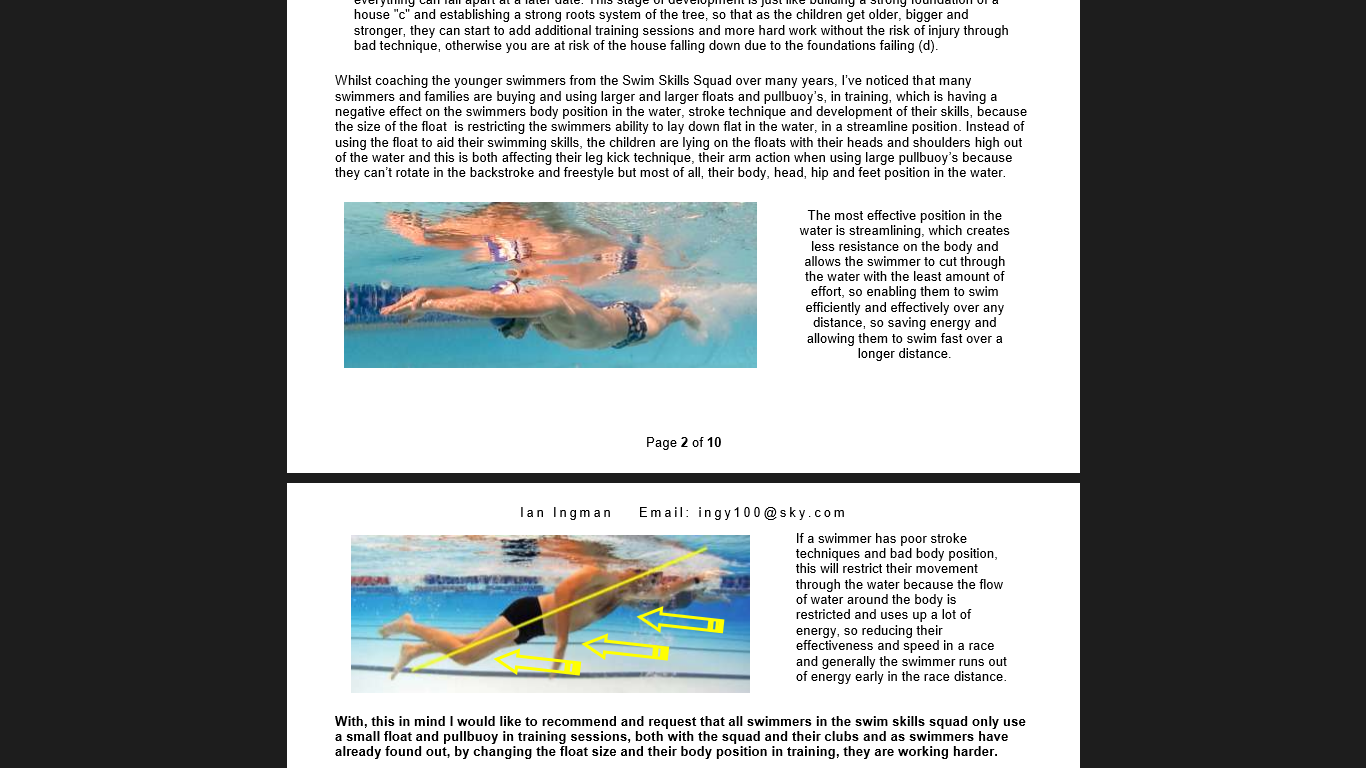
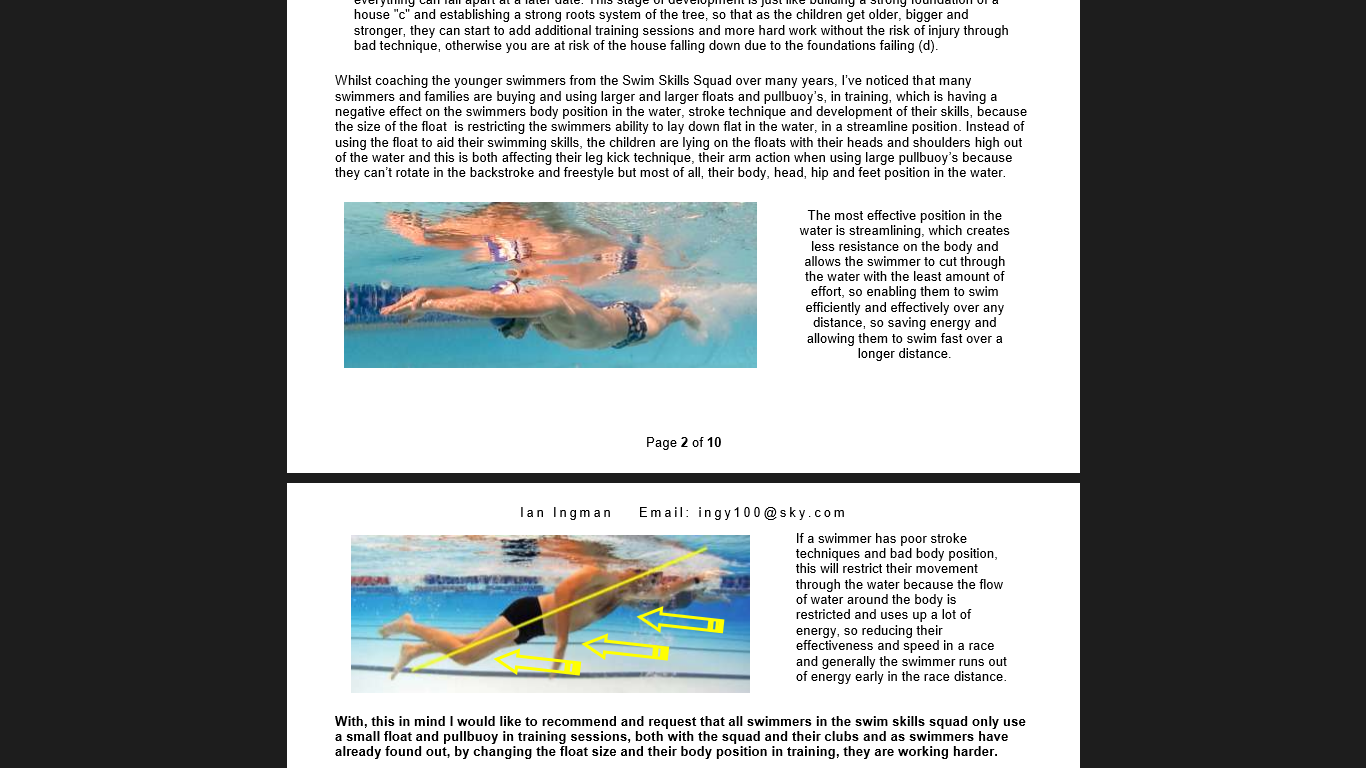
**Correct use of swim aids ( By Ian Ingman COLSC Coach)**

