



Mini Polo Badge Award

Summary

These tests have been produced under the auspices of Kent ASA's Water Polo Future Development sub-committee. The tests are designed for mini polo players aged 12 or under. The aim is to guide coaches by specifying a set of skills that should be built over a period of time by mini polo players and to recognise and reward achievement of these skills by individuals.

Test Set-up

The award comprises four individual test areas. All four test areas must be passed for a player to earn the award of the KCASA Mini Polo Skills Badge. Ideally all four tests should be attempted in a single testing session but testing can be spread over two sessions if this is deemed necessary. If this is done then a warm up should be arranged prior to the second session in order to simulate the tiredness that candidates would have should they have taken the full test in a single session.

There is some progression implicit within the tests in that swimming strokes (test 1) provide the foundation skill for swimming with a ball (test 3) and eggbeater (test 2) is the foundation for throwing & catching (test 4). Tests should be taken in numerical order and tests 3 and 4 should not be taken until tests 1 and 2 have been passed. This should emphasise the importance of teaching eggbeater at as early a stage as is possible.

Where a ball is used it should be a mini water polo ball. The swimming tests can be done in shallow water but the eggbeater and throwing & catching tests must be done in water of sufficient depth such that feet do not touch the bottom. In preparation for mini and water polo game play, goggles should not be worn for any of the tests.

Testing must be undertaken by a coach accredited by Kent ASA's Water Polo Secretary. One or more counters/assistants also need to be involved, particularly if several candidates are being examined at one session.

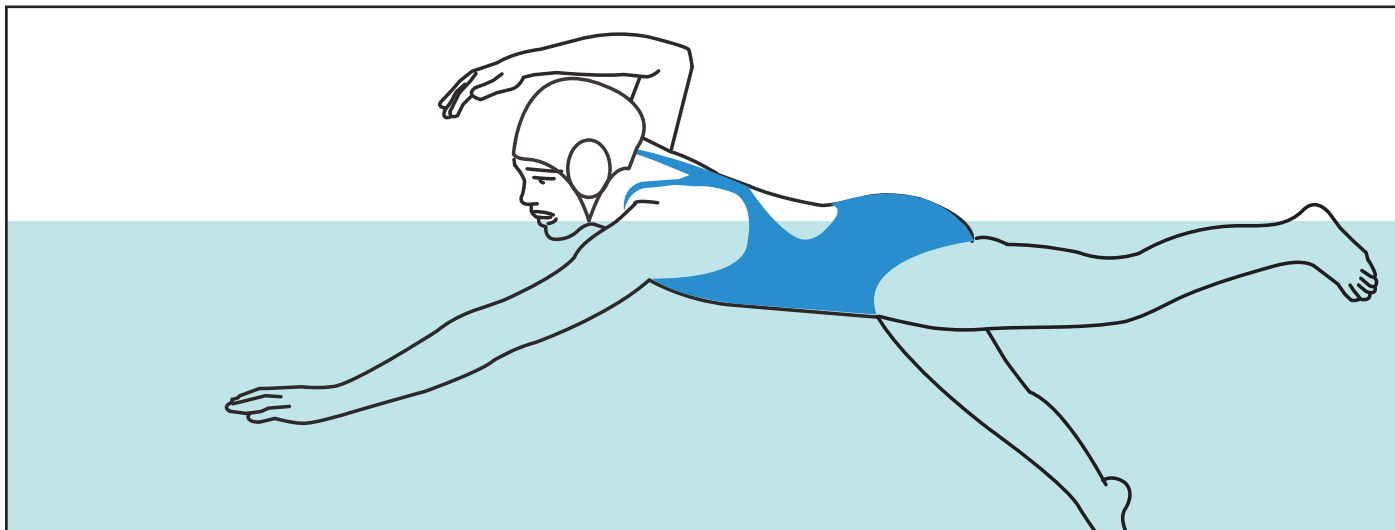
A scale of fees will be established. Different rates will be specified for the test and for individual test re-examinations. The rate will also be varied as necessary to reflect pool hire costs.

Tests must be passed at the first attempt on the day unless a specific re-sit exemption is specified but subsequent re-examination of individual tests that were not passed originally is allowed. Should there be time available immediately after the test session is completed, the re-sits may be arranged there and then at no extra cost. Otherwise re-examinations will be subject to a fee.



Test Area 1: Swimming Strokes & Fitness

Exercise 1.A Demonstrate a good head-up water polo freestyle stroke.



