance.

DESCRIPTION

The kids carry the ball on the water surface, with their palm under the ball. They keep their head out of the water, calmly looking both ahead and behind. Kids should move forward in a **semi-vertical position** doing only breaststroke kicks, keeping the ball behind them. The supporting hand in the front helps to move their body faster while **sculling**.

THINGS TO CHECK AND CORRECT

- ✓ Ball should be carried on the palm of the hand.
- ✓ Fingers should not squeeze the ball.
- ✓ It is important that the kids alternate looking ahead (toward the hypothetical goalkeeper – 34) and behind (toward the hypothetical defender – 35).



34



35

GLIDING FORWARD WITH BREASTSTROKE KICKS WHILE HOLDING THE BALL BEHIND



DRILLS



6.1

Get the kids to alternate **dribbling** for 5 meters and then gliding forward with the ball behind their body for 5 meters.



6.2

Get the kids to change direction by zig-zagging with the ball. On your signal, they should stop and start gliding forward with the ball behind their body.



6.3

Have the kids form pairs with one being the attacker and the other the defender. The attacker should glide forward with the ball behind while the defender follows from 5 meters behind. As the defender approaches the ball, the attacker should bring the ball in front of them and swim forward. On your signal, both players should stop and change roles.



6.4

Tell the kids to lie on their backs with a ball in their hand and move backwards kicking with breaststroke kicks. The ball should be in their throwing hand on the water surface behind them. On your signal, they should stop, change body position, and glide forward with the ball behind them.



6.5

Finally, the kids should glide with the ball behind them for 5 meters and then assume the **basic vertical position** for 5 seconds. Get them to repeat this.

JUMPING OUT FROM THE WATER

(VERTICALLY OR Laterally)



OBJECTIVE

A vertical or lateral in-water jump is a very important element of water polo, not only for goalkeepers but also for players when defending or attacking. To perform the vertical or lateral in-water jump, the kids need to have mastered the **eggbeater kick**, the breaststroke kick, and **sculling**.

DESCRIPTION

Kids assume a ready (prone) position on the water surface, **sculling** with their arms, doing **eggbeater kicks** in the **legs start position** 36.

When they jump, they should do one fast breaststroke kick with one arm stretched upwards trying to reach as high as possible 37. As their body comes down to the water after reaching the highest point, they open their legs wide and start **eggbeater kicks** at once. Their arms and their legs tread water to avoid sinking 38.

Similarly, after the kids jump to the side, they return to the ready/prone position using the arm that's in the water to recover their body position.



THINGS TO CHECK AND CORRECT

- ✓ Three elements – the **eggbeater kick**, the breaststroke kick, and **sculling** – are required for the entire movement, so be sure to notice and correct any mistakes.
- ✓ When the kids jump out of the water, they should nearly close their legs with a fast breaststroke kick.
- ✓ When they land back into the water, they should open their legs wide and start the **eggbeater kick** at once.
- ✓ Their head should always out of the water. Kids should first lift their body up and then jump to the side.



JUMPING OUT FROM THE WATER (VERTICALLY OR Laterally)



DRILLS

1

7.1

Have the kids line up in front of you and jump with one arm high in the air on your signal. Hold your arm up to signal to them to jump vertically; hold your arm out to the side to signal to them to jump laterally.

1

7.2

Get the kids to pair off in the water and practice passing a balloon back and forth to each other.

2

7.3

Have the kids swim in water polo freestyle for 5 meters with their head up, then stop and jump one time with their right arm held high and one time with their left arm held high. Then they should continue swimming and repeat the jumps.

3

7.4

Get the kids to do **eggbeater kicks** with both arms out of the water for about 5 seconds. On your whistle they should start jumping vertically or laterally with their right and left arm, depending on which direction you signal.

2

7.5

Finally, hold a ball or swim board at different heights and see who can reach it with a jump. Make it a competition.

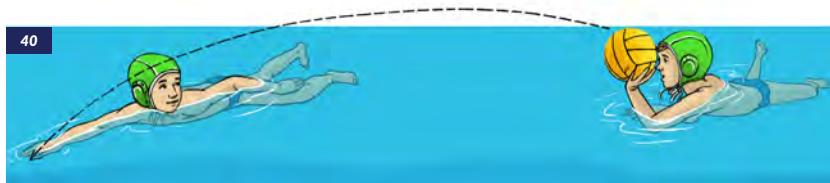
PASSING WITH THE WRIST WHILE SWIMMING WITH THE BALL

OBJECTIVE

A player **dribbling** with the ball often needs to pass to a teammate without stopping and standing in a **basic throwing position** while **lifting the ball** off the water.