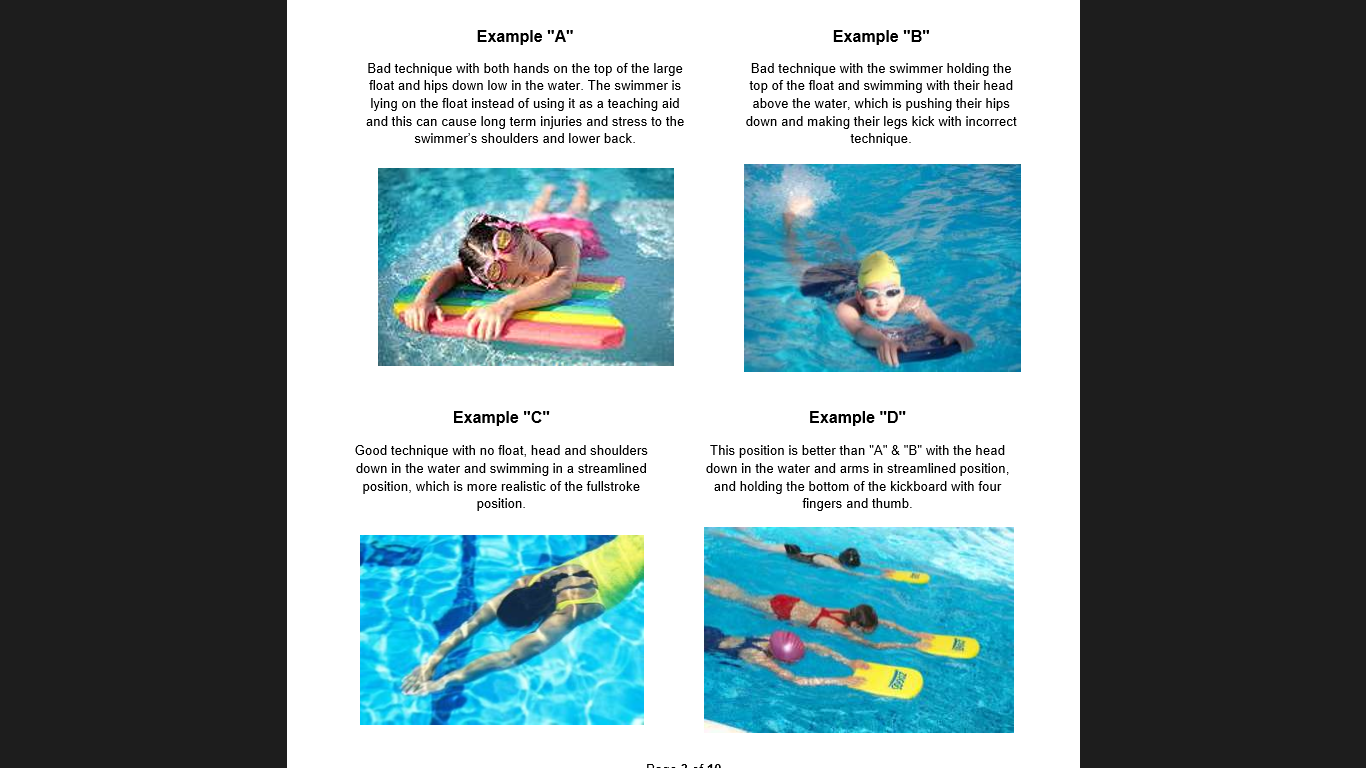
Many swimmers use larger larger floats and pullbuoy’s, in training, which ha a negative effect on the swimmers body position in the water, stroke technique and development of their skills, because the size of the float is restricting the swimmers ability to lay down flat in the water, in a streamline position. Instead of using the float to aid their swimming skills, the children lie on the floats with their heads and shoulders high out of the water and this is both affecting their leg kick technique, their arm action when using large pullbuoy’s because they can’t rotate in the backstroke and freestyle but most of all, their body, head, hip and feet position in the water.

