



HaBaWaBa School v.04
ELEMENTARY LEVEL
KIDS 7 to 9 YEARS OLD

1ST WEBINAR

28 JANUARY 2026



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ΠΟΛΥΤΕΧΝΕΙΟ ΚΡΗΤΗΣ
TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY
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Hello everybody, and welcome.

My name is Yiannis GIANNOURIS. I am a board member of the non-profit association Water Polo Development and the Director of the HaBaWaBa International Festival, held annually at Lignano Sabbiadoro Italy.

This is the 1st webinar of the HaBaWaBa School Project, supported by Erasmus + Sport. Our goal is to help coaches develop young water polo players through a shared and practical pathway.

HaBaWaBa began in 2008 and, every year in late June, thousands of children in the U9, U11, and U13 age groups take part. It has become a strong environment for learning and motivation, and some former participants now compete at international and even Olympic level—proof that early development creates real opportunities.

We created HaBaWaBa School to support coaches working with ages 7–9 and later 10–12, offering clear guidelines to teach fundamentals and build a solid foundation.

The project is delivered with partners from Greece and Italy—University of Crete, Club Anemos Chania, and Club Aquatico Pescara—together with Water Polo Development, and supported by Erasmus+.

Participation is free, with seven more monthly webinars, short and practical.

All materials will be on the platform, and the final outcomes will be presented at the HaBaWaBa International Festival 2026 at Lignano in the 3rd week of June.

Thank you, and let's begin.

HaBaWaBa SCHOOL

Purpose & Philosophy

- ❑ Progressive, playful, safe pathway to teach Water Polo fundamentals for kids 7 to 9 and 10 to 12 years old.
- ❑ Connects swim basics (free/back/breast) with water polo technique.
- ❑ Develops confidence, teamwork, efficient movement, joy for the game, and Fair Play.
- ❑ Kids learn best when they feel safe, challenged, supported.
- ❑ Guided by the HaBaWaBa spirit – PLAY, LEARN, RESPECT, every session develops skills while promoting social learning and positive behavior.

The Four-Step Approach

- ❑ **STEP 1:** Introduce the Skill: name the skill + purpose, simple language.
- ❑ **STEP 2:** Explain and Demonstrate the Skill: normal + slow, different angles, whole–part–whole.
- ❑ **STEP 3:** Practice with Drills: short, varied, fun repetition (with/without ball), peer support.
- ❑ **STEP 4:** Correct Errors and Reinforce Learning/Feedback: observe, one correction at a time, re-demo if needed, reinforce positively.

Goal: Capture interest, create curiosity, and make sure every child understands the objective.



The Four-Step Approach

Practical Recommendations

- ☐ Adapt to individuals; progress easy→hard / simple→complex; repeat key skills.
- ☐ Use Ball No. 3 (kickboard if needed).
- ☐ Check progress every 4–6 weeks (technique, game skills, behavior).
- ☐ Add a Fair Play moment each session: “Play hard, play fair, help a teammate.”



Kids 7-8-9 years old - Elementary Level

Introduction

- ❑ In the Elementary Level, we introduce skills focused on improving swimming ability, while gradually adding the ball as a substitute for the traditional kickboard.
- ❑ Starting with freestyle and backstroke kicks, breathing control, and body glide, we progressively add breaststroke legs, then head-up swimming, swimming with the ball, and backstroke with the ball, combining both strokes with breaststroke kicking.
- ❑ Once children feel confident in the water, we move to the vertical body position, introducing the bicycle (eggbeater) kick horizontally and vertically, followed by the basic throwing position with the ball.

All videos to be presented were prepared with the participation of [Damiano SPINA](#), an 8-year-old athlete of Club Aquatico Pescara.