DESCRIPTION

When the kids **dribble** with the ball and want to pass from a horizontal position to a teammate close to them, they place their hand under the ball and lift it slightly above the water surface using their arm, wrist, palm, and fingers **39**. They pass the ball with their arm in the water, slightly bent at the elbow. At the same time, they combine the wrist pass with a strong breaststroke kick **40**.



THINGS TO CHECK AND CORRECT

- ✓ Kids should keep their horizontal position without stopping while passing.
- ✓ They should use a breaststroke kick, without dropping their legs underneath their body, and then continue swimming.

PASSING WITH THE WRIST WHILE SWIMMING WITH THE BALL



DRILLS

-
- | | | |
|---|-----|---|
| 1 | 8.1 | Have the kids form pairs with one ball per pair. They should swim close to each other and pass the ball with a wrist pass while swimming. The ball should always move close to the water surface. |
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| 1 | 8.2 | Still swimming in pairs with one ball per pair, the kids should do a wrist pass on your signal without stopping. They must move in a horizontal position and keep swimming. After every wrist pass, they should change direction, keeping about 2 meters distance from each other. |
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| 1 | 8.3 | Still in pairs, ask one kid to stay in a basic vertical position with the ball. They should pass the ball on the water anywhere in a defined area. A second kid should move continuously for the ball and pass it back. Then they can change roles. |
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|---|-----|--|
| 1 | 8.4 | Have one kid stay in a basic vertical position with the ball, but this time they can only pass the ball to their partner when they have made eye-contact. |
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-
- | | | |
|---|-----|--|
| 1 | 8.5 | Again, one kid stays in a basic vertical position with the ball, but now they can only pass the ball to their partner when their partner starts swimming towards them. The pass should be on the water in front of the partner. |
|---|-----|--|
-

PASSING THE BALL TO A TEAMMATE'S HAND



OBJECTIVE

As their skills improve, kids learn to pass the ball to each other from hand to hand. This is much quicker than passing the ball on the water. Once the kids have the ball, they can shoot. But their palm is small, and the ball is big. Therefore, they need to learn a **special ball-catching technique**.

DESCRIPTION

A right-handed kid stands in the water with the ball in a **basic throwing position**. Their right elbow is higher than their ear and the ball is higher than the top of their head. Their left leg is in front and their supporting left-hand pushes the water in front of their body. Their shoulders are turned and out of the water.

The left-handed kid who is waiting for the ball stands facing their teammate. Their right leg is slightly in front. They reach forward with their throwing arm.

When their teammate throws the ball and as the ball reaches the kid's fingertips, their arm slowly goes backwards to the **basic throwing position** and breaks the speed of the approaching ball. At the end of this special catching technique, the ball is in the **basic throwing position** again ⁴¹. This technique helps the kids to keep the big ball on their little palms. When both throwing and catching, the kids should lift their body above the water surface with very fast **eggbeater kicks**.



THINGS TO CHECK AND CORRECT

- ✓ Shoulders should be above the water.
- ✓ The elbow of the throwing arm should be higher than the line of the ear.
- ✓ The opposite leg should be in front.
- ✓ Kids should be in a **basic vertical position**. Don't let them lie on their backs.
- ✓ Knees should be close to the water surface.
- ✓ Before catching, the kid's throwing arm needs to reach forward for the ball.
- ✓ When kids throw or catch the ball, they must lift their body above the water surface. Their eyes should always be on the ball.
- ✓ When throwing the ball, their throwing shoulder should be behind; when catching the ball, their throwing shoulder should be in front.



PASSING THE BALL TO A TEAMMATE'S HAND

DRILLS

2

9.1

Have the kids stand in front of a wall on the pool deck and throw the water polo ball against the wall. When it bounces off the wall, they should catch it using the right technique. Shoulders, trunk, and hips should be turned away before throwing. When turned back, hips, trunks, and shoulders give more energy and speed to the ball when the kids throw it. It is easier to catch the ball if the speed is slower.