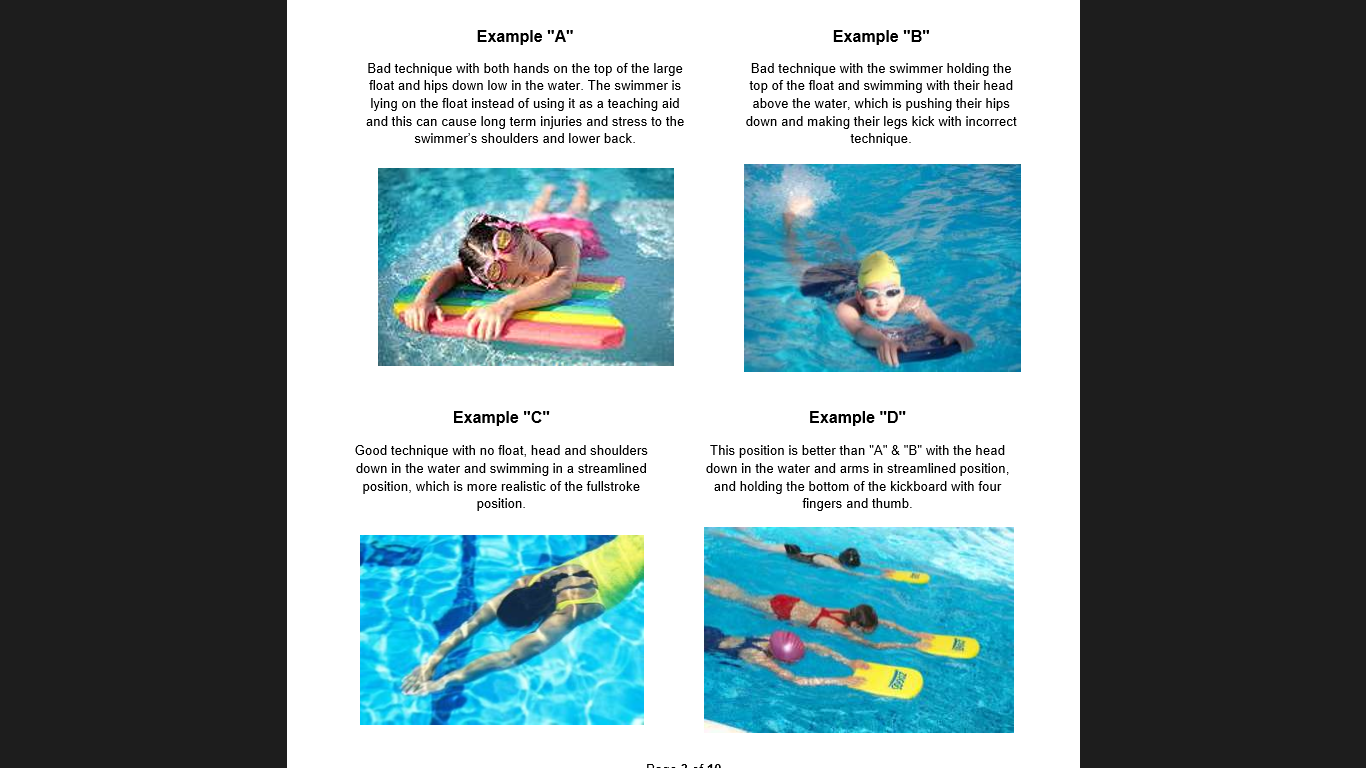
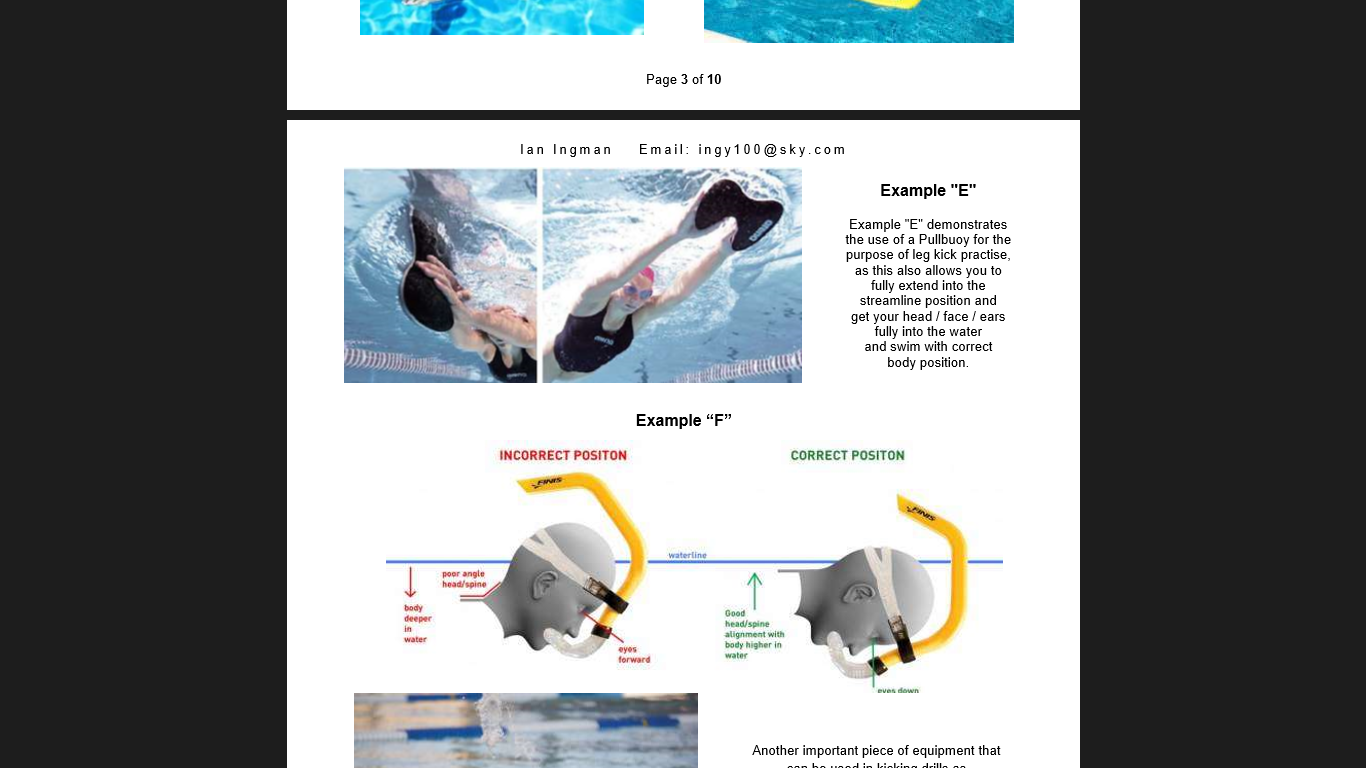
The most effective position in the water is streamlining, which creates less resistance on the body and allows the swimmer to cut through the water with the least amount of effort, so enabling them to swim efficiently and effectively over any distance, so saving energy and allowing them to swim fast over a longer distance.

