

Going Underwater

Joyful underwater attempts are the foundation of swimming

Provide a safe environment filled with fun

Aim for voluntary underwater attempts

You demonstrate; they learn

Parents and instructors should go underwater with the learning swimmer.

Get at eye level. Smile frequently. Laugh often. Go under too.

Demonstrate joyful, happy, laughing underwater examples and provide opportunities for learner to join.

Build into every activity a chance for learner to experience going underwater with their own agency and interest.



Get eye-to-eye

Loving underwater takes time

For a new learner to love being underwater takes time and many joyful experiences. We want to give swimming learners lots of positive experiences to remember when they confront the discomfort and pain of choking on water; inhaling water is uncomfortable, scary, and terrifying.

Play games! Sing songs!

Do things that build the learner's trust and comfort in the aquatic environment. Remember that the water is a vastly different place than the child's typical living. On land they can breathe without difficulty, issue, or pain.

Inhaling water teaches the learner to be afraid of going under. We want to build positive joyful experiences with going underwater that teach the learner they can hold their breath (or keep their lips closed) and enjoy swimming without the pain and discomfort it could have.

Focus on:

- Demonstrate every activity, challenge, game, and song. Do the things too.
- Smile, laugh, have fun, be involved as your joy and comfort will transfer to the learner.



Laugh, smile, enjoy teaching!

Underwater Progression

Earn trust by being consistent, predictable, and safe

Follow the underwater progression step-by-step

Do the careful deliberate work first, then build on trust

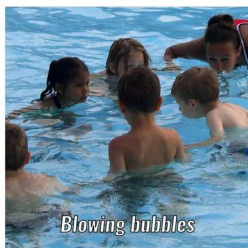
Create trust

Build trust by never letting go of the swimmer to let them fend alone.

Always support the learner with no surprises.

Telegraph all of your actions: demonstrate clearly what will happen by doing it yourself or with another participant.

Fun now leads to joy later



Build smiling joy into every early swimming activity or challenge/ game.

The effort you put into the learner's positive experiences doing supported front glides will blossom into excited independent streamlines later.

All activities lead to bravery



All of the supported glides & jumps, challenges and games done in a beginner's swim lesson will echo into the future.

Build trust. Go slow.

The time you take now to be careful and loving will create bravery later.

Reach to the next step

Incremental improvements

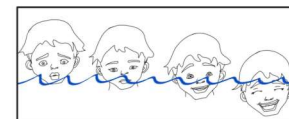
Going underwater is a slow progression where learners experience the unique feeling of being submerged.

Your role is to safely and gently teach a learner that the water is different, fun, and exciting while also potentially hazardous.

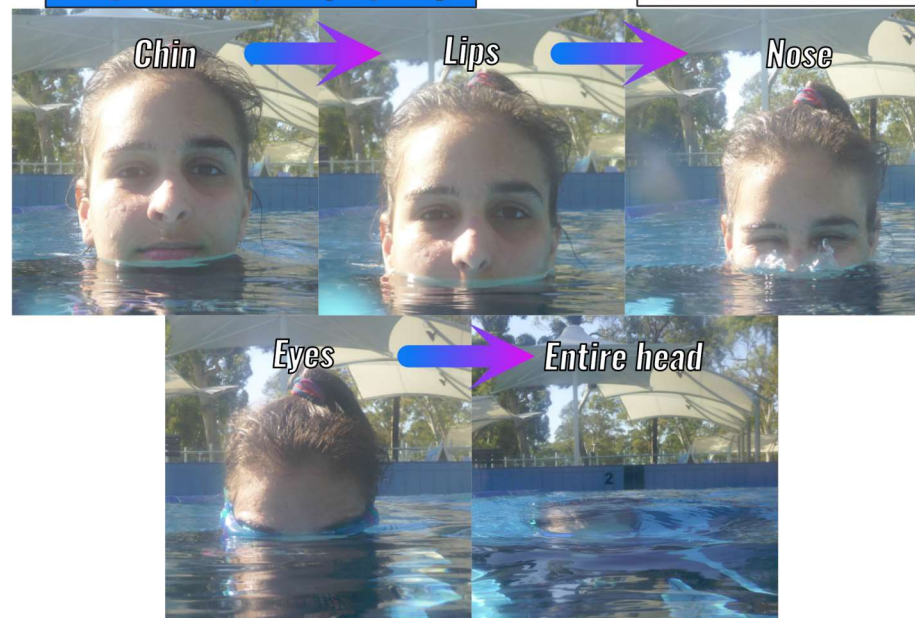
Go slow. Build step by step: 1 small step after another small step.