2

9.2

Get the kids to throw the ball at a rebound board in the water and concentrate on using the special catching technique to catch it.

2

9.3

The kids stand very close to the rebound board in the water and

- a) throw and catch the ball by moving their wrist only.
- b) throw and catch the ball by moving their forearm and their wrist only.
- c) throw and catch the ball moving their shoulders, arm, and wrist.
- d) throw and catch the ball moving their trunk, shoulders, arm, and wrist.
- e) throw and catch the ball moving their hips, trunk, shoulders, arm, and wrist.

2

9.4

Get the kids to pass the ball to each other from a distance of 2 meters. Make it a competition to see which pair has the best technique.

3

9.5

Try another competition to see which pair can pass the most times in one minute. It doesn't matter if the ball drops onto the water.

THROWING THE BALL – SHOOTING



OBJECTIVE

Kids can throw the ball in different ways to each other in the water. The throws that go to the goal are stronger and faster; we call them *shots*. All the other are considered *passes*. The basic technique of shooting and passing are the same. The main goal at such a young age is to improve the throw's length and precision.

DESCRIPTION

BASIC POSITION BEFORE THROWING FOR A RIGHT-HANDED KID:

- Left leg is in front.
- Left hand is in front.
- Knees are pulled up close to the water level.
- Hips and shoulders are turned to the right side.
- Ball is sitting on the palm of the right hand, higher than the line of the head.
- Elbow is higher than the line of the ear.

THE THROW:

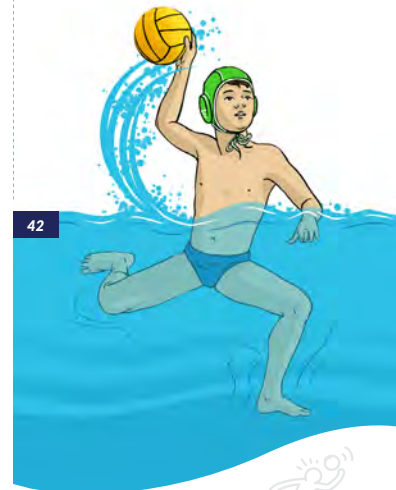
The ball sits on the palm waiting to 'fly'. The kids must lift their body out of the water and lift the ball as high as they can. The ball has zero speed when the kids have it in their hand.

Kids must give the speed and energy to the ball during the throw. When the ball leaves the throwing hand's fingertips, it flies with maximum speed. At the last moment of the throw, the shoulders swap direction – the shoulder that was behind comes to the front.

Right-handed players should keep their left shoulders in front before shooting. The fingertips help to direct the ball to the target **42**.






THINGS TO CHECK AND CORRECT

- ✓ The opposite leg and hand must be in front.
- ✓ The opposite hand – the supporting hand – helps to raise the body out of the water.
- ✓ The elbow of the throwing arm must be higher than the line of the ears.
- ✓ Shoulders must change position with each other during the throw.
- ✓ The wrist 'says': Bye-bye!



THROWING THE BALL – SHOOTING

DRILLS

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- | | | |
|---|-------------|--|
|  1 | 10.1 | Have the kids throw the ball from the side of the pool into the water using the correct movements. |
|---|-------------|--|
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- | | | |
|---|-------------|--|
|  1 | 10.2 | Again, with the correct movements, have the kids throw the ball from the water as far as they can. |
|---|-------------|--|
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- | | | |
|---|-------------|---|
|  2 | 10.3 | From the basic throwing position , get the kids to throw the ball to the goal, concentrating on the correct technique. |
|---|-------------|---|
-
- | | | |
|---|-------------|---|
|  3 | 10.4 | Make a target – a circle on a shooting board, a cap hanging on the goal, or a ball on the water – and get the kids to throw the ball from the water towards it. |
|---|-------------|---|
-
- | | | |
|---|-------------|--|
|  3 | 10.5 | Finally, have the kids shoot the ball toward a goalkeeper. |
|---|-------------|--|
-

THESE SAMPLE PROGRAMMES FOR BLUE CAP, ORANGE CAP, AND GREEN CAP LEVELS ARE JUST THAT – SAMPLES.