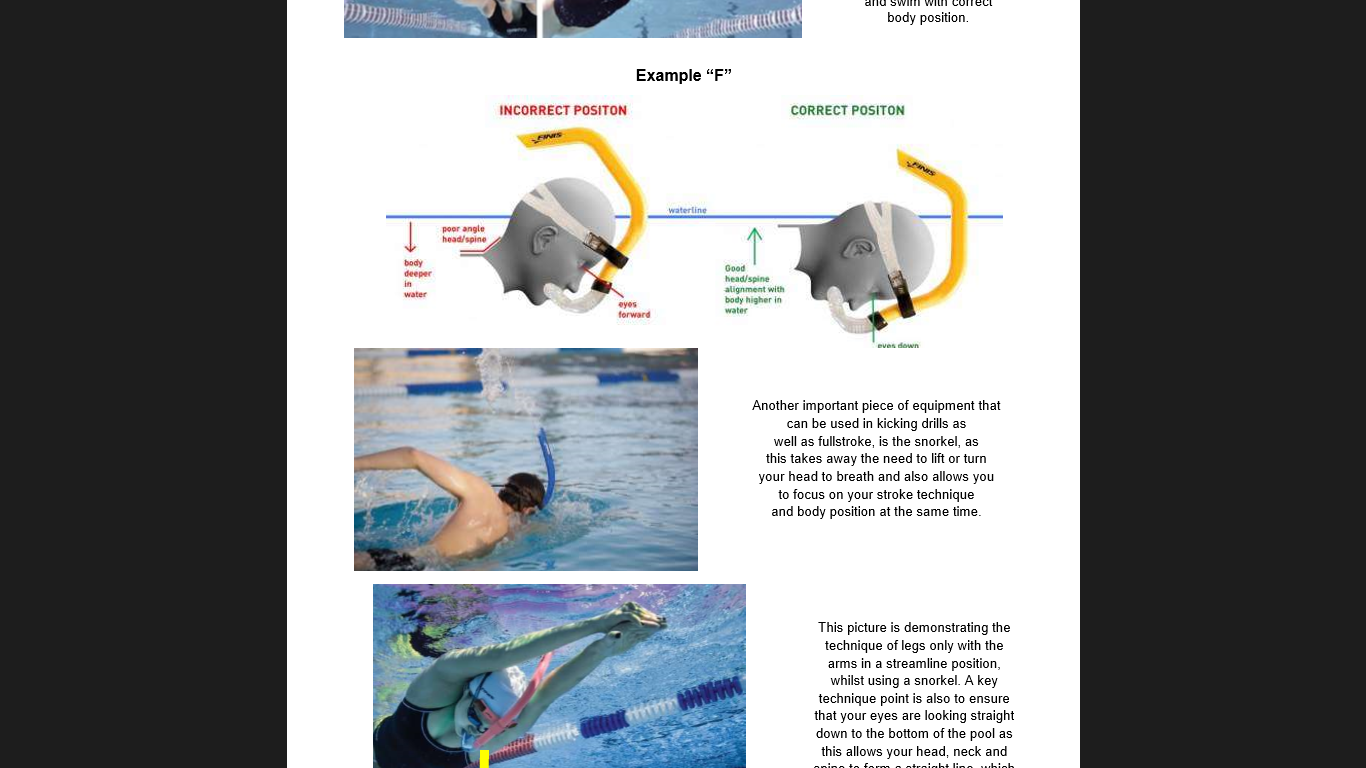
If a swimmer has poor stroke techniques and bad body position, this will restrict their movement through the water because the flow of water around the body is restricted and uses up a lot of energy, so reducing their effectiveness and speed in a race and generally the swimmer runs out of energy early in the race distance.