The Underwater Progression:

- Shoulders
- Chin
- Lips
- Nose
- Eyes
- Whole face
- Entire head



Progress Slowly. Step-by-step.



*Never skip a step of the underwater progression.

Avoid asking a learner to put their chin in the water and then their eyes. Skipping steps of the progression erodes trust. We want to build trust by being predictable and consistent.

Work on each step until comfort is consistent knowing each increment is important.

Go slow and master each step

Encourage going underwater

Do different things to achieve an underwater goal

Build a foundation through earned trust

Supported Front Glides lead to Streamline



Constantly encourage the swimmer to "kiss" the water whenever you do a supported front glide.

Over time, eventually the swimmer will put their face in the water willingly.

Building a habit of looking down in a supported front glide will make streamline easier.



Supported Back Glides lead to water comfort

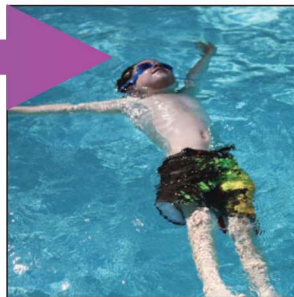


Upside down, backwards, unable to see, total trust in a stranger (INS), can't stand.

Back glides can be terrifying.

Teach how to float, move, stay on surface with arms and kicks, how to recover, stand, and return to shallow water.

Comfort and confidence grows slowly.



Jumps, games, encouragement leads to JOY!



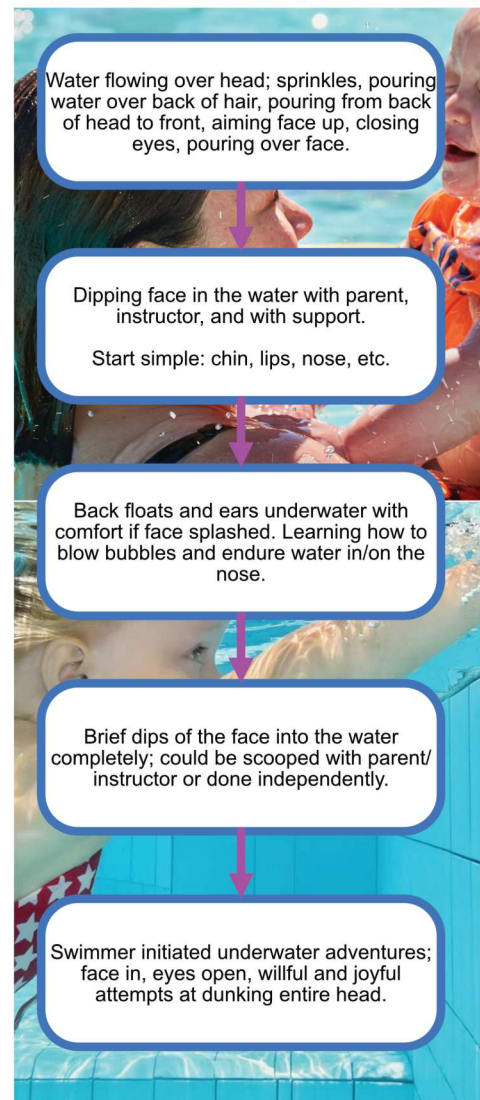
Initial jump reluctance comes from fear of being dropped, going under, and falling.

Scoop from wall to hugs, support the hands and keep swimmer's face from going under if not desired.

Over time, excitement and pure fun will develop into reckless jumps of joy!



From the timid beginner to the joyful underwater adventurer



Going underwater is a fundamental step to learning how to swim.

Encourage it gradually, over time, in a loving, caring, supportive environment.

Start with small actions; splashes on the face, self-directed play with toys, and good old-fashioned encouragement.

As the swimmer gets more comfortable with the lesson, the instructor, and their experience in the water they'll develop more bravery to do something totally unnatural: go underwater.