YOU, AS THE INSTRUCTOR, SHOULD **ADAPT EACH SESSION TO YOUR REALITY, WHETHER YOU ARE TEACHING KIDS OR BEGINNERS.** WE STRONGLY RECOMMEND FIRST REVIEWING THE ENTIRE SCOPE OF THE PROGRAMME AND THEN ADAPTING IT AS APPROPRIATE.



Use the following sample schedules for 2 to 4 weekly sessions.

The basic scheme consists of 15 minutes on the pool deck and 60 minutes in the water.



During an 8–10-month season, all **Blue Cap**, **Orange Cap**, and **Green Cap** associated skills and drills should alternate within the daily/weekly and monthly schedule.



Maintain a log and track all elements you introduce and work with during the entire season.

This will help you assess your work at the end of the season.





**BLUE
CAP**

INTRODUCTORY
LEVEL

SAMPLE WEEKLY PROGRAMMES

BLUE CAP LEVEL

(UP TO TWO TIMES PER WEEK)



DAY 1

1. 15 minutes on deck
2. 7-minute warm-up:
 - Medley of freestyle-breaststroke-backstroke
 - Legs freestyle, breaststroke
3. 10 minutes of swimming and correction
4. 10 minutes of water polo swimming
5. 20 minutes of Blue Cap skills and drills
(2 Blue Cap skills or drills X 10 minutes each)
6. 10 minutes of passing
(basic position with the ball – passing in pairs)
7. 3-minute cool-down

DAY 2

1. 15 minutes on deck
2. 7-minute warm-up:
 - Medley of freestyle-breaststroke-backstroke
 - Legs freestyle, breaststroke
3. 10 minutes of swimming and correction
4. 10 minutes of water polo swimming
5. 20 minutes of Blue Cap skills and drills
(2 Blue Cap skills or drills X 10 minutes each)
different than the previous day
6. 10 minutes of passing
(basic position with the ball – passing in pairs)
7. 3-minute cool-down





**ORANGE
CAP**

ELEMENTARY
LEVEL

SAMPLE WEEKLY PROGRAMMES

ORANGE CAP LEVEL

(UP TO THREE TIMES PER WEEK)

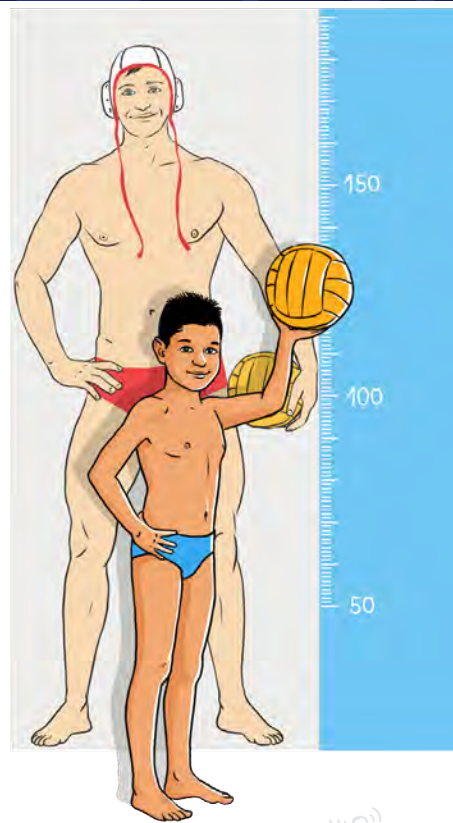


DAY 1

1. 15 minutes on deck
2. **7-minute warm-up:**
 - Medley of freestyle-breaststroke-backstroke
 - Legs freestyle, breaststroke
3. 10 minutes of swimming and correction
4. 10 minutes of water polo swimming
5. 20 minutes of **Orange Cap** skills and drills
(2 Orange Cap skills or drills X 10 minutes each)
6. 10 minutes of passing
(basic position with the ball – passing in pairs)
7. 3-minute cool-down

DAY 2 – DAY 3

1. 15 minutes on deck
2. **7-minute warm-up:**
 - Medley of freestyle-breaststroke-backstroke
 - Legs freestyle, breaststroke
3. 10 minutes of swimming and correction
4. 10 minutes of water polo swimming
5. 20 minutes of **Orange Cap** skills and drills
(2 Orange Cap skills or drills X 10 minutes each)
different than the previous day
6. 10 minutes of passing
(basic position with the ball – passing in pairs)
7. 3-minute cool-down