Set-up

The exercise involves two warm-up widths and then two examined swims each of one width. For the first part of the test two individual widths are swum with the examiner giving coaching advice as necessary. Then two further one width swims are done. The examiner observes these swims to decide whether or not all of the coaching points are being met. Note that for this and all other exercises involving swimming widths, it is assumed that the width is about 12.5m. If it is less than 10m or more than 16m then the swim should be over 12.5m of the length of the pool.

Coaching Points

- Head up and still (no underwater glides and head not flicking from side to side)
- Short stroke with elbows high (well clear of the water)
- Good strong leg kick (feet breaking the water)
- Reasonable speed maintained over all four widths that are swum (this is judged subjectively and allowing for age)

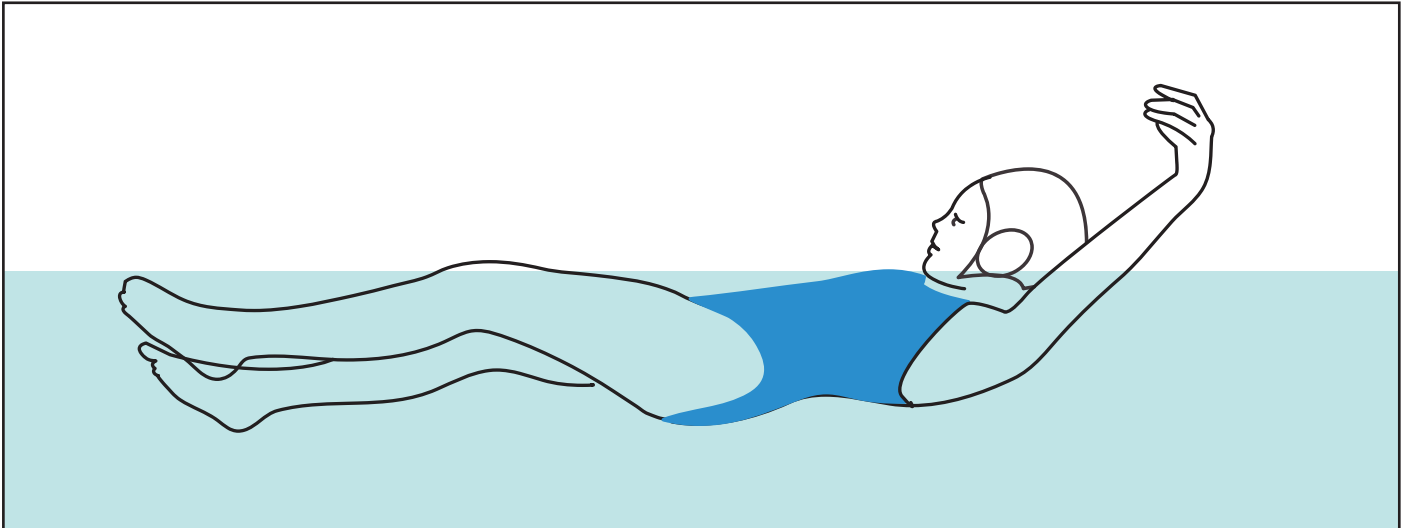
Test Criteria

The main aim is to demonstrate a good style with all four of the coaching points achieved for the two observed widths. Speed, and implicitly fitness, is assessed over the four widths of each of this and the immediately following water polo backstroke test. The examiner will apply judgment concerning speed/fitness taking relative age into account and recognizing the idea that at this stage in a player's development, style is more important than speed.



Test Area 1: Swimming Strokes & Fitness

Exercise 1.B: Demonstrate a good water polo backstroke



Set-up

The exercise involves two warm-up widths and then two examined swims each of one width. The candidate starts off swimming a few strokes of water polo freestyle and then rolls onto their back in order to establish a view behind. They make eye contact with the examiner who observes the stroke style and then gives a nod of the head to signal the time to roll back to the freestyle position. The candidate does this and completes the width swimming water polo freestyle. The examiner must either change sides after each width or be helped by an assistant on the far side of the pool. The role of the assistant is simply to make eye contact and nod to indicate that the swimmer should return to swimming on their front. For the first part of the test two individual widths are swum with the examiner giving coaching advice as necessary. The test is then undertaken over two further one width swims on which the examiner decides whether or not all of the coaching points are being met.

