

12-WEEK GYM PROGRAMME

MASTERS FREESTYLE DRYLAND STRENGTH



A 12-week gym programme for masters swimmers — explosive pulling power, rotational drive and static holds for a faster, more efficient front crawl.

WHY FREESTYLE TRAINS DIFFERENTLY

Freestyle is a pulling, rotating stroke. Most of the speed comes from a powerful catch and pull-through — driven by the lats and chest and transferred through a rotating, braced trunk. The legs mostly set body position and rhythm rather than drive pace. So the gym priorities lean upper body and core, with the posterior chain keeping you flat and fast — and shoulder health is non-negotiable.

- **LAT-DRIVEN PULL**
The catch and pull-through — the engine of the whole stroke.
- **ROTATIONAL CORE**
Transfers power between limbs through controlled body roll.
- **SHOULDER STABILITY & HEALTH**
Durability for a high-volume overhead stroke.
- **POSTERIOR CHAIN & BODY LINE**
Glutes and hamstrings for a high, flat position.
- **SCAPULAR CONTROL**
A strong, stable shoulder blade behind every pull.

HOW TO RUN THE PLAN

Two gym sessions per week, sitting alongside your pool training.
Work through the three phases in order — four weeks each, twelve in total.
Each phase earns the next: build a pulling base and bulletproof the shoulders before you load up, then add speed last.

FOUNDATION

1

Build a pulling base and bulletproof the shoulders before you add load.

EXERCISE	SETS × REPS	FOCUS
Inverted row Horizontal pulling base — mid-back strength and posture.	3 × 10	PULL
Lat pulldown Grooves the catch-and-pull path that drives the stroke.	3 × 12	VERTICAL PULL
Face pull / band pull-apart Rear-delt and scap health — protects a high-volume shoulder.	3 × 15	SHOULDER
Romanian deadlift Glutes and hamstrings for a high, flat body line.	3 × 8	POSTERIOR CHAIN
Pallof press Resist rotation to build a stable, transferring trunk.	3 × 10 / side	ANTI-ROTATION
Dead bug Anti-extension control for a long, connected body line.	3 × 8 / side	CORE

PHASE GOAL

Earn the right to load. Full range, clean reps, shoulders strong before speed.

STRENGTH & POWER

Heavier pulls and rotational strength under load.

2

EXERCISE	SETS × REPS	FOCUS
Pull-up or weighted pulldown Top-end pulling strength — weight if strong, band if not.	4 × 6	MAX PULL
Single-arm dumbbell row Matches the single-arm catch and exposes side-to-side gaps.	3 × 8	UNILATERAL PULL
Straight-arm pulldown Isolates the lat through the catch-to-pull path.	3 × 10	LAT
Landmine or cable rotation Trains body roll under load — power between the arms.	3 × 8 / side	ROTATIONAL POWER
Trap-bar deadlift Whole-body strength base behind a stable body line.	4 × 5	POSTERIOR CHAIN
Hollow hold The braced, connected trunk of an efficient stroke.	3 × 20-30s	STATIC CORE

PHASE GOAL

Bridge strength to speed. Pull heavy, then add rotational power that transfers.

POWER & PLYOMETRICS

Express the strength explosively — low volume, high quality.

3

EXERCISE	SETS × REPS	FOCUS
Med ball overhead slam Fast, lat-driven action — power for the catch.	4 × 5	EXPLOSIVE PULL
Med ball rotational throw Explosive body roll — drive power across the trunk.	4 × 4 / side	ROTATIONAL POWER
Explosive band pulldown Move the pull pattern at speed — intent over load.	3 × 6	FAST PULL
Plyo press-up Explosive pressing for a fast, powerful arm recovery.	3 × 5	UPPER PLYO
Trap-bar jump / KB swing Posterior-chain power that holds the body line late in a swim.	3 × 6	HIP DRIVE
Weighted streamline hold Strength in the long, locked streamline off every wall.	3 × 20s	STATIC HOLD

PHASE GOAL

Be fast, not tired. Stop a set the moment speed drops — that is the workout done.

THE MASTERS RULES

Adult swimmers respond to the same training as anyone — they just need to respect recovery and the shoulder a little more. These five rules keep the plan working for the long haul.

- 01** **WARM UP, EVERY TIME**
 Five to eight minutes of shoulder mobility, band activation and light pulls before you load. Cold shoulders under heavy pull-ups are how masters get hurt.
- 02** **SEPARATE HARD FROM HARD**
 Keep explosive and heavy-pull sessions at least a day away from your biggest pull sets in the pool. Two maximal stimuli on a tired shoulder is where overuse starts.
- 03** **MIND THE SHOULDER**
 Freestyle is a high-volume overhead stroke. If the shoulder niggles, drop overhead pressing and heavy pull-ups, keep the rear-delt and scap work, and never train through shoulder pain.
- 04** **PROGRESS ONE THING AT A TIME**
 Add load before you add speed or volume. Chasing both at once is the fastest route to a niggle that costs you weeks in the water.
- 05** **RECOVERY IS TRAINING**
 Sleep, protein and a day between sessions are doing real work. The adaptation happens between sessions, not during them.

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