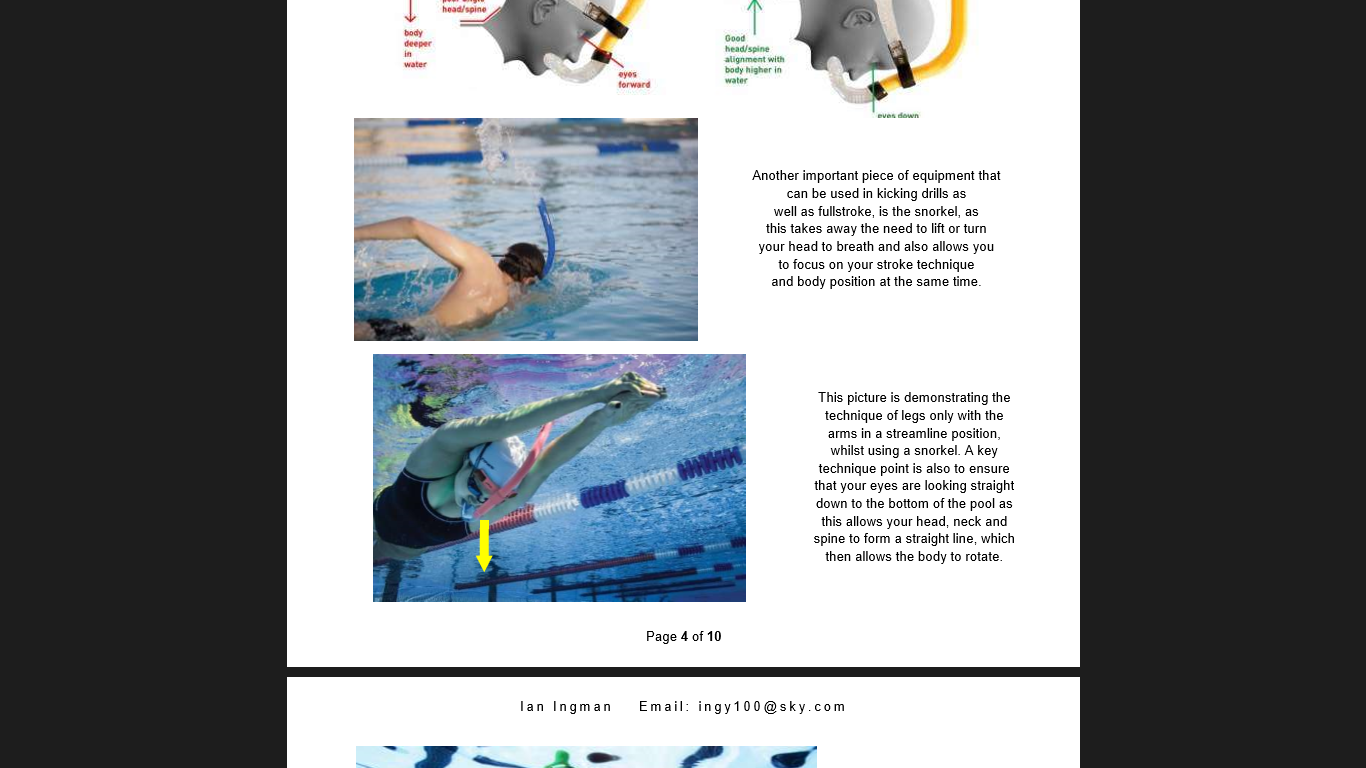
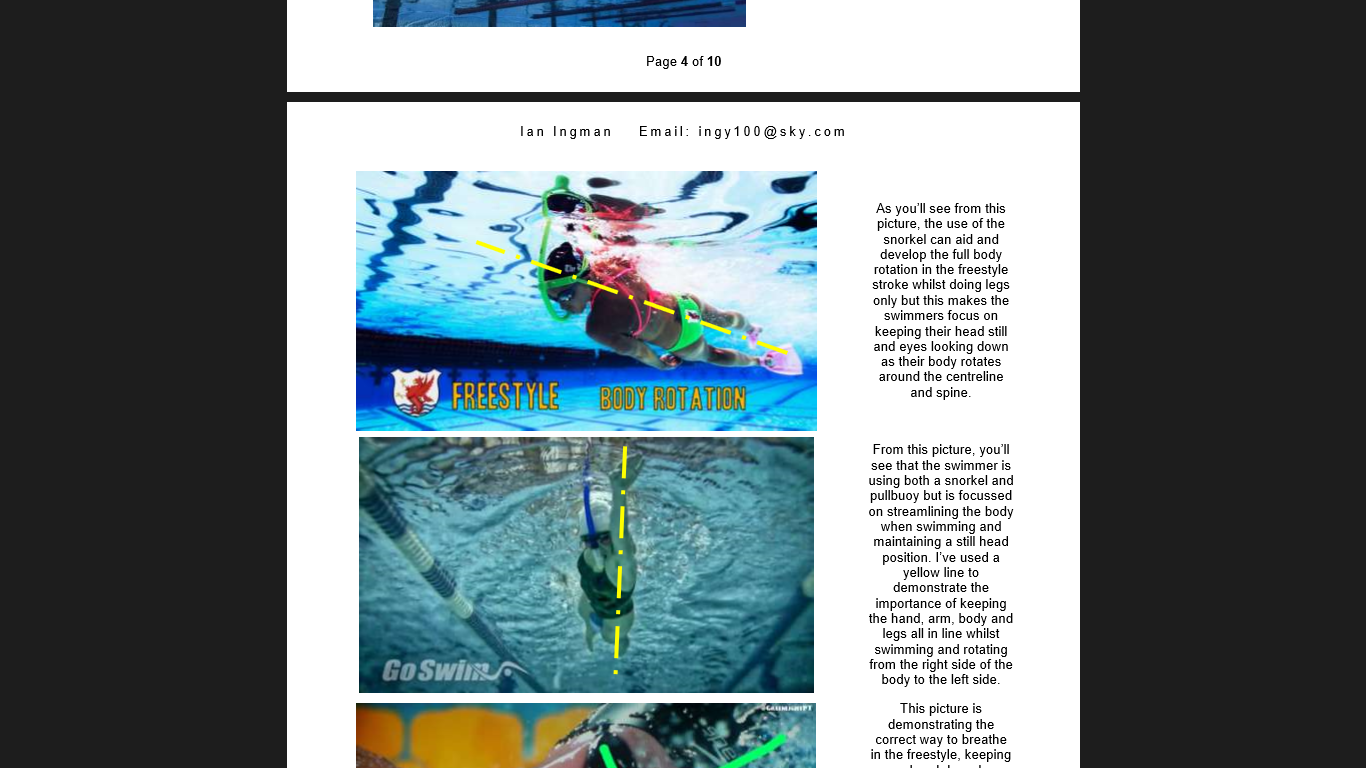
With, this in mind I would like to recommend and request that swimmers only use a small float and pullbuoy in training sessions.

Please see below some different examples of kicking with and without a float and reasons why they are either good or bad for the children.

