

## AUSTSWIM

Formed in 1979 as the Australasian Council for the Teaching of Swimming and Water Safety, AUSTSWIM is the leading Registered Training Organisation in Australia responsible for the education and training of Swimming and Water Safety Teachers. Austswim Teachers of Swimming and Water Safety will contribute in their role to help shape and educate learners to make good/ better choices about teaching safer diving. That is, clean clear water, depth, clarity, conditions and environment. AUSTSWIM is heavily invested in ensuring each learner receives the best possible training with the highest standard of safety.

## Background

All AUSTSWIM Trainers deliver a clear and consistent message to learners who are intent on becoming an AUSTSWIM Teacher of Swimming and Water Safety on the subject of diving. Learning safer diving with progressive practices forms a part of learning safer entries into the water, starting with the learner sitting on the side and turning to enter the water slowly. As the learner grows in competency on their learn-to-swim journey, safer dive entries can be introduced as another type of entry into the water. This type of entry is not to be confused with a competitive start entry used for swimming competitions.

The teaching of diving in the context of swimming and water safety lessons poses a serious risk of injury to the swimmer which could result in a spinal injury, particularly to the head and neck, rendering the swimmer paraplegic or quadriplegic if not taught the skill following best practice guidelines. Participants in swimming and water safety lessons who are learning how to dive, need to be assured of a safe learning environment with qualified teachers skilled in the teaching of diving. Education providers, pool operators and swimming and water safety teachers should all be trained and well-practised in the skill of teaching safer diving.

## Risk Management Considerations

Teaching a student in a structured and formal class is inherently different from permitting recreational users from diving (or teaching diving to others), and that if delivered with appropriate risk management, is an important part of teaching swimming and water safety skills. Guidance on risk management is available to swim schools in the Royal Life Saving Society – Australia Guidelines for Safe Pool Operations (GSPO).

The importance of the swim school having a current “Teaching Diving Risk Assessment” cannot be stressed highly enough and should include factors including, but not limited to:

- Is there someone on hand who has the appropriate competency to manage an aquatic spinal injury incident? (<https://training.gov.au/Training/Details/SISCAQU021>)
- If no one is on-hand with the appropriate unit of competency, and diving depth is sub-

optimal, leading to an increased risk, consideration should be given to not teaching diving until circumstances have changed and the risk is appropriately mitigated.

- Is there appropriate spinal injury management rescue equipment on hand? Is appropriate water safety signage installed?
- Has the swimming and water safety teacher completed appropriate in-service training which covers aquatic rescue techniques and appropriate teaching methodologies? (Ref: GSPO AP2.5 – Currency Training and Professional Development)
- Has the swimming and water safety teacher been inducted to the aquatic facility in which they will be teaching, including the most appropriate and safe locations to teach diving? (Ref: GSPO AP 2.4 – Induction)
- Is the swimming and water safety teacher medically fit and healthy to teach the activity?

(Ref: GSPO AP 2 – Swimming and Water Safety Teachers, 2.3 Health and Fitness Assessments)

(Ref: GSPO AS 4 – Pool Signage)

(Ref: GSPO SE 1 – Determining Safety Equipment Requirements, GSPO SE 7 – Spinal Immobilisation Equipment)

## Royal Life Saving Guidelines for Safe Pool Operations Definition of Teaching Diving

A dive is defined in the GSPO as entry into water where the upper body (the hands, arms and head followed by the torso and lower limbs) enters first during activities, which are conducted under aquatic programming such as:

- Swimming and related (triathlon, distance swimming, Lifesaving Sport) squad training and competition
- Lifesaving classes
- Swimming and water safety classes

(Ref: GSPO AP 9 – Teaching of Safe Water Entries and Diving)

## Basic Safety Rules for Teaching Diving

1. The depth of water should be checked by both the teacher and the student before entry into any body of water. In many natural water environments, the depth may vary during the period of one session and should be regularly monitored.
2. It is recommended practice to slide in to check the water depth is adequate before diving, particularly in unfamiliar areas.
3. Check for water depth signs.
4. Ensure that the water area and surrounds into which entry is anticipated is free of obstruction (e.g. other bathers, toys, lane ropes).

5. Dive away from the pool edge.

Ref: GSPO AP 9 – Teaching of Safe Water Entries and Diving. 9.3 – Instruction in Safe Water Entry

## AUSTSWIM's Best Practice Teaching of Diving

Prior to the commencement of the teaching of water entries and diving it is important that the teacher understands and gives consideration to specific safety factors, including the depth of water into which the learner will enter and the height from which they will dive. The student should be educated in the dangers of diving into known and unknown pools, lakes, dams, rivers, creeks and at beaches or in the ocean.

It is noted that, on their first visit to the water environment in which the teaching of diving is to take place, the student should receive a facility familiarisation induction on the safety considerations prior to entering the water.

