

AUSTSWIM Safe Handling of Students in Swimming and Water Safety Lessons FAQs

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Child Safeguarding – Manual Handling of Students in Swimming and Water Safety Lessons

Protecting students with safe manual handling techniques whilst teaching swimming and water safety lessons is critical for our workforce. For beginner students learning how to swim, it is necessary, in most cases, for the teacher to provide manual assistance to the student to enable them to float or to help them maintain the correct body position for certain skills.

To help Swim Schools ensure their teachers are following best practice guidelines, we have compiled the following list of FAQs:

1. How can a teacher of swimming and water safety support a non-swimmer or beginner swimmer when they are learning to float on their back?

The teacher can support the student by holding them under the head or using flotation devices (noodle, kickboard etc.). Sometimes it is necessary for the teacher to support the student by placing their hands under their shoulders. Consent should be sought from the student before doing this. There is no need to touch any other part of the student's body.

2. How can a teacher of swimming and water safety support a non-swimmer or beginner swimmer when they are learning to float on their front?

The teacher can hold the hands of the student, or the student can use flotation devices (noodle, kickboard etc.). There is no need to hold or touch any other part of the body.

3. Where should the teacher's hands be if they are not supporting the student?

The teacher's hands should be visible to the parents/carers who may be observing the lesson.

4. Should the teacher force the student to put their head in the water?

No. Students should never be forced into doing something they don't want to do. This will not help the student learn skills any faster.

5. Is it ok for the teacher to hold the student's head and move it to show them the breathing position for freestyle?

There should be no need to do this. The teacher should demonstrate the action and explain the practice to the student.

6. How should the teacher help the student to get out of the pool?

Climbing out of the pool without steps is a learned skill. The student should be taught by the teacher using the following teaching points:

- Elbow, elbow, knee, knee.

If the student needs assistance from the teacher, the teacher should ask permission from the student to help them. Only then should they provide assistance which may be by way of a stirrup made by the teacher's hands, with clear explanations to the student.

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7. What is the best way to teach breaststroke leg action without the teacher holding and moving the student's legs?

In the early stages of learning the symmetrical leg action required for breaststroke, the teacher can select a competent student who can demonstrate the leg action. This may be a student from another class. It is generally easier for the student to grasp the concept of the leg action if they learn survival backstroke first.

The teacher asks the students to sit on the pool edge with their knees bent and their feet in the water. The teaching points are:

- Legs out in front, feet together
- Keep legs together and drop heels to touch the wall
- Move the heels out along the wall and then bring the legs quickly back to the outstretched together position.

The teacher should develop teaching and demonstration practices that enable them to explain the leg action to the student.

Teaching swimming and water safety to students whilst in the water can be challenging. Always remember to set clear expectations for the lesson; to keep your hands as visible as possible at all times and always ask permission from the student before touching them to support them.