**GREEN
CAP**

**FOUNDATION
LEVEL**

SAMPLE WEEKLY PROGRAMMES

GREEN CAP LEVEL

(UP TO FOUR TIMES PER WEEK)



DAY 1

1. **15 minutes on deck**
2. **10-minute warm-up:**
 - Medley of freestyle-breaststroke-backstroke
 - Legs freestyle, breaststroke, eggbeater
3. **15 minutes of swimming and correction**
combined with water polo swimming
4. **10 minutes of Orange Cap skills and drills**
(1 Orange Cap skill or drill X 10 minutes) –
consolidation of skills learned in Orange Cap level
5. **30 minutes of Green Cap skills and drills**
(3 Green Cap skills or drills X 10 minutes each)
6. **20 minutes of passing**
(basic position with the ball – passing in pairs)
7. **5-minute cool-down**

DAY 2 – DAY 3 – DAY 4

1. **15 minutes on deck**
2. **10-minute warm-up:**
 - Medley of freestyle-breaststroke-backstroke
 - Legs freestyle, breaststroke, eggbeater
3. **15 minutes of swimming and correction**
combined with water polo swimming
4. **10 minutes of Orange Cap skills and drills**
(1 Orange Cap skill or drill X 10 minutes) –
consolidation of skills learned in Orange Cap level
5. **30 minutes of Green Cap skills and drills**
(3 Green Cap skills or drills X 10 minutes each)
different than the previous day
6. **20 minutes of passing**
(basic position with the ball – passing in pairs)
7. **5-minute cool-down**

OBJECTIVE

WATER POLO IS A GAME.

TEACHING WATER POLO INCLUDES SHORT, AGE-RELATED GAMES.

- In these games, kids use the skills they have learned in a complex way, connecting one skill to another.
- The games improve their water polo thinking and teach the kids the basic tactics.
- They have fun while gaining important knowledge.

CHECK AND CORRECT:

- ✓ Always correct the kids' movements during the games.

1. POINTS

BLUE CAP
LEVEL

6-8
PLAYERS

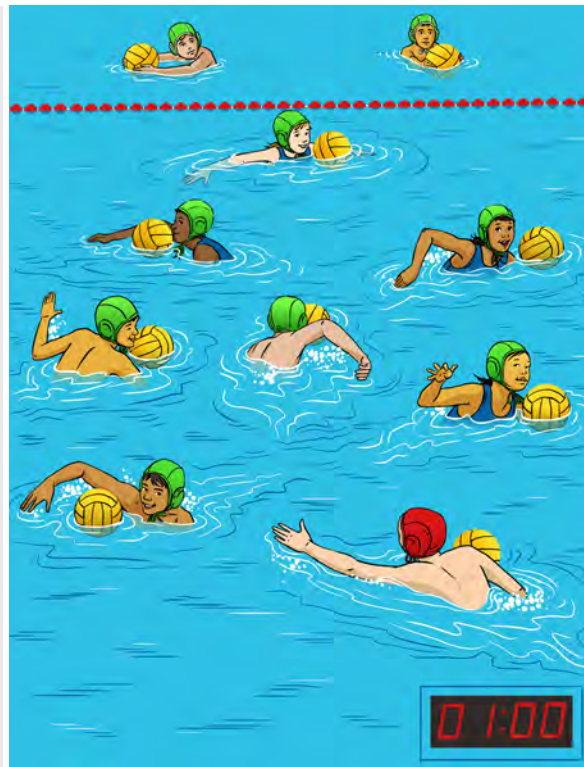
TWO TEAMS PLAY, EACH HAS 3 OR 4 PLAYERS. THE GOAL IS TO COMPLETE 5 PASSES WITHIN THE TEAM. EACH SET OF 5 PASSES IS WORTH 1 POINT.

- Team A starts. If Team B manages to steal the ball, they can then try to complete the 5 passes.
- After 5 successful passes, a team is awarded 1 point and the other team gets to start.



2. TAG

- The tagger has a ball, and they have to touch others with it.
- Everyone has a ball.
The first person to get touched by a ball becomes the tagger.
- Select 5 taggers.
They each get 1 minute to tag as many kids as they can.
The one with the most tags wins.
These time taggers can touch the others by hand.



