

Hand Positions: How to modify intensity during water exercise

Published in the CALA WaveLink Newsletter Vol. One, Number One Spring 1998

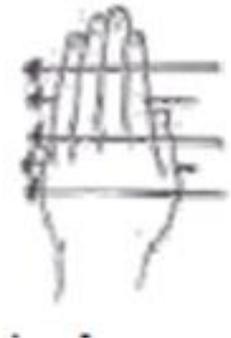
The water is like an instantly adjustable liquid weight room. The multi-directional resistance provided by water enables a variety of people of varying levels of fitness to get a workout that suits their needs. The hard-core athlete can move in the water with power and strength using long levers and a flat hand position. A frail individual, just getting back into exercise can choose to shorten their levers and slice through the water with their hands. Altering surface by changing hand positions is one way to make a water exercise harder or easier.

Hand Positions

The surface area or leading edge of your hand as you push and pull it through the water contributes a great deal to the intensity level of the exercise:

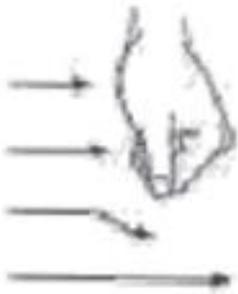
Slice Hand Position - the easiest

Use the slice hand position at the beginning of the warm up. If you have a problem with your neck, shoulder, elbow, wrist or fingers, use the 'slice' throughout the class. If you are at a low level of fitness, this 'slice' hand position will allow you to exercise for a longer period of time before fatigue sets in.

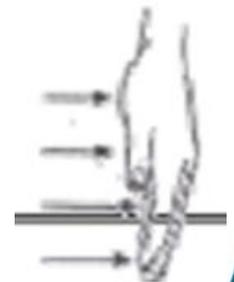


Fist or Fold Hand Position - slightly harder

Changing the hand position from a 'slice' to a 'fist' position increases the surface area meeting the water during exercise. Use the 'fist' or 'fold' hand position when your body begins to feel warm and ready for the workout phase, usually after the first few minutes of the warm up. If you have any joint problem areas or if you have a low level of fitness, continue to use the 'slice' hand position throughout the class. Also, use the 'fist' or fold any time during the class if you are tiring and find the 'flat' hand too intense. The 'fold' hand position is appropriate for people with long fingernails, or those with joint problems in the hand and finger areas.



Flat Hand Position - fingers together or just slightly apart - harder



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This position creates the greatest intensity because the largest surface area is presented to the water. This position is often referred to as a 'paddle hand'. Beware if you have any of the joint problems or are at a low level of fitness as mentioned above, avoid the 'flat' hand position and stay with a 'slice' or 'fist'.



Maintaining a firm wrist will prevent excessive unintentional movement at the joint.

Recommendations - how to use the hand positions safely and effectively:

Keep your wrist firmly “locked” during all hand movements, which are intended to generate resistance and increase exercise intensity.

Avoid allowing the wrist and fingers to “flop” around when moving through the water.

Keep your fingers and hand strong, and avoid excessive squeezing or gripping of the muscles in the hand, fingers or wrist.

Enjoy your water workout - all gain, no pain!