

HEALTH
MOVE

Winning Strokes

Hit the pool ready to work the lap lane with on-land exercises that sculpt and stretch **BY NATALIE GINGERICH MACKENZIE**

MOST OF US HAVE made the mistake: When the mercury climbs, we're so ready to ditch the throbbing soundtrack and stale air of the gym for the cool of the pool that we overdo it entirely. Dozens of laps later, we emerge from the water feeling virtuous, only to wake up the next morning so sore we can barely get out of bed.

But swimming isn't a workout to skip. Water provides up to 15 times the resistance of air, meaning your muscles have to work harder to complete every movement. Swimming is also easy on the joints. "It's one of the best total-body exercises you can do," says Chris Webb, a swim coach in Charlotte, North Carolina, who works with veteran Olympians and Olympic hopefuls.

And water is good for the soul. According to a study in *Environmental Science & Technology*, workouts done in or near bodies of water provide a bigger boost to mood than do other outdoor activities. One theory is that our ancestors' positive associations with life-supporting water got passed on to us.

Still, Webb says, "when it comes down to it, swimming can be pretty unnatural." That's why doing land-based moves to ward off muscle imbalances, practice movement patterns, and prep the nervous system before diving in is key. He created this routine to "bulletproof" the body against injury and soreness while helping you nab the perks of the pool—including a gold-medal figure—on dry land.

PADDLE PERFECT
Vive la resistance band: Control the difficulty of these moves by adjusting your distance from the anchor. For a greater challenge, step away from it. To ease up, shuffle in closer.

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THE PLAN

You'll need a light-resistance rubber band and a door or object that you can use for anchoring the band at about chest height. Start with 2 to 3 minutes of arm swings and jumping jacks to raise your core temperature and circulate synovial fluid—the body's natural joint lubricant—in the shoulders and hips. Do the exercises in the order shown 2 times through. Total time: 20 minutes.



1 SPIDERMAN CRAWL

WHAT IT DOES Stretches tight hips, which can lead to back and shoulder problems; strengthens arms, shoulder blades, and core

HOW TO DO IT Place your hands on the floor in front of your feet and walk them forward until you're in a plank position. Take a big step forward with your left foot, planting it near the outside of your left elbow. Bend that elbow to sink deeper into the hip stretch; then walk your hands forward again and step with your right foot. Complete 10 steps on each side.

KEEP IN MIND With each step forward, pause and breathe deeply to relax into the leg stretch.



2 BACK-FACING SHOULDER SERIES

WHAT IT DOES Targets the region that stabilizes your shoulder when you raise your arm, an injury site in as many as two-thirds of elite swimmers, in one study; strengthens the shoulders, back, and arms

HOW TO DO IT Anchor a resistance band at about chest height by tying a double knot in the center and closing the knot on the other side of a closed door. Hold one end in each hand and do 20 reps (10 per side) of each of the following: A) Extend your arms out, elbows straight but not locked. Press arms together in front of the chest, palms facing each other about a foot apart. B) Bend elbows in to your sides and alternate punching fists forward as though boxing.

KEEP IN MIND While "rowing," imagine you could pinch a pen between your shoulder blades; while "boxing," think about propelling the punches from your back.

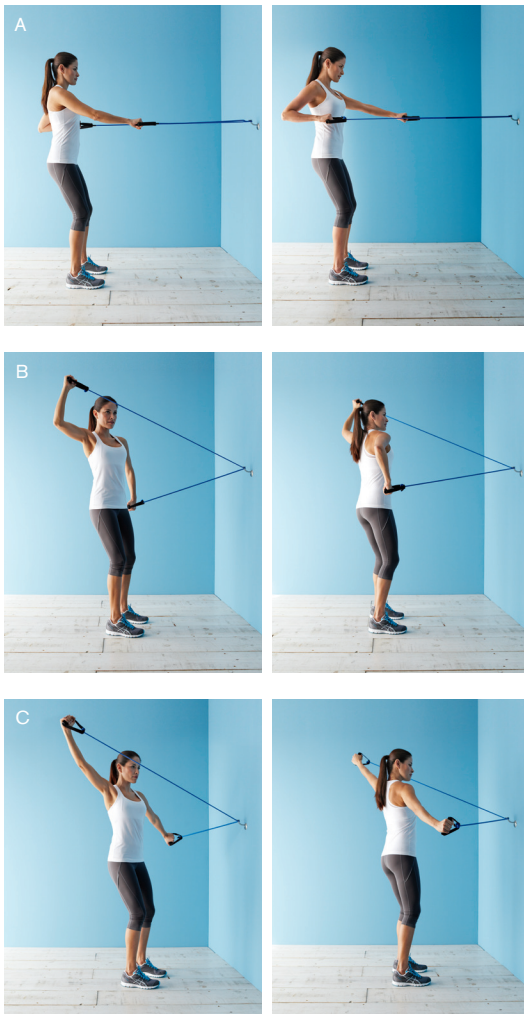


3 INCHWORM

WHAT IT DOES Stretches the backs of the legs, which are the prime movers for your swimming kick; strengthens arms, shoulder blades, and core

HOW TO DO IT Starting in a push-up position on your hands and toes, walk your feet forward until you feel a stretch in the back of your legs. Then unwind by walking your hands forward until you're back in a push-up position. Repeat 5 times.

KEEP IN MIND No sagging—pull your abs up and in as you walk your hands out to engage your core and support your back without arching.



4 FRONT-FACING SHOULDER SERIES

WHAT IT DOES Practices the patterns of movement that connect your core to your shoulders during swimming; strengthens the obliques, shoulders, and arms

HOW TO DO IT With palms down, grab the ends of a resistance band anchored at chest height and do 20 reps of each of the following without stopping: **A)** Bend one elbow at a time to slide it straight back against the band's resistance. **B)** Bend elbows to 90 degrees and rotate one up and one down (as if you were showing off your muscles). Reverse, switching arm positions and turning your hips toward the upper hand. **C)** Straighten your elbows so that your arms form a diagonal line—one fist up, one down. Repeat the last move with straight arms, rotating from your shoulders and turning your hips.

KEEP IN MIND Your shoulders should be pulled down, in line with your back, not shrugging up toward your ears.



5 HIP LIFT

WHAT IT DOES Glutes tend to “go to sleep” during swim workouts, leaving the heavy lifting to some of the smaller muscles in the legs and back and increasing your odds of injury. This move wakes them up so that they fire more effectively; it also strengthens the glutes, hips, and back.

HOW TO DO IT Lie with knees bent, feet flat, arms along your sides. Extend one leg toward the sky; then, without lowering it, lift your hips into a bridge, forming a straight line from your shoulders to the knee of your grounded leg. Lower body to almost touch the floor. Do 10 lifts per side.

KEEP IN MIND Press into your grounded heel and keep your hips level so that one side doesn't dip.

6 BANDED BEAR WALK

WHAT IT DOES This exercise mimics the coordination your body has in the water: arms and legs moving in opposite patterns, forcing you to use both sides of your brain simultaneously. It also strengthens the entire body.

HOW TO DO IT Tie your band into a loop and slide it around your arms just above your wrists. Get onto your hands and feet, knees bent, and crawl forward 10 steps and backward 10 steps on your palms and toes.

KEEP IN MIND Keep your torso taut and your shoulders and hips level so that your limbs power the movement.



iPad Extra: Watch videos of these moves in our iPad edition. Available from the App Store.