BLUE CAP
LEVEL

3-10
PLAYERS

3. PIGGY IN THE MIDDLE

**TWO ATTACKERS, 1 DEFENDER IN A LINE OR
5 ATTACKERS IN THE OUTER-RING, 3 DEFENDERS
IN THE INNER-RING:**

- The attackers get a point if they can complete 5 passes without a defender touching the ball.
- The defenders get a point if they can steal the ball from the attackers or touch the ball.
- 10 players with 3 balls: The ball has to be passed to the attacker who is being chased by a defender, except if they have a ball.

BLUE CAP
LEVEL

3-10
PLAYERS



4. PENALTY SHOOTOUT

GREEN CAP
LEVEL

UNLIMITED
PLAYERS

PLAYED WITH 1 BALL. EVERYONE GETS 5 LIVES, EXCEPT THE GOALIE, WHO GETS 6.

- The shooters line up and take turns shooting at the goal.
Whoever scores goes to the end of the line; whoever misses becomes the goalie.
- A life can be lost only if the goalie doesn't save a shot.
- There is no need to wait for the goalie to reach the goal.
Shooters can shoot as soon as they get the ball.
- Whoever loses all their lives is eliminated and becomes a spectator.
- The last player standing is the winner.

5. IMITATION

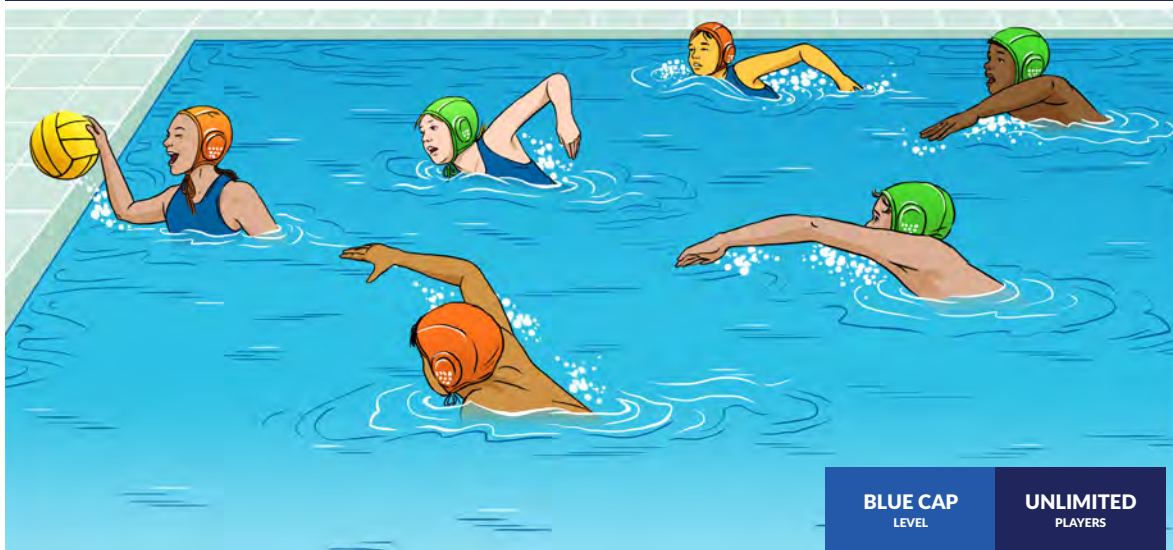
ORANGE CAP
LEVEL

2
PLAYERS

PAIRS PLAY WITH EACH OTHER: ONE IS A BALL HANDLER, THE OTHER THE IMITATOR.

- The imitator needs to recreate every move the ball handler makes.

6. WATER RUGBY



BLUE CAP
LEVEL

UNLIMITED
PLAYERS

TWO TEAMS PLAY AGAINST EACH OTHER; THE GOALS ARE BOTH ENDS OF THE POOL.

- Points are scored when a team touches the opposite end of the pool with the ball.

7. GET THE BALL

ORANGE CAP
LEVEL

3
PLAYERS



**TEAMS OF 3 WITH 2 KIDS LINED UP NEXT TO EACH OTHER
5 METERS FROM THEIR THIRD TEAMMATE WHO IS OUT ON THE POOLSIDE WITH THE BALL.**

- On your signal, the third teammate drops the ball into the water in front of the 2 other kids.
- The winner is the one who reaches the ball first.
- Rotate so everyone gets to play both roles.

