

### **Importance of floating and body balance**

A swimmer's ability to float and feel balanced in the water is one of the main basic principles that has the biggest effects on their performance in the water. Some swimmers with a disability (e.g. swimmers with limited core function or swimmers with a limb deficiency) may give the impression that they do not have the ability to balance in the water. Drills and skills should be taught from the beginning of their swimming so that they learn from an early stage how to balance correctly. Even non-disabled swimmers are imbalanced due to more muscle development on one side than the other, this is simply a more exaggerated form. Rather than developing compensatory patterns, teachers/coaches should develop normalised patterns.

Look at the following:

- Float on front and back – Swimmers with more severe disabilities may only swim on their backs, however, they should still be taught to float on both front and back, as well as controlling rolls from back to front and vice versa.
- If a swimmer is top heavy i.e. a swimmer with no legs or no leg movement, get the swimmer to lift their head slightly higher to aid floatation
- Swimmers with a weakness on one side of the body or having a missing limb will be off balance as one side will be heavier than the other. Look at getting the swimmer to turn their head to the side of the weakness. This will help for them to feel what it is like to be flat on the water. As they improve and begin to feel the correct position, gradually move the head back into central position
- The use of play at Fundamental stage is just as important for Swimmers with a disability as it is for non-disabled swimmers. Teach them somersaults, handstands and other games that allow them to go under the water, no matter what level of disability.

Reference:

These tips were put together with the use of the following resource:

Swimming against the Current: A practical teaching and coaching Manual for Swimmers with Disabilities; Anne Green, 2010