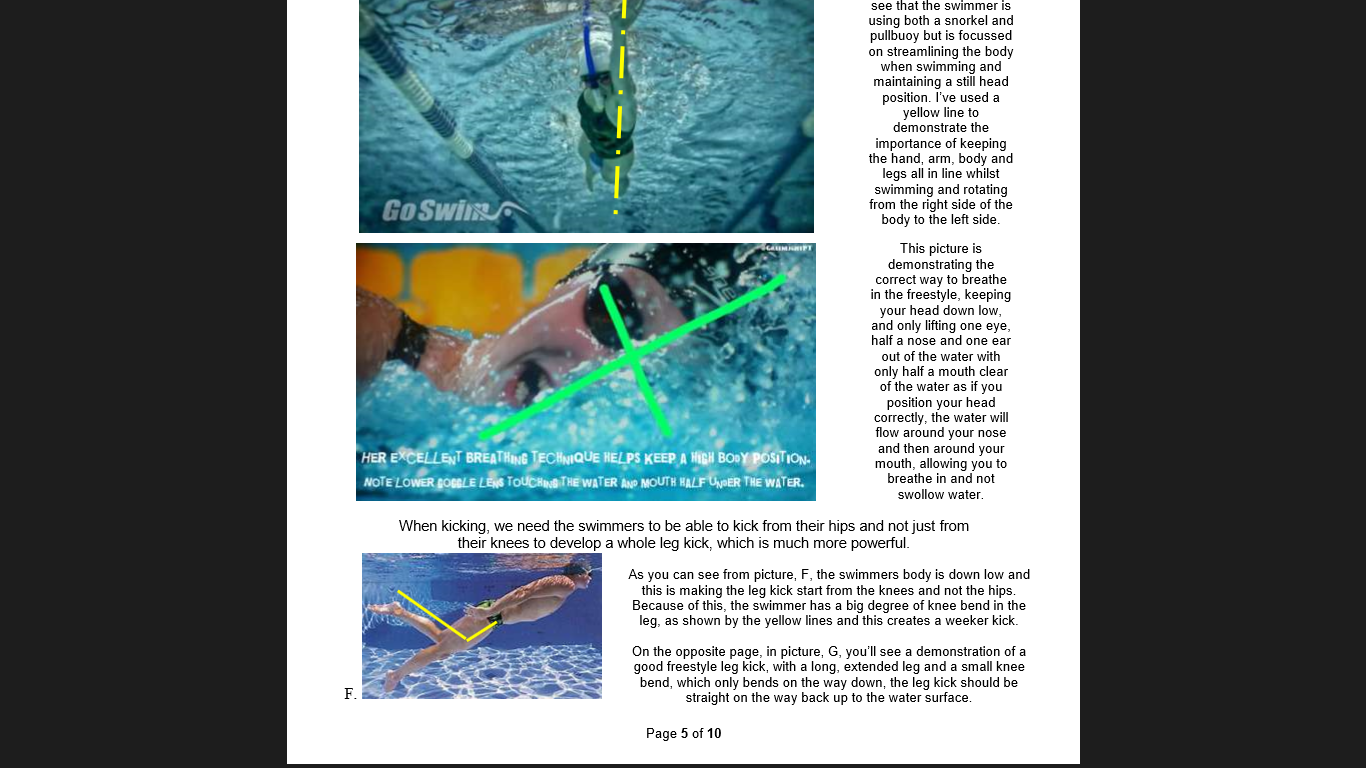






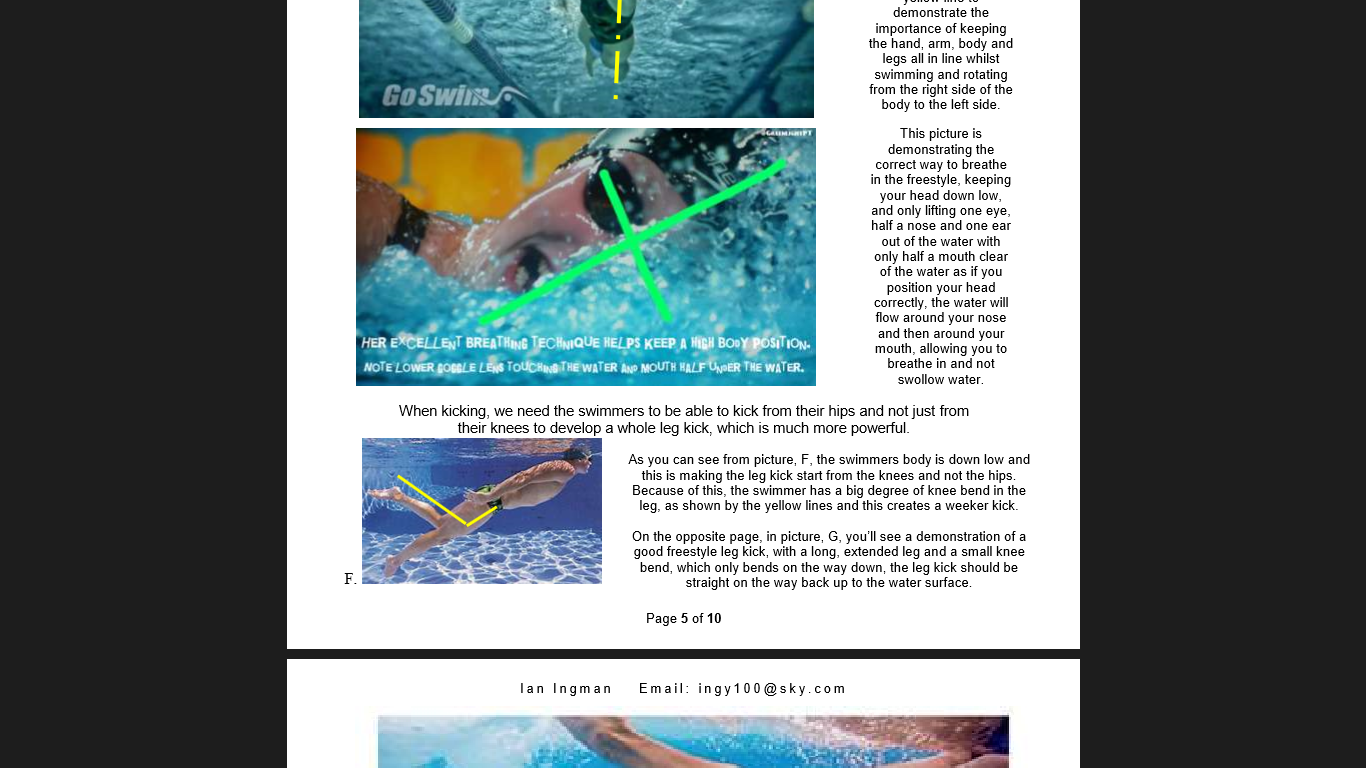
As you’ll see from this picture, the use of the snorkel can aid and develop the full body rotation in the freestyle stroke whilst doing legs only but this makes the swimmers focus on keeping their head still and eyes looking down as their body rotates around the centreline and spine.

From this picture, you’ll see that the swimmer is using both a snorkel and pullbuoy but is focussed on streamlining the body when swimming and maintaining a still head position. I’ve used a yellow line to demonstrate the importance of keeping the hand, arm, body and legs all in line whilst swimming and rotating from the right side of the body to the left side.