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1st WEBINAR - AGENDA

Kids 7-8-9 years old - Elementary Level

- ✓ **Skill 1 – Kicking Freestyle (with/without the Ball)**
- ✓ **Skill 2 – Breaststroke Kick (with/without the Ball)**
- ✓ **Skill 3 – Water Polo Freestyle (Head Up)**
- ✓ **Skill 4 – Swimming with the Ball (Dribbling)**
- ✓ **Skill 5 – Water Polo Freestyle + Breaststroke Kick**





Kids 7-8-9 years old - Elementary Level

Skill 1 – Kicking Freestyle (with/without the Ball)

Objective:

- ☐ Build a fast, hip-driven freestyle kick to maximize propulsion, keep a high body line, and establish a stable breathing rhythm for later ball dribbling.

Description:

- ☐ Kick from the hips with short, quick beats while keeping the head steady and hips high. Knees stay just under the surface; ankles relaxed and toes pointed.
- ☐ With the ball, arms extend forward to support posture; without the ball, arms stay streamlined or perform small sculls only as needed.
- ☐ Maintain a steady breathing rhythm without lifting the chin excessively.





Kids 7-8-9 years old - Elementary Level

Skill 1 – Kicking Freestyle (with/without the Ball)

Drills:

1. [Ball Support Kick](#): Hold the ball with both hands at shoulder width, head up; 10–15 s reps focusing on hip-driven, short-fast kicks.
2. [Head-In / Head-Out Sets](#): Kick 2 m face in (exhale) → 2 m head up (inhale); repeat to ingrain rhythm and posture.
3. [No-Support Progression](#): When the kick is strong, repeat without the ball (no support), arms extended forward (hands slightly out of the water); keep arms still or minimal sculling.
4. [Whistle Breathing Drill](#): Kick with head in and exhale; at the whistle, lift head and continue head-up kicking; alternate on each whistle.
5. [Arm-Switch Breathing](#): Left arm forward/right by side; kick while exhaling face in, rotate head to inhale; switch arms halfway (repeat on the other side).





Kids 7-8-9 years old - Elementary Level

Skill 2 – Breaststroke Kick (with/without the Ball)

Objective:

- ❑ Build a strong, well-timed breaststroke kick to enhance propulsion, maintain a high body position, and support later development of a stable eggbeater.

Description:

- ❑ From a horizontal body line, the player bends knees gently to draw heels toward the hips, keeping knees close together.
- ❑ Feet rotate outward before a quick whip kick that ends with legs fully extended and toes pointed.
- ❑ The motion is smooth and rhythmic—pull knees slow, kick fast—driven by the hips and inner thighs.
- ❑ With the ball, arms extend forward to stabilize posture; without the ball, arms remain streamlined or perform small sculling motions for balance.
- ❑ The glide after each kick teaches rhythm, buoyancy, and efficient forward movement..





Kids 7-8-9 years old - Elementary Level

Skill 2 – Breaststroke Kick (with/without the Ball)

Drills:

1. [Ball Support Kick](#): Head up, arms extended, hold ball forward while performing controlled breaststroke kicks.
2. [No-Ball Kick](#): Same movement without ball; hands just under surface for balance; focus on symmetry.
3. [Kick and Glide](#): One full kick followed by a 2-second glide; feel propulsion from hip drive.
4. [Short-Stroke Contrast](#): Alternate long, powerful kicks with short, fast leg strokes; sense efficiency difference.
5. [Combo Set](#): 3 breaststroke kicks → 3 m fast freestyle kicks; repeat – develop transition ability.





Kids 7-8-9 years old - Elementary Level

Skill 3 – Water Polo Freestyle (Head Up)

Objective:

- ☐ Build endurance, awareness, and stability while swimming head-up freestyle, maintaining vision and body alignment.

Description:

- ☐ Swim freestyle with the head above the surface, eyes forward, and chin steady.
- ☐ Arm strokes are short and quick, elbows high, hands entering at shoulder width.
- ☐ Legs perform continuous fast flutter kicks to keep hips near the surface.
- ☐ Breathing is natural—slight rotation of the head follows the shoulders, without lifting or twisting.
- ☐ This skill teaches swimmers to move efficiently while tracking the ball, teammates, and opponents.