In accordance with the GSPO, diving should be taught in water that has a preferable depth of at least 2 metres with a series of progressive practices starting with a push and glide off the wall in the water, a sitting dive, then a crouch dive and finally a standing dive from the edge. It is noted that AUSTSWIM recommends key teaching points that are used are “lock hands, lock head, steer up”. The cue “lock head” acts to reinforce and remind students of the correct alignment of the spine to minimise the risk of injury. It would be possible to practise in a depth of no less than 1.5m. When practising diving skills in a depth between 1.5m and 2.0m it is recommended that signage is displayed indicating that diving is being taught under instruction.

Remember that the depths recommended in the GSPO are the minimum depths and that deeper water may be more appropriate for certain students, including students who are tall or having difficulty learning safe techniques.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. What are the key considerations when teaching safer diving?

- The safety and skill level of the learner
- Appropriate depth of water to perform the skill
- The use of progressive teaching practices when teaching diving.
- Only current and qualified swim coaches, lifesaving coaches and instructors (excepting beach lifesaving), and licensed swimming and water safety teachers should instruct safe water entries and diving skills. (Ref: GSPO AP 9.3.17).
- An appropriate aquatic risk assessment with appropriate controls in place for spinal injury management (inclusive of equipment and training).

### 2. What is the correct depth for teaching safer diving?

The aquatic industry recommended depth for teaching diving is 1.5m – 2.0m. Refer to table below.

	Optimum Water Depth	Minimum Water Depth	Source
<b>Teaching</b> Sitting Dive	1.5m+	1.2m	AUSTSWIM Teaching Swimming and Water Safety – the Australian Way, 2021  (Note: not incorporated in GSPO).
<b>Teaching</b> Crouch Dive	2.0m	1.5m	GSPO, v4.0, AP9 – Teaching of Safe Water Entries and Diving, 01/09/2018. Retrieved 17/10/22.
<b>Teaching</b> Standing Dive from Pool Side	2.0m	1.5m	GSPO, v4.0, AP9 – Teaching of Safe Water Entries, 01/09/2018. Retrieved 17/10/22.
<b>NOTE</b>			
It is noted, in pools where the recommended depth of water is not available, the <u>sit dive only</u> may be performed in 1.2 metres, under close supervision by the qualified teacher in the water.			
It is recommended that signage be displayed stating that diving is being taught under instruction by the teacher in the water when teaching diving in a depth of less than 1.8m. This should be in place anywhere the depth is between 1.5m and 1.8m.			

### 3. What are the guidelines for recreational diving?

	Optimum Water Depth	Minimum Water Depth	Source
<b>Recreational</b> Dive	No less than 1.8m	1.8m	GSPO, v4.0, AP13.3 – Supervision of Safe Water Entry (diving) for Recreational Swimming, 01/09/2018. Retrieved 14/02/23.
<b>Recreational</b> Dive entry from a starting block	2.0m+	2.0m	GSPO, v4.0, AP13.3 – Supervision of Safe Water Entry (diving) for Recreational Swimming, 01/09/2018. Retrieved 14/02/23.
<b>Recreational</b> Dive from pool sides >380mm above water level	2.0m+	2.0m+	GSPO, v4.0, AP13.3 – Supervision of Safe Water Entry (diving) for Recreational Swimming, 01/09/2018. Retrieved 14/02/23.

	Optimum Water Depth	Minimum Water Depth	Source
<p><b>NOTE</b></p> <p>It is noted that dive entry should only be allowed in pools where there is a forward clearance of 6000mm or greater, the first 5000mm of which should be at the recommended water depth.</p> <p>It is further noted that running dives should not be permitted into any depth of water.</p>			

**4. What are the progressive practices or stages recommended by AUSTSWIM when teaching students to dive?**

The swimmer should only progress to the next step once they have demonstrated the correct technique at each stage<sup>(1)</sup>. For more detailed information, please refer to Appendix A.

- Push to Glide
- Push to glide, steer up
- Glide through hoop tunnel
- Dolphin like action - over noodle, under water, steer up through hoop
- Sitting Dive
- Crouch Dive
- Standing Dive

**5. What are the main teaching points to use when teaching safer diving?**

Lock hands, lock head steer up. Grip edge with toes.

**6. Is an AUSTSWIM Teacher qualified to teach diving from the starting blocks?**

A qualified AUSTSWIM Teacher of Swimming and Water Safety may use the starting blocks for dive practice as a progression after the other steps have been successfully demonstrated and assessed as competent, ensuring that correct teaching points are used. It is noted that if blocks are to be used, the appropriate water depth of 2.0m must also be available.

**7. Is an AUSTSWIM Teacher qualified to teach diving from a diving board?**

It is observed that only a current and qualified swim coach, lifesaving coach and instructor (excepting beach lifesaving), and licensed swimming and water safety teachers should instruct safe water entries and diving skills.

(Ref: GSPO AP 9. 9.3.17 – Minimum Qualifications).

**8. What is important to consider before teaching safer diving to students?**

It is noted that the person teaching diving from the side should be appropriately qualified to do so and should adhere to the recommended guidelines concerning water depth when teaching diving.

It is noted that the person teaching diving should follow and adhere to directions on signage pertaining to diving at the venue.