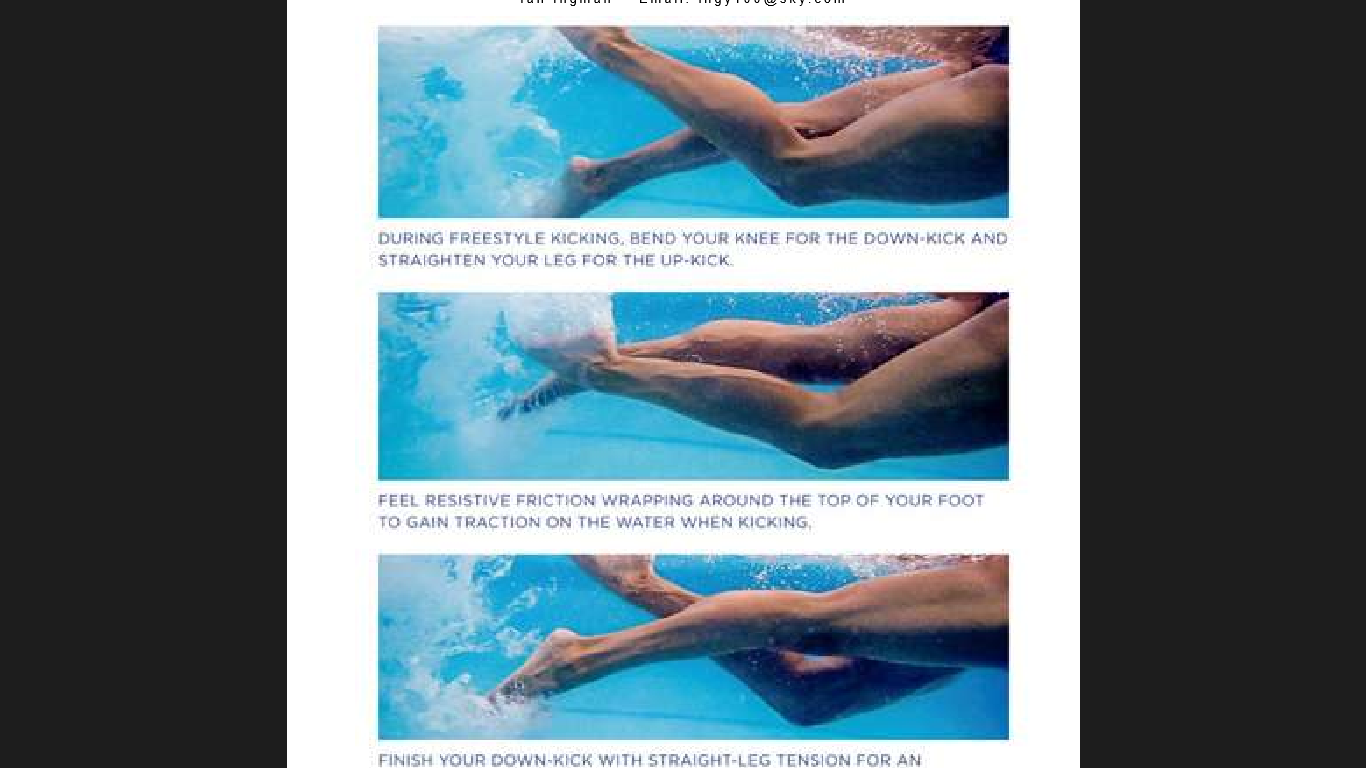


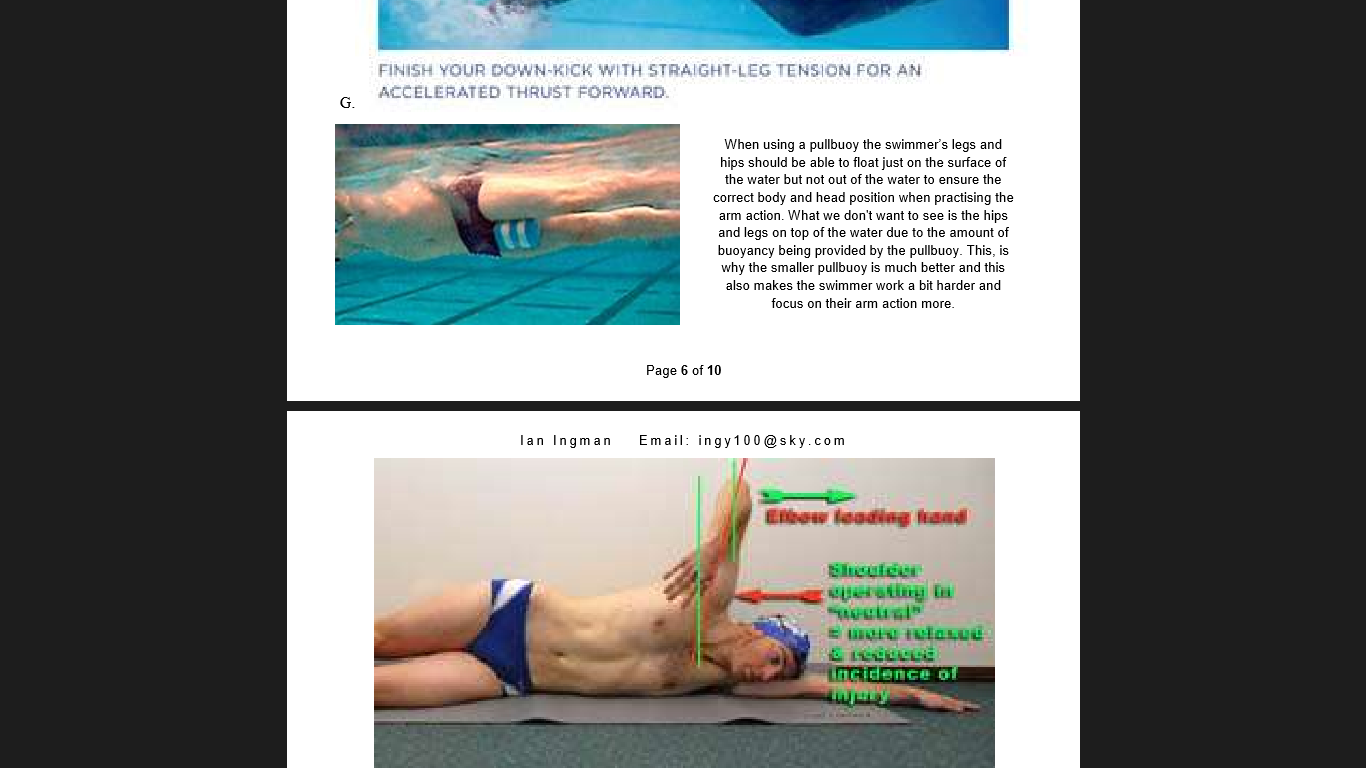
This picture is demonstrating the correct way to breathe in the freestyle, keeping your head down low, and only lifting one eye, half a nose and one ear out of the water with only half a mouth clear of the water as if you position your head correctly, the water will flow around your nose and then around your mouth, allowing you to breathe in and not swallow water.