Coaching Points

- Head raised high so as to have a clear view backwards (not held back so as to view the ceiling)
- Short stroke with arms entering clearly wide and to the side of the body
- Reasonable leg kick (breaking the surface of the water)
- Quick transition to and from the backstroke position (the aim is quickly to establish a clear view behind and then be able to revert to swimming on one's front)
- Reasonable speed maintained over all four widths that are swum (this is judged subjectively and allowing for age)

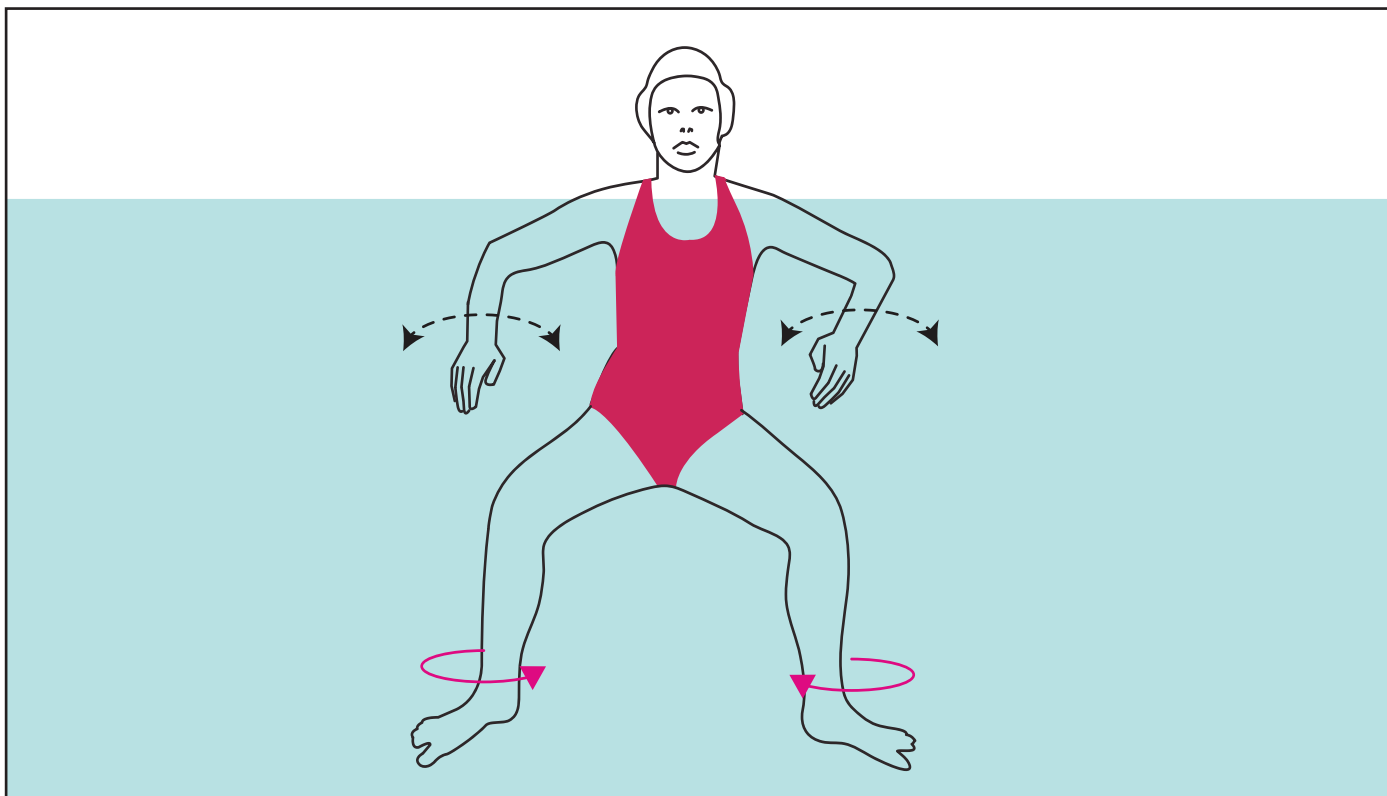
Test Criteria

The main aim is to demonstrate a good backstroke style with all five of the coaching points achieved for the two observed widths. Speed, and implicitly fitness, is assessed over the four widths of each of this and the immediately preceding water polo freestyle test. The examiner will apply judgment concerning speed/fitness taking relative age into account. This second swimming test provides the main opportunity to assess fitness and candidates would be failed should they show excessive tiredness.



Test Area 2: Eggbeater

Exercise 2.A Demonstrate good competence at the basic “at rest” eggbeater treading water skill.



Set-up

This is assessed through observing the candidate’s ability to maintain for 30 seconds a relaxed position in deep water through a combination of eggbeater legs and sculling with both hands.