Going underwater can be scary. Do you remember inhaling water? Did you like it?

Be gentle and encouraging. Provide many opportunities to go underwater.



Free Motion & Play

Find the right fit; life jackets should be snug

Play games and let the learners move, laugh, and race

Independent movement is best; if it is safe and shallow

Play in shallow water

Leverage floating aids, life jackets, and play games in shallow water where learners can stand and float; about chest deep.

Every bit of play and fun you can work into a lesson will help learners understand how the water feels.

Much of learning to swim is the learner experiencing what it feels like to be submerged, feeling how to move through water, and feeling what happens when they push against the water.



Group play is fun and promotes learning

Games, Life Jackets, Moving

Every challenge has a purpose

Play games and allow for independent movement. Find shallow water or provide a swim bench.

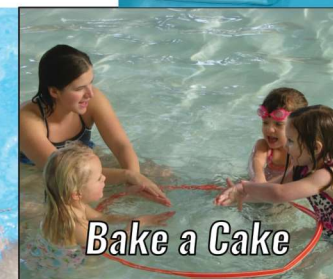
Learners need time and opportunity to explore the water for themselves.

Free motion & play teaches:

- How to move through the water
- How the water pushes against the body to make one move
- Buoyancy, breath control, and how to relax and float



Leverage shallow water



Bake a Cake



Too big!



Play to learn

Front Glides



Focus on forward horizontal movement

Body, line, and posture are the three keys to gliding

Progress from support to position 11 to streamline

Teach body position:

Achieve good body position with these key elements:

- Head/face aimed down
- Arms reaching forward above shoulders
- Body held straight and narrow kick moves person

Front Glide Script:

- Put your shoulders in water
- Put your hands out in front of you
- Put your face in water
- Push off with/to me



A great front glide is also Position 11.

This is "position 11." We use this drill/position as a teaching tool. Every swimming stroke will flow through this position.

Streamline



All glides lead to streamline

SL = Streamline. Every supported glide, independent glide across benches, or forward horizontal motion builds towards the crucial swimming skill: streamline.

A good streamline is the ultimate goal, after we've established comfort gliding with the face in the water.

We use supported front glides as the next step in the incremental progression of skills.

They can be done with learners that go underwater and those that do not.

Your goal for supported front glides is to establish a good body posture, line, and balance at the surface so learners can adjust their head and arm position for better quality.



Streamline is the goal; front glides build to SL

*See Streamline section for specifics

Supported Front Glides

Use the script every time

Repetition, Repetition, Repetition; many attempts

Every attempt is another opportunity to go underwater

The script:

- Put your shoulders in the water.
- Reach your arms out to me.
- Put your face [chin, lips, nose] in the water.
- Push off [with, to] me.



A supported front glide; hands on shoulders

- Instructor demonstrating
- Learner trusts instructor
- Learner's arms reach for instructor's shoulders

3 types of support

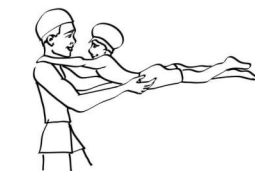
Hands on shoulders

The swimmer puts their hands on the instructor's shoulders.

Keep swimmer's arms straight and attempt to keep body straight. This support is usually used for swimmers that do not put their face in the water.

Lift the belly or outside of hips to manipulate the swimmer's body into a straight line.

The instructor should walk backwards to simulate movement and independent propulsion.



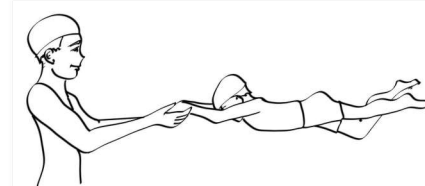
Hands in hands

Participant reaches forward in streamline with their face in the water.

The instructor will hold the participant's hands with their own. Keep the swimmer's hands near the surface and pull to provide motion.

Hold the swimmer at arms length. If needed, use other hand to support belly and body.

The goal is to keep participant's arms straight, their face in the water, and their body relaxed, stretched, and floating on the surface while the instructor moves backwards.