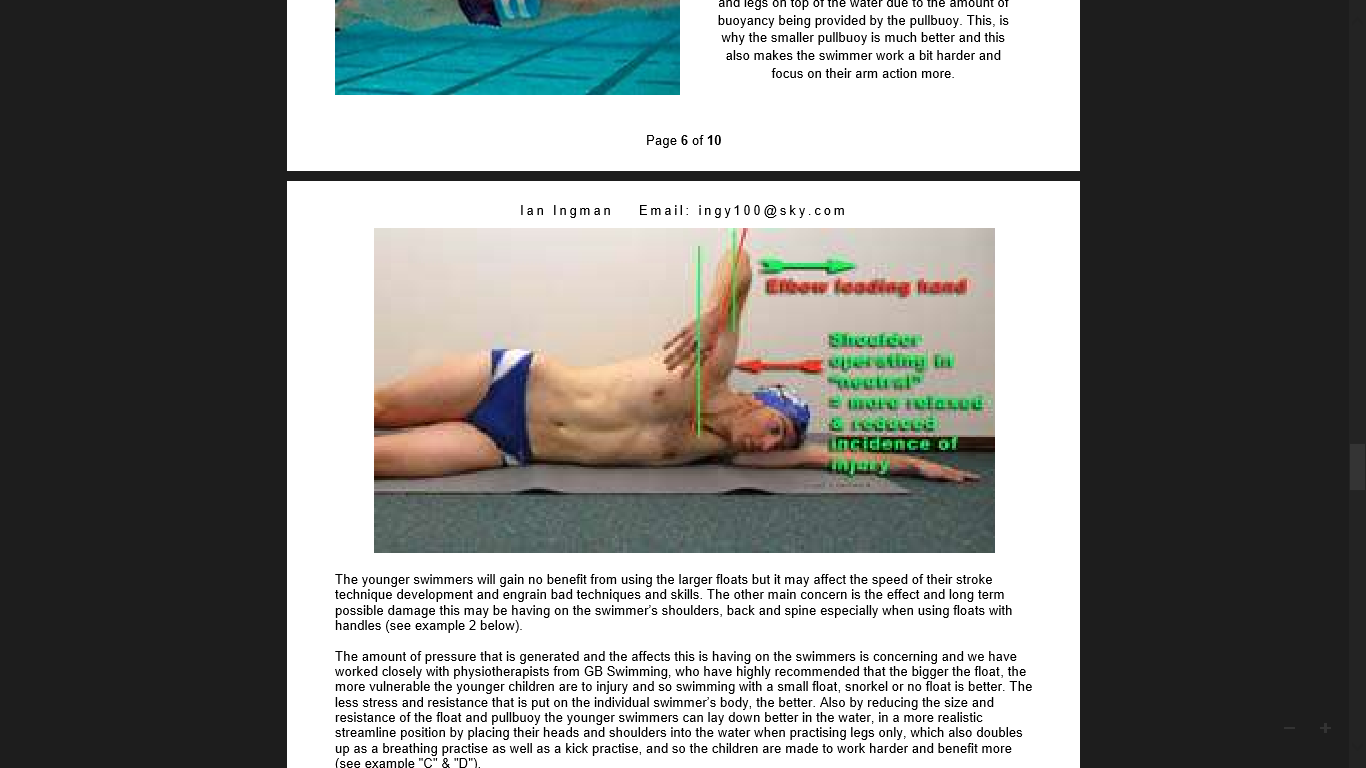
When kicking, we need the swimmers to be able to kick from their hips and not just from their knees to develop a whole leg kick, which is much more powerful.

As you can see from this picture the swimmers body is down low and this is making the leg kick start from the knees and not the hips. Because of this, the swimmer has a big degree of knee bend in the leg, as shown by the yellow lines and this creates a weaker kick.

A good freestyle leg kick, with a long, extended leg and a small knee bend, which only bends on the way down, the leg kick should be straight on the way back up to the water surface.



When using a pullbuoy the swimmer’s legs and hips should be able to float just on the surface of the water but not out of the water to ensure the correct body and head position when practising the arm action. What we don't want to see is the hips and legs on top of the water due to the amount of buoyancy being provided by the pullbuoy. This, is why the smaller pullbuoy is much better and this also makes the swimmer work a bit harder and focus on their arm action more.



The younger swimmers will gain no benefit from using the larger floats but it may affect the speed of their stroke technique development and engrain bad techniques and skills. The other main concern is the effect and long term possible damage this may be having on the swimmer’s shoulders, back and spine especially when using floats with handles (see example 2 below).

The amount of pressure that is generated and the affects this is having on the swimmers is concerning and we have worked closely with physiotherapists from GB Swimming, who have highly recommended that the bigger the float, the more vulnerable the younger children are to injury and so swimming with a small float, snorkel or no float is better. The less stress and resistance that is put on the individual swimmer’s body, the better. Also by reducing the size and resistance of the float and pullbuoy the younger swimmers can lay down better in the water, in a more realistic streamline position by placing their heads and shoulders into the water when practising legs only, which also doubles up as a breathing practise as well as a kick practise, and so the children are made to work harder and benefit more (see example "C" & "D").

The use of a large float when doing kick work effects the children by the float lifting them so high in the water and even out of the water around the upper body, arms and shoulder position and so causing their hips and legs to drop much too low, which then effects their stroke technique and body position in the water (See example "A" & "B". (Pictures are not specific to a company, just sizes).