Coaching Points

- Correct body position – vertical trunk; legs spread out and wide from hips; upper leg is approaching parallel with the water level
- Correct eggbeater leg kick - lower legs beating in the alternating eggbeater fashion not in a breast stroke or flutter kick motion
- Both hands operating in the support scull motion – working from bent elbows; hands operating together in a waving fashion; thumbs up when moving in and down when moving out
- Head maintained throughout the exercise in a steady position well above the water level; breathing is easy.

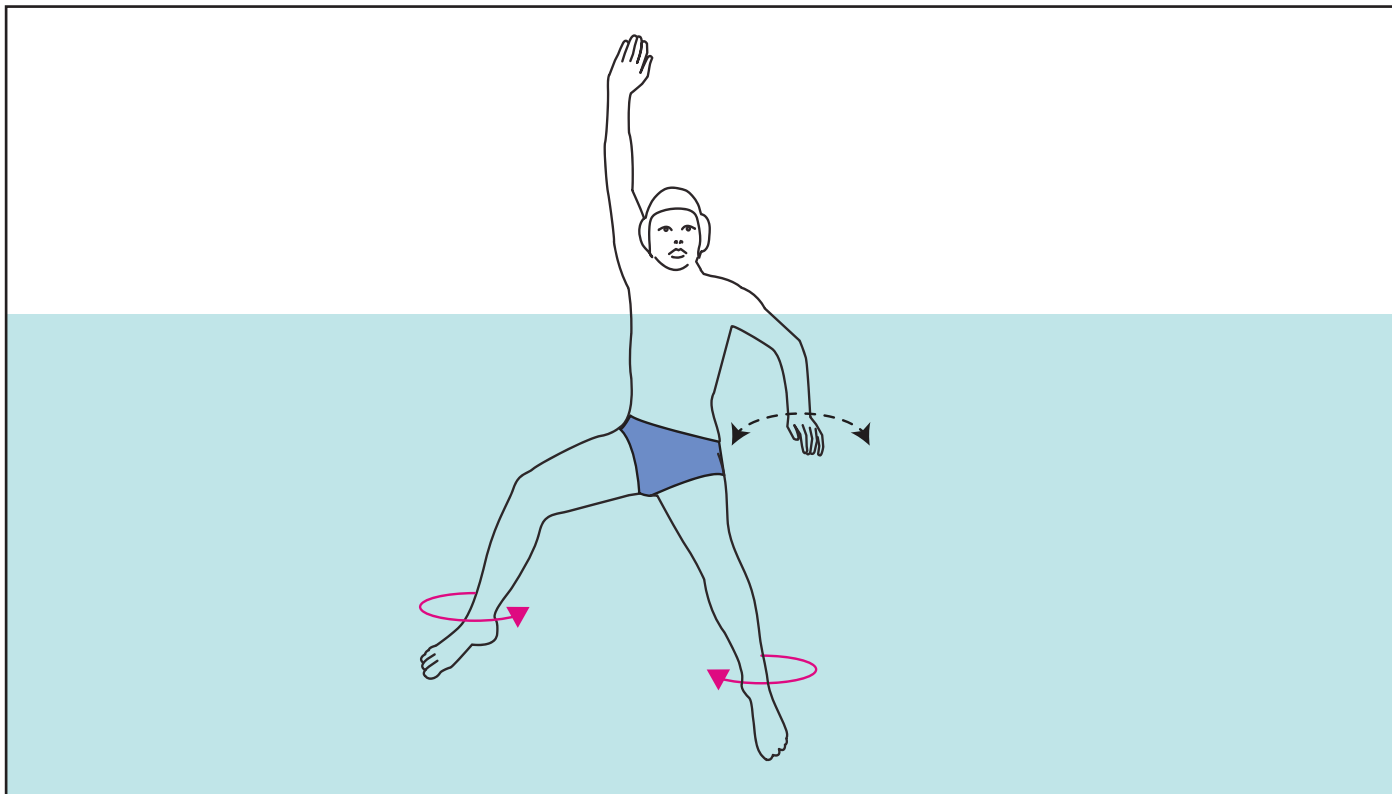
Test Criteria

The requirement is to demonstrate and hold the position for 30 seconds. Some latitude can be given concerning the correct body position but a flutter or breast stroke leg kick would result in a fail. The candidate should appear to find this exercise easy and not have to exert excessive energy simply to stay with the mouth well clear of the water.