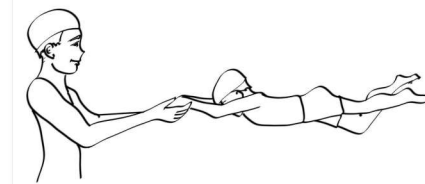
Short glide, then hand in hand

The Instructor stands a body length or two away from the swimmer and waits for them to glide to the instructor.

Goal is for participant to glide with their face down, in the water keeping their body straight.

Once participant gets to instructor, either support with hands on shoulders or hands supported on instructor's hand.

Once the swimmer starts independent glide the instructor MUST NOT MOVE. Catch the swimmer first, then walk backwards.



Front Glide: Progressions

Move at the swimmer's comfort.

We should always support the swimmer based on their ability to remain calm; do what they want, and...

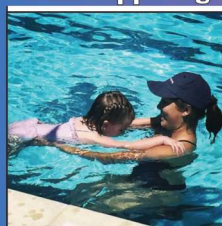
Stretch (push) by asking the swimmer to do a very small, further than normal, distance without support.

Push swimmer to do things alone

- Provide support
- Never move once they start

Gradually adjust support

Full support glides → ½ alone ½ supported



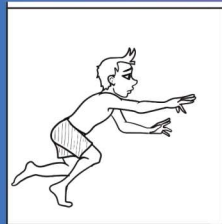
The transition to independent attempts is paved with many many many opportunities to do a front glide alone.

Start with holding the swimmer and aiming them at the wall. Let them fall to the wall, with their feet on your knees.

Grow and increase the distance.



Small brave attempts → Longer glides alone

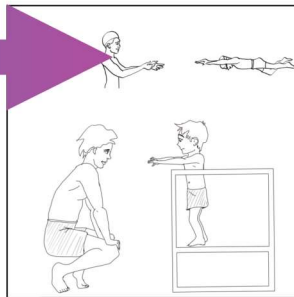


Let the swimmer reach for your shoulder, or the wall, or another bench.

Then, when they can stretch and reach about their body length, take 1 step back.

Let them fall forward, and PUSH with their feet to your shoulders/arms.

As mastery grows, start further away.



Staying put earns trust! → Swimmers thrive!



YOU MUST NOT MOVE!!!!

Once the swimmer initiates an unsupported glide, regardless of the distance, the instructor MUST NOT MOVE.

Build and earn trust by being where they last saw you. They're blind, underwater, alone, and desperate for your support. Provide it.



Build Confidence

Combat fear by being consistent

Beginners:

Hold them close. Their hands on instructor's shoulders. Keep them supported.

Introduce to what it feels like to be flat.

Build comfort:

Do the same thing, over and over and over. Establish expectations and habit; follow the scripts.

Introduce falling forward:



Fall like a "tree doing a TIMBER!"

Feet remain on ins knees, swimmer hands reach for the wall.

Stand 1 step away, then 2 steps...

STAY WHERE YOU ARE until the swimmer reaches you.

Glide alone, then supported glide.

Gliding alone is Streamline!

The swimmer is confident in laying flat, face in, feet kicking, and arms stretched forward.

Can recover to standing without fear.

Front glides should focus on:

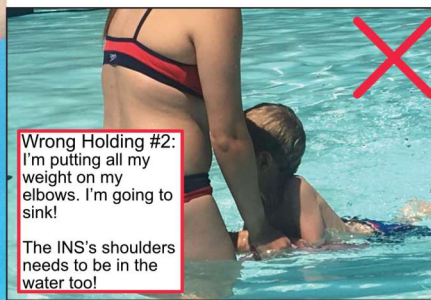
- Face in water
- Body flat and relaxed at surface
- Arms stretched, feet kicking

List of supported front glides:

- Hands on shoulders
- Tree falling close start → Hands on shoulders.
- Tree falling close to wall → reach for wall
- Two benches: step across the gap
- Two benches: reach for the other handle
- Swimmer hand in instructor's hand
- Brief glide alone (1 body length) then hand in instructor's hand
- Short independent glides from bench to bench
- Long glide to instructor, stand w/o help



Wrong Holding #1: I'm learning to push my belly down and lift my head and feet.



Wrong Holding #2: I'm putting all my weight on my elbows. I'm going to sink!

The INS's shoulders needs to be in the water too!