

Staff should practice strategies to enable communication for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) children.

ENCOURAGING STAFF PARTICIPATION
IN UNDERSTANDING THE NEEDS
OF DHH CHILDREN

DEAF-FRIENDLY SWIMMING INSTRUCTION: IMPORTANT TIPS FOR SWIM STAFF

Swim staff should endeavour to specific strategies to ensure effective communication and inclusion for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) children during swimming instruction. Not doing this can result in misunderstanding, safety risks, reduced confidence, frustration, and feelings of isolation for the child.

Mandatory Practices for Inclusive Instruction:

ASCERTAIN COMMUNICATION

PREFERENCE: Directly ask the child or their caregiver about the child's preferred communication method (e.g., spoken language, sign language, visual cues).

SECURE ATTENTION BEFORE

SPEAKING: Always gain the child's visual attention before initiating communication. Use clear visual cues such as waving a hand, a flag, or a float.

MAINTAIN FIXED POSITION AND EYE

CONTACT: Remain stationary and maintain direct eye contact with the child while speaking. This facilitates lip-reading and visual comprehension.

UTILIZE VISUAL COMMUNICATION:

Employ gestures, demonstrate strokes and techniques physically, and use visual aids to supplement verbal instructions.

REPEAT PEER CONTRIBUTIONS:

Reiterate any contributions or questions from other swimmers to ensure the DHH child is fully aware of group interactions and instructions.

ALLOCATE TIME FOR TECHNOLOGY

MANAGEMENT: Allow designated time for the child to put on hearing technology mid-session if required. Alternatively, deliver all crucial verbal instructions before devices are removed.

FOSTER OPEN COMMUNICATION:

Ensure the child feels comfortable and empowered to request repetition or clarification of instructions.

PRACTICE VISUAL STARTS: Prior to competitive events, conduct practice races utilizing touch starts or strobe lights to familiarize the child with these visual cues.

Prohibited Communication Practices:

AVOID EXAGGERATED SPEECH: Do not speak excessively slowly or shout. This distorts natural lip patterns and hinders comprehension.

ELIMINATE MOVEMENT DURING SPEECH: Remain still while speaking to avoid distracting visual cues.

MAINTAIN CLEAR MOUTH VISIBILITY: Never cover your mouth or speak with a whistle in your mouth, as this obstructs lip-reading.

SEPARATE INSTRUCTION METHODS: Do not speak and demonstrate simultaneously. Present information sequentially: speak, then demonstrate, or vice versa.

DID YOU KNOW?

Open Water isn't just for swim schools. If you offer activities or programs on the beach for children or young people, we'd love to have you on our side!



For further information about Deaf Children Australia.

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Deaf Children Australia uses the term 'deaf' to refer to all degrees and types of hearing loss.
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