PARTICIPATION CERTIFICATES



Kids learn the skills of the **Blue**, **Orange** and **Green** Cap levels at a different rhythm, because of their different levels of coordination, differences in age, or the length of time they devote to practicing these skills.

At the end of the 8–10-month season, don't think in terms of some kids passing to the next level while others failed. The main objective is the continuous refinement of the skills and ultimately the mastery of all with time.

At the end of the season, award each kid with a Swim&Play Ball Participation Certificate.

Acceptable participation is when a kid has followed 70% of the entire volume of sessions and learned the 10 skills for both Cap levels. Have them take a simple test of selected drills for each level as follows.





BLUE CAP

INTRODUCTORY
LEVEL

PARTICIPATION CERTIFICATES

BLUE CAP LEVEL

(4 EXERCISES)



WATER POLO SWIMMING SKILLS

- 25 meters head-up freestyle kicks with the ball
- 25 meters head-up water polo freestyle
- 25 meters breaststroke kicks with ball
- 25 meters **dribbling** (swimming with the ball)





ORANGE CAP

ELEMENTARY
LEVEL

PARTICIPATION CERTIFICATES

ORANGE CAP LEVEL

(6 EXERCISES)



WATER POLO SWIMMING SKILLS

- 25 meters head-up water polo freestyle with breaststroke kicks
- 25 meters head-up water polo freestyle with breaststroke kicks switching to water polo backstroke with breaststroke kicks after 5 arm strokes
- 25 meters **dribbling** (swimming with the ball)

EGGBEATER KICK

- 20 seconds of **eggbeater kicks** with both hands up
- 20 seconds in the **basic throwing position** with a ball in the hand
- 10x picking the ball from underneath with the help of the supporting hand and passing in the water (2 meters ahead)





GREEN CAP

FOUNDATION
LEVEL

PARTICIPATION CERTIFICATES

GREEN CAP LEVEL

(9 EXERCISES)



WATER POLO SWIMMING SKILLS

- 25 meters **dribbling** – every 5 meters stop and assume the **basic throwing position** for 5 seconds
- **Dribbling** zig-zagging for 12.5 meters and then returning also zig-zagging
- 25 meters **gliding with the ball behind** 2 meters then **dribbling** for 5 meters

SCULLING – JUMPING – PASSING WHILE DRIBBLING

- 30 seconds of **sculling** in the ready (prone) position with shoulders above the water
- Holding the **basic vertical position** and alternating jumping out of the water, with the right arm, left arm, then both arms, jumping to the right and then to the left, 3 times
- Passing with the wrist while **dribbling** in pairs 2 meters from each other

BALL HANDLING

- 10 passes with a teammate at a 2–3-meter distance with the ball not falling in the water
- 5 shots to an empty cage (2.15 m X 0.75m) and using the right techniques
- 5x swimming with the ball from the 10-meter line to the 5-meter line then stopping and shooting at an empty cage using the right techniques – starting, **dribbling**, **lifting the ball**, shooting

Basic throwing position

Ball is higher than the top of the head.
Supporting arm and opposite leg are in front.

Basic vertical position

Remaining stable in the water and maintaining a constant vertical position using the **eggbeater kick**.

Dribble/dribbling

Moving forward with hands at each side of the ball creating a protective fence with the arms.

Eggbeater kick

A leg, breaststroke-type kick, with a wide kicking base alternating with the kicking motion of each leg that creates a stable base and allows the player to ride high and stable.

Gliding with the ball behind

Rather than swimming with the ball, the player slides in a **semi-vertical position** keeping the ball behind, while using breaststroke kicks to advance.

Legs start position

Knees almost in line with the hips.

Lifting the ball

Lifting the ball into the **basic throwing position** behind the body is like lifting a tray.

Picking up the ball

Picking up the ball from underneath using one hand only – like lifting a tray.

Sculling

Using the hands under the water as paddles, like artistic swimmers do.

Semi-vertical position

Between vertical and horizontal (45 degrees).

Special ball-catching technique

As the ball reaches the player's fingertips, their arm slowly goes backwards to the **basic throwing position** and breaks the speed of the approaching ball.

Start-off

Starting to swim without using the side of the pool to push off.





Fair play

Teamwork

Respect

Discipline

Work ethic

Enjoyment

Courage





FÉDÉRATION
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