

Level 1

Going Underwater, and Support

- Go underwater unassisted
- Supported front float with face in water
- Supported back float with ears in water
- Go underwater, then recover to standing on own

Level 1 is primarily focused on getting new participants comfortable with your location, the water, being held, and going underwater. Instructors should move quickly from activity to activity, focusing on games, songs, and repetition. Typical age range is 3-6 years old, though you can begin teaching around 2.75 years old if they can stand on their own in chest deep water.

Swim instructors should be familiar with:

- Incremental underwater progression
- Supported front glide progression
- Supported back glide progression
- Command language
- Removing “ok” from sentences
- Game: Bake a Cake
- Game: Buckethead (or variation of water pouring principles)
- How to hold hands when supporting jumps

Managers should be aware of:

Tears and hesitation. Keep on the lookout for scared swimmers as they initially leave their parents. Provide smiles, reassurance, and confidence. If absolutely necessary, let parents walk swimmer to the edge of the pool and then exit quickly to viewing area. Let instructors acknowledge fears and tears, but not drop everything to focus only on tearful child. Invite to join, then move on.

Silent teachers. Watch for swimmers that do not participate fully and instructors that are not engaging their swimmers. Ensure that instructors are constantly encouraging swimmers to push into the next step in a progression. Doing supported front glides hands on shoulders, instructor should be asking swimmer to kick and put face in the water with the appropriate underwater progression step (chin, lips, nose, eyes).

Excessive downtime. We should strive to have swimmers actively engaged in some activity for the majority of the time they are in the lesson. Avoid having long periods of waiting doing nothing.

Level 2

Streamlines, and the Crawls

- Streamline three body lengths on front
- Streamline three body lengths on back (can be done in soldier position: hands near hips)
- Streamline, and then do front crawl arms for total of 5 body lengths
- Streamline, or soldier, then do back crawl arms for total of 5 body lengths
- Be introduced to fly kick with hands at hips

Level 2 is focused on horizontal motion. When swimmer put their face in the water willingly, we can start the business of teaching motion. At this point we want to introduce pushing off benches, wall, platforms, anything to provide propulsion. Use short distances and excessive attempts to keep swimmers moving and getting used to moving horizontally with their face in the water. What the head, torso, and hips do is more important than what the arms and hands are doing. Soldier position should be reinforced repeatedly in multiple ways.

Focus on body posture before arms.

Swim instructors should be familiar with:

- Streamline and the 3 things to work on with it
- Streamline and swimming are two separate events where streamline comes first.
- Soldier position, lazy puppet, position 11 and the 3 things to work on for pos. 11.
- Arm circles, over water recovery
- Rotation method, waves, and constant motion between 2 benches
- Hips must move more in fly kick

Managers should be aware of:

Lack of feedback. Level 2 should be filled with horizontal forward motion. Generally moving in a very short area back and forth multiple times per task (5 times streamline with free kicks). Instructors will often go silent and watch, sometimes giving non-feedback words like “Good job,” or “good.” Make sure instructors are giving specific feedback as often as possible, and progressively based on effectiveness of feedback. Attempt 1: “Well done on kicking, remember to look down too.” Attempt 2: “You kept kicking well, and you looked down, but now you forgot to lock your thumb.” Attempt 3: “Well done on all 3 Johnny!”

Poor explanation, or no demonstration. Make sure instructors actually demonstrate what they are looking for. They should do 2 or 3 streamlines from bench to bench first to show what they are looking for. Instructors should also be as specific as possible when giving commands.

Level 3

Breathing, Breaststroke, and Fly

- Front crawl with breathing 8 meters
- Back crawl with body at surface 8 meters
- Demonstrate “11, Y, Eat, and Reach” on deck, and while doing front float
- Demonstrate breaststroke kick while sitting on edge of water
- Demonstrate butterfly arms while on deck and while doing front float

Level 3 mainly focuses on breathing to the side during front crawl, and introducing breaststroke kicks. Swimmers will also work on breaststroke arms and butterfly arms, but without true “swimming” those strokes. By now, swimmers should have a solid straight core when doing streamlines and moving arms to move with their face in the water short distances. Focus on progressions to repetitively learn turning head to the side to breathe for front crawl. Use short distances, specific arm strokes, limited breathing opportunities to provide a safe, easy transition to swimmer and breathing.

Swim instructors should be familiar with:

- Front crawl breathing to the side
- 11, Y, Eat and Reach. It does NOT make you move forward. Think of it more like a “dance move”
- Breaststroke kick, specifically FLEX
- Butterfly arms: 11, push down to hips, thumbs forward, travel through airplane, clap back of hands above head, restart
- Rotation method and short distance cheat sheet

Managers should be aware of:

Lack of feedback. Instructors will often go silent and watch, sometimes giving non-feedback words like “Good job,” or “good.” Make sure instructors are giving specific feedback as often as possible, and progressively based on effectiveness of feedback.

Sloppy or erratic arm motions on “11, Y, Eat, and Reach.” Literally do exactly those poses with the fewest moving parts. Later, after they know how to breath and hold a pause will we introduce the “scull” and the “turning the corner” while the elbows press in and forward in breaststroke.

Chicken Wings. During breaststroke arms the elbows should remain high near the head and not pull down to the torso like someone “flapping their wings.”

Long distance swimming. Give swimmers and opportunity to swim longer distances once or twice in a lesson, AFTER they have done a significant number of short distance attempts. Build breathing confidence first, then allow for a longer distance swim.

Level 4

Distance, Competitive, IM

- Front Crawl 20 meters with bilateral breaths
- Back crawl 20 meters with body in soldier near surface
- 3 x streamline with no kick, 1 breaststroke arm stroke (11, Y, Eat, and Reach), then, 1 breaststroke kick in position 11.
- 3x streamline with 2 strokes of fly swim and kick with a breath on stroke #2
- Swim 50 meters non-stop of either front or back crawl

Level 4 mainly focuses on refining front crawl or freestyle, backstroke, and building endurance to swim longer. Spend time kicking only to increase leg strength and movement potential. When swimmers can kick stronger they can move their body and arms easier through the water. We should have a decent foundation of breaststroke arms, breaststroke kick, and fly arms and kick. Use short distances to put them all together. For breaststroke emphasize that the arms and the kick are two distinct separate events. The arms happen with a breath, then in position 11 the kick happens. For fly, focus primarily on arms straight on the recovery and the hips moving up when the arms reach position 11.

Swim instructors should be familiar with:

- Front crawl bilateral breathing (both sides) and head position, hip rotation, early catch
- Back crawl body position and underwater pull: not “S” curve, not straight arm
- BR arms and BR kick should be done as two distinct events separate from each other: longer is better
- Butterfly: how to swim, how to break down each part

Managers should be aware of:

Distracted instructors: With kicking for longer distances a large part of this level instructors have an opportunity to slack off. Encourage engagement and emphasize that the swimmer is the primary focus. Make sure instructors are attentive even when they don't need to provide constant feedback during a kick set.

Remember short distances for maximum learning: If a swimmer is in level 4 they pretty much “know how to swim.” Still use short distances to refine and perfect stroke technique. Even though they can swim a full length, make use of repetition, feedback, and short distances to maximize improvement.

Get in the water: You can argue it is easier to teach out of the water, or on deck. Instructors should be in the water too for this class. They don't have to be the WHOLE time, but they should demonstrate and get in and get wet to correct poor form. This is not an on deck only level for instructors.