Helping someone roll.

Your job is to give the assistance the instructor has shown you and pay attention to the person in the boat. You don't need to add a running commentary. Let them finish, get their breath and tell you how it felt.



Before you start

Ask the qualified coach to demonstrate your position, permitted contact and how the roller will be helped upright. Show it back before practising.

Agree the stop/help signal and what you should do when it happens. Know who takes over if you are unsure.

Check the space around the boat and paddle with the instructor. Equipment, depth and rescue arrangements follow the pool session plan.

Work with a qualified supervising coach and the pool session plan. Agree contact and a stop/help signal. Stop for pain or distress. No solo underwater practice, breath-hold tasks or surprise capsizes.

0 to 8 min / Agree how you will work together.

1. Watch the coach demonstrate your role. Ask where to stand, what to support and what to do if the attempt stops.

2. Show your part back to the coach while the roller is upright.

3. Keep the agreed rescue person available. Being a helper does not automatically make you the rescuer.

8 to 15 min / Find the movement before adding the paddle.

1. Let the roller move themselves on the mat. Do not pull their arms or shoulders into place.

2. Tell the instructor about discomfort or sliding you notice. Leave outfitting changes to the coach.

3. Before water practice, confirm the support you will give and the signal again.

Mat demonstration and boat-fit recording

Build the boat movement.

15 to 27 min / Turn the boat with support.

1. Give the support exactly as shown by the coach and keep it predictable. Do not move it away to test the roller.

2. Watch whether the boat turns or the roller pushes their head and chest upwards. Report what you saw after they are settled.

3. Follow the agreed stop/help procedure promptly. Do not hold a head, shoulder or body down to make a cue happen.

Cue: Let the boat come round before you lift your head.

Move on when: The roller can repeat a comfortable supported rotation with less pushing, and the coach agrees to add the paddle.

Otherwise: Keep the same support and reduce the lean. The paddle can wait for another session.

EJ phase 1 / 0:43 to 2:49

27 to 39 min / Add the paddle without changing the job.

1. Ask the coach to show whether you are supporting the paddle, the boat or neither in this attempt. Do not improvise a grip.

2. Keep support consistent until the coach and roller agree to change it. Do not pull the paddle or the roller upright by their arms.

3. Notice if the blade sinks early or the movement changes when support is reduced, then tell the instructor once the roller is upright.

Cue: Keep the boat movement you just found.

Move on when: The supported movement stays comfortable with the paddle; the qualified coach decides whether support can be reduced.

Otherwise: Restore support and return to the previous movement. A first roll is optional today.

EJ phase 2 and prepared first attempt / 2:49 to 5:17

The clock does not decide readiness. Repeat the useful exercise and leave later phases for another session when needed.

Find the setup and review.

39 to 50 min / Learn where the paddle starts.

1. Let the roller find the setup themselves while upright. Wait for the instructor rather than moving their hands into place.

2. Before any underwater attempt, confirm your position and the help plan. Use the agreed cue instead of adding a second explanation.

3. If the roller asks for help or becomes distressed, follow the agreed recovery procedure. Do not prolong an attempt to finish the sequence.

Cue: Find your paddle position, then turn the boat.

Move on when: The roller can find the setup and transition upright, and the coach approves any water progression.

Otherwise: Continue upright setup practice or return to supported rotation. Do not add submersion just to finish the plan.

EJ phase 3 / 5:17 to 7:52

50 to 55 min / Find the setup from somewhere else.

1. Keep the exercise predictable and follow the same support plan. Do not tip the roller unexpectedly.

2. Watch whether they find the setup themselves or need a cue.

3. Tell the instructor if tiredness or uncertainty is increasing so the exercise can be simplified.

Cue: Find the starting position you already know.

Move on when: The roller can recover the familiar setup comfortably and describe what they are doing.

Otherwise: Finish with a comfortable earlier exercise and leave varied entries for another session.

EJ phase 4 / 7:52 to 9:23

55 to 60 min / Talk through what changed.

1. Let the roller speak first, then add one specific observation.

2. Check whether the assistance you gave was useful and what should be different next time.

3. Help put equipment away according to the pool session arrangements.

Source and next practice

Adapted from Eric Jackson, EJ's Rolling and Bracing 4 Phases of the Roll. Our timings and role briefings are additions. Illustrations are AI-assisted session scenes, not exact technique or rescue diagrams. Qualified coach review remains outstanding.

Watch the source video | Open your full guide

Next practice: _____