

Common Questions



Should I teach from in or out of the pool?

Schools are required by law to have an adult supervising from poolside. This could be the teacher or another adult if the teacher wishes to get in the water. During the first three levels of Swim Start, it is beneficial for learners to have the teacher in the water with them, so schools should look at recruiting some parent helpers who have preferably done the Swim Start/ASTA course also if the teacher is not getting in the water.

It is common practice for Swim School teachers to teach in the water.

What do you do with children that won't bring their togs?

It is critically important to try to ascertain what the problem is and to see if there is something the school can do to solve the problem. This would usually involve contacting the parents if there is an ongoing problem. There are many reasons for the lack of support of swimming lessons. It is important that it is just left to go. One reason could even be that the parent is very nervous around water and therefore does not realize the huge importance of breaking this negative cycle.

Worksheets on water safety, task cards, water safety crosswords or reading of a library book are other activities for one off non swimmers.

What do you do with children that won't get in the pool?

Find out from parents if there are any reasons for this i.e. past bad experience. Don't push the child but encourage them to move at their own pace i.e. they may sit on the side for the first lesson, sit on the steps for the second lesson etc. Often having an adult in the water with them may help. Give them a toy to hold to distract them and encourage them to join in with activities when they are ready.

Why can't this swimmer float? Should I move on?

There are several factors that may affect the ability to float streamlined on the water. They include:

- Head position i.e. if the head is raised the feet will sink. Front float - ensure head is tucked down between arms, eyes looking to bottom of pool, chin on chest. Back float – ensure eyes look directly up.
- Relaxation – being tense in the water prevents lungs from filling with air, which assists floating.
- Body Composition – fat assists floating and muscle and bone sink. If a swimmer has little fat, they are likely to sink.

Swim teachers can do little to prevent the last point. Often adding leg action in this case will assist gaining a streamlined body position. For the first two points, keep working on technique and don't move on until a streamlined float has been established.

Common Questions



A swimmer is not confident floating on the back. Should I move on?

Swimmers not confident at back floating will have problems learning to roll in freestyle breathing, as they will be scared they will roll onto their back. Therefore they are likely to turn their head rather than rotate their whole body to breathe. Work on horizontal rotation/rolling logs as the children demonstrate readiness to do this. Floating on the back is obviously a critical life saving skill so needs to be mastered as soon as possible.

Why do you blow bubbles?

There are many complex reasons why it is critical that children blow bubbles while they are swimming. Some reasons are:

- Promotes relaxation. Holding your breath makes many swimmers tense and being tense inhibits your movement through the water. However, people float better when there is lots of air in the lungs so holding the breath is an advantage for FLOATING activities. Eventually swimmers may learn “explosive breathing” which involves holding the breath for a certain number of strokes and blowing it out quickly, immediately before
- Breathing. This is an advanced technique and it is not recommended that this technique be taught to learners
- Enables the swimmer to submerge. This is a very important skill for both games e.g. picking up objects off the bottom, or diving
- Down for streamlined starts. It enables the swimmer to be more in control of the water rather than the water be in control of them.
- Exhaling plays an important role in balance in the water.
- Enables undulation in the water which is needed for all stroke but particularly breast stroke and butterfly.

How many strokes should I teach the learners to do before they breathe in freestyle?

In Swim Start it is recommended that two or four strokes works well in the beginning. This is because many learners find it easier to breathe to one side than on both sides. Once swimmers are able to co-ordinate leg and arm action with breathing, bilateral breathing (i.e. breathing to both sides) can be practiced.

Eventually swimmers should be taught to breath on both sides, as this results in a more balanced stroke. During the freestyle breathing progressions, it is possible to practice drills using both sides, just not at the same time: i.e. one arm freestyle: Practice the first length with left arm on the board and breathing to right side. Practice the second length with right arm on the board and breathe to left side.

Common Questions



Do you bring your thumb out of the water first or little finger first when swimming backstroke?

It doesn't really matter. What does matter is that the little finger enters the water first at the end of the recovery.

Why do you rotate in freestyle and backstroke?

Rotation allows for more distance per stroke. It also cuts down resistance. When the body moves through the water on its side, there is less resistance than moving through the water square on.

Why is butterfly not taught in Swim Start?

Swim Start is a survival programme and butterfly is not seen as being able to aid survival. However, the beginnings of butterfly, dolphin body actions are taught in Level Four.

Why do we not use children for the pool sessions on the Swim Start course?

We want to give course participants the opportunity to try out skills and progressions, so that they can experience first hand or be reminded of what the children will experience in the swimming programme. It is also important to understand what some of the barriers to learning are in the swimming pool environment i.e. getting cold if you are not kept busy, noise, distractions etc so they can develop methods to overcome these.

If you have other questions, please do not hesitate to contact your Regional Education Manager. Details below:

Arjun Haszard
Swimming New Zealand
03 387 0372
027 291 6107
arjun@swimmingnz.org.nz