Test Area 2: Eggbeater

Exercise 2.B Demonstrate good competence at applying the eggbeater kick to support the body with one arm out of the water for 15 seconds in a blocking or catching position.



Set-up

This exercise is done in deep water. It is assessed through observing the candidate's ability to maintain one arm raised for 15 seconds while doing eggbeater kick with the legs and a sculling action with the second arm.

Coaching Points

- Basic Eggbeater as defined in exercise 2.A above although one shoulder may be lowered in order to raise the other.
- Raised arm is held straight and steady (not waving about); top of the shoulder on the supporting side is visible above the water.
- Some exertion is expected as candidates should be working to their full potential to raise the arm as high as is possible.

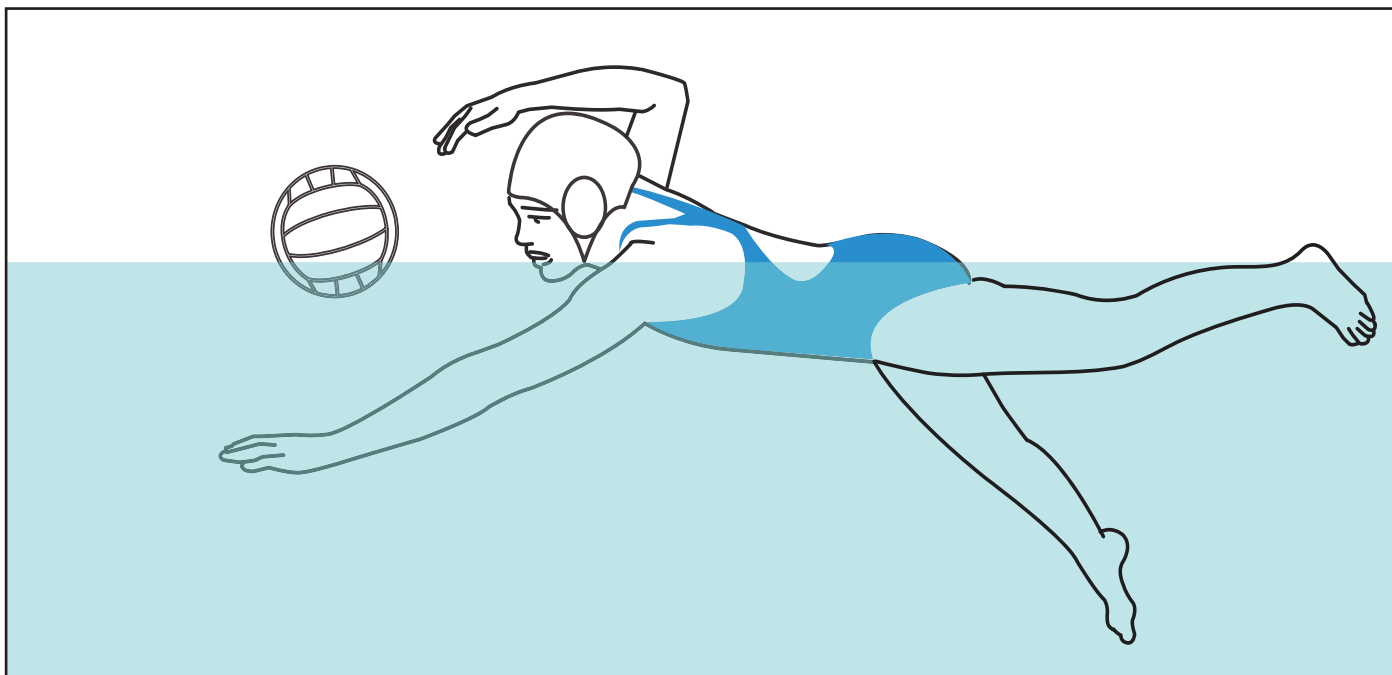
Test Criteria

The raised arm must be held up and with minimal movement for at least 15 seconds. The above three coaching points must all be achieved. Note in particular the need to use the eggbeater kick and not, for example, breast stroke.



Test Area 3: Swimming with a Ball

Exercise 3.A Demonstrate good competence at swimming with a ball.



Set-up

This is carried out in a similar manner to Exercise 1.A with two warm-up widths and then two examined swims each of one width. The test is done as a set of four one width swims with only short intervals between each. Swimming fitness is assessed based on all four widths. The examiner can provide feedback to the candidate at the end of each of the two warm-up widths but no corrections are to be given during the examined widths.