## 9. What happens if I continue to teach diving without following recommended guidelines?

The teaching of diving outside of the recommended guidelines increases the probability of risk/injury to the student. Both the likelihood of injury and the consequence in an injury increase therefore increase the overall risk to the activity. In this instance, the swim school or the swimming and water safety teacher would be liable for that injury.

## 10. Additional Resources

- AUSTSWIM, 2021, 'Teaching Swimming and Water Safety<sup>TM</sup>, The Australian Way'.
- Guidelines for Safe Pool Operations, 2018, Royal Life Saving Society - Australia, Available at: <https://www.royallifesaving.com.au/subscribers/GSPO>
- Diving Australia, <https://www.diving.org.au/community/coaches/>

## References

1. AUSTSWIM, 2021, 'Teaching Swimming and Water Safety<sup>TM</sup>, The Australian Way'.
2. Diving Australia, <https://www.diving.org.au/community/coaches/>
3. Guidelines for Safe Pool Operation, 2018, Royal Life Saving Society - Australia, Available at: <https://www.royallifesaving.com.au/subscribers/GSPO>



## Appendix A – Diving Progressive Practices

### 1. Push to Glide

- a. Swimmer starts in the water and performs a streamlined push and glide from the wall, on the surface of the water
- b. Students start with the body held straight so the glide is in a straight line with no kicking of the legs.
- c. Students look down tucking chin to chest, ears are in the water, arms are extended, hands locked.

### 2. Push to glide, steer up

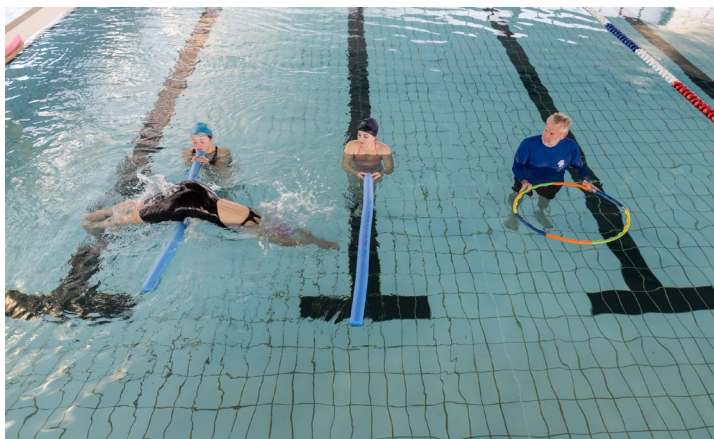
- a. Once successful with the above, introduce the concept of 'steering up'. Students push and glide off the wall, using their hands to 'Steer up' by changing the angle of the wrists enabling their fingers to point up towards the surface of the water
- b. Teaching points are: "Lock hands, lock head, steer up". These teaching points prevent the student from doing a breaststroke arm action pull whilst under the water.

### 3. Glide through hoop tunnel

- a. This practice is used to fine tune the underwater skill of steering up. Students hold hoops in a row under water.
- b. In turn, students push and glide through the hoops, steering up with their hands through the last hoop.

### 4. Noodles and hoops

- a. Students hold a noodle and a hoop flat on the water surface in a line. In turn students "lock hands" and "lock head".
- b. Push off two feet off floor, dolphin over the noodle then steer up to the surface and through the hoop.



From AUSTSWIM, 2021, 'Teaching Swimming and Water Safety™, The Australian Way'

## 5. Sitting Dive

- a. Once competent in the push and glide and steering up, students progress to the sitting dive. Competency in the sitting dive must be achieved before the student progresses to the crouch dive.
- c. Students sit on the pool edge, feet against the pool wall.
- d. With hands and head locked, the student leans forward, fingertips pointing into the pool, they push with their feet against the wall enabling them to ‘dive’ into the water. Using the same teaching points as in previous progressions, the student **MUST** steer up. Steer up is the most crucial teaching point, as it reduces the chances of the student steering toward the pool floor. This preventative action helps to maintain a safer dive entry.
- e. Once this skill is mastered, the student is ready to progress to the next step.



From AUSTSWIM, 2021, ‘Teaching Swimming and Water Safety<sup>TM</sup>, The Australian Way’

## 6. Crouch Dive

- a. The student crouches on the pool edge, one foot forward with toes gripping the edge, the other about 30cms behind, head locked, hands locked.
- b. The student tips forward towards the water, transferring weight from back foot to front foot. The head and hands are locked. The front foot pushes the body forwards.
- c. On entering the water, the student must steer up to enable them to return to the surface.
- d. Once the student has gained more confidence, they can progress to having feet shoulder width apart with toes gripping the pool edge.



From AUSTSWIM, 2021, ‘Teaching Swimming and Water Safety<sup>TM</sup>, The Australian Way’



## 7. Standing Dive

- a. The student stands with feet shoulder width apart and toes gripping the pool edge.
- b. Initially, the student tips forward with hands and head locked, toes pushing against the pool edge.
- c. Hand entry position should be at least 50cms in front of the feet position
- d. Upon entry, the student must steer up.
- e. Flight distance can be gradually increased as greater force is applied at push off from the edge.



From AUSTSWIM, 2021, 'Teaching Swimming and Water Safety™, The Australian Way'