Kids 7-8-9 years old - Elementary Level

Skill 3 – Water Polo Freestyle (Head Up)

Drills:

1. [Mixed Set](#): Swim 5 m head-down freestyle (breathing every 3), then 5 m head-up freestyle; compare rhythm and balance.
2. [Bilateral Breathing Freestyle](#): Focus on short strokes, high elbows, and consistent kick tempo at slow pace.
3. [Head up - Head down on Whistle](#): Swim classic freestyle; on whistle, lift head and continue head-up; alternate every few meters.
4. [Fast – Slow Speed Contrast](#): Swim 10 m head-up fast → 10 m head-up slow; repeat for control and posture awareness.
5. [Kickboard Drill](#): Place kickboard under chest to feel correct hip position and reduce body roll.





Kids 7-8-9 years old - Elementary Level

Skill 4 – Swimming with the Ball (Dribbling)

Objective:

- ☐ Learn to control and propel the ball forward while swimming, maintaining rhythm, vision, and body balance.

Description:

- ☐ Swim freestyle with the head up, using short, quick strokes and a strong kick to keep hips high.
- ☐ The ball rolls in a small wave at the forehead, staying close to the face. Hands act like rails, guiding the ball gently along its path—never slapping or striking it.
- ☐ The player maintains steady rhythm and direction while keeping eyes forward to scan the pool.
- ☐ This skill builds game-awareness and coordination between swimming and ball control..





Kids 7-8-9 years old - Elementary Level

Skill 4 – Swimming with the Ball (Dribbling)

Drills:

1. [Slow–Fast Swimming with the Ball](#): Swim 5 m dribbling slowly, then 5 m fast; feel how control changes with speed.
2. [Kickboard Assist](#): Dribble with a kickboard under the chest to emphasize hip stability.
3. [Controlled Speed Swimming with the Ball](#): Dribble with short, quick strokes and strong legs, keeping elbows high and ball steady.
4. [Head Up – Head Down on Whistle](#): Swim 3 m face in the water, then on the whistle 5 strokes head-up while dribbling; repeat.
5. [Swim and Roll](#): Swim with the ball for 5 meters, then perform a forward somersault. After the turn, continue swimming and repeat the exercise every 5 meters.



Kids 7-8-9 years old - Elementary Level

Skill 5 – Water Polo Freestyle + Breaststroke Kick

Objective:

- ☐ Combine the propulsion of freestyle with the control of breaststroke legs to adapt movement to changing game situations.

Description:

- ☐ Swim head-up freestyle, integrating a breaststroke kick every one or two arm strokes to enhance balance, reach, or directional control.
- ☐ The coordination between the freestyle pull and breaststroke kick allows the player to adjust rhythm, slow down, or accelerate while keeping the body high and stable.
- ☐ The key is to time the kick precisely as the hands extend forward, creating a powerful glide and maintaining full awareness of the ball and surroundings.



Kids 7-8-9 years old - Elementary Level

Skill 5 – Water Polo Freestyle + Breaststroke Kick

Drills:

1. [One-to-One Coordination](#): Head-up freestyle with a breaststroke kick every arm stroke.
2. [Two-Stroke Coordination](#): Perform breaststroke kick every two freestyle strokes; maintain consistent tempo.
3. [Defense Drill](#): eft arm extended, right arm swims freestyle with breaststroke kick; switch halfway.
4. [Ball Switch Stroke Coordination Drill](#): Hold the ball on the palm of the extended arm; perform 2 freestyle strokes + 1 synchronized breaststroke kick. Then throw the ball slightly high, switch the ball to the other arm, and repeat the sequence.
5. [Ball-Spinning Coordination Drill](#): Head-up freestyle while performing a breaststroke kick on every two arm strokes. Keep both hands in contact with the ball, spinning it counter-clockwise continuously without losing control.





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