Coaching Points

- Basic water polo freestyle as outlined in Exercise 1.A swum in a straight line across the pool.
- The ball is propelled along within the “cocoon” created by the head and high elbows and with minimum touching by the hands or arms.
- Ball is always maintained within an arm’s length reach and is not thrown ahead at the start.
- Reasonable speed maintained over all four widths that are swum (this is judged subjectively and allowing for age).

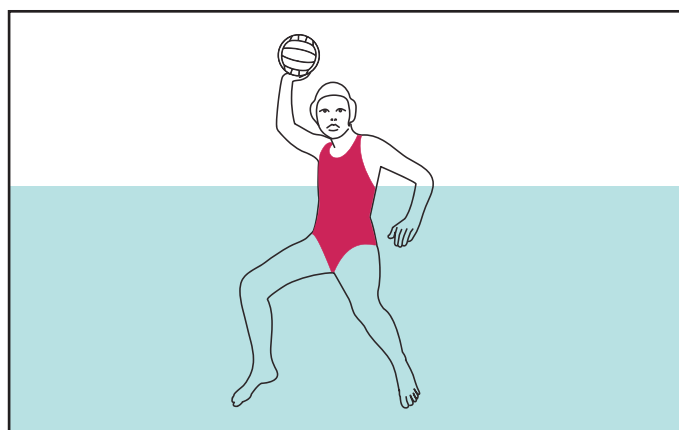
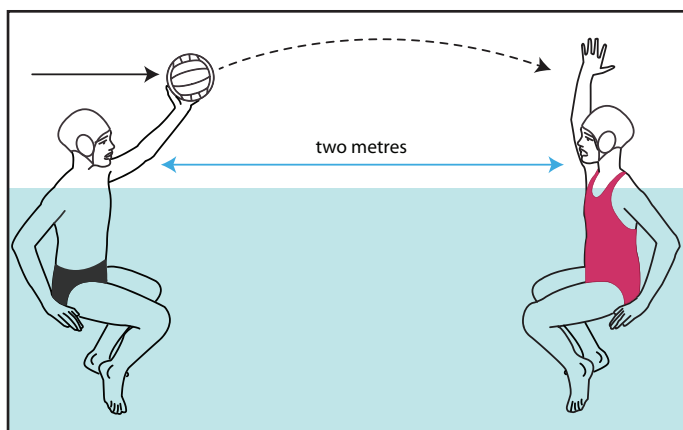
Test Criteria

All four coaching points must be achieved on the two examined widths. The direction of the swim must be straight across the pool and not at an angle or with an obvious zig-zag path. Some contact with the ball is permitted but a good part of each width should be done with no contact with the ball. Speed, and implicitly fitness, is assessed over the two warm-up widths and then the two examined swims. Style is more important than speed but a candidate should be failed if they show an obvious lack of speed or fitness.



Test Area 4: Throwing & Catching

Exercise 4.A Demonstrate the ability to throw to, and receive passes from, a partner who is two metres away, using a one-handed action.



Set-up

This test is undertaken with a partner who has already achieved at least the Bronze Water Polo badge level of skill. The candidate and their more skilled partner are positioned in deep water facing each other and two metres apart. A total of five passes must be given and these should alternate with the receipt of five passes from the partner. All passes are given and received with the use of just one hand. The receiver should indicate where they wish to receive the pass by holding their preferred hand in that place.

Coaching Points

- The receiving hand is raised to present a target. The ball should arrive very slightly above the receiving hand.
- Ball is brought under control by being taken backwards in the hand after receipt.
- The pass is set up before it is given by ensuring the body is in a good position with eggbeater kick supporting a vertical body trunk and the other hand working in a sculling motion to support the throwing arm above the water
- Pass uses the full body rather than being just from the elbow and is reasonably on target. The shoulders and trunk should rotate as the pass is given.
- Pass is sufficiently looped and on target so as to facilitate an easy catch by the receiver.

Test Criteria

At least 7 of the 10 passes given/received must be received “dry” and with a good style. Errors caused by the partner would not count and such passes should be retaken. A second attempt to achieve the required standard is permitted within the test if the first attempt is narrowly failed (i.e. if five or six passes are given /received “dry” or if there are minor style errors). The assessment is of style as well as the number of dry passes. A good attempt must be made at all of the five coaching points although some mistakes are permitted. Note in particular the need to take the ball backwards after its receipt. Larger players may be able simply to grab a small mini polo ball in their fingers, but even if they do this, they must demonstrate the basic technique which does involve taking the ball backwards after receipt.