

How to be a

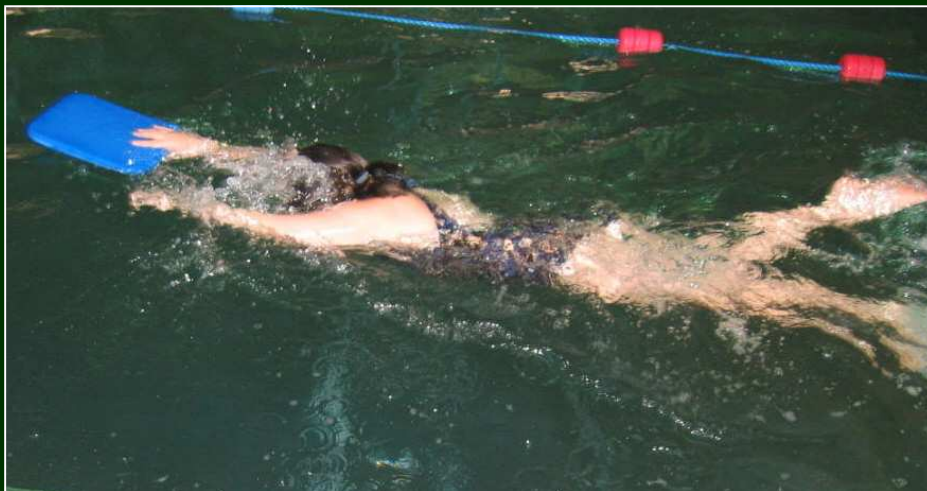
# SWIMMING TEACHER

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The Definitive Guide to Becoming a  
Swimming Teacher

## Part 1

Mastering the Art of Teaching Swimming



Essential Reading for Aspiring and  
Experienced Teachers

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Mark Young

How to be a Swimming Teacher —Part 1

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**Note: this book is intended as a course guide and should accompany additional course material as set on an official swimming teaching course by an official Swimming Association.**

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Graphics and illustrations created by Poser V6.0

Published in association with **swim-teach.com**

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# Why Learn to Swim?

**The benefits gained from learning to swim**, especially from a young age, are numerous. Top of the list has to be safety. Swimming pools and open water areas such as lakes and rivers are an attractive source of fun and entertainment and as a result quite often the dangers of water can be overlooked.

The importance for children of learning to swim cannot be underestimated and respect for the water should be taught as early as possible. As children grow and develop, their strength and therefore ability to move around in the water, with or without floatation aids, also increases. This in turn opens up a whole world of fun and enjoyment. This brings us to the next most important reason to learn to swim: fun.

People swim for various reasons. From health and fitness, to escape and de-stress, right up to training and competition. Most of us, particularly children, swim for fun. With fun come health and fitness in the form of exercise and activity – and most swimming pools and leisure facilities are in local areas and are relatively inexpensive.

Ensuring children receive high quality teaching is very important – because learning to swim is a skill for life and the safety aspects of swimming are unquestionable. Having a child taught by a well qualified teacher will ensure they are provided with appropriate skills.

It is important to note, that children should always be supervised around water, regardless of their swimming ability. The most competent of swimmers can get into trouble at any time and in any water environment. Nobody is drown-proof!



# Health and Safety

**The safety of all pupils in your class** is of paramount importance, especially in this day and age, when we can be sued for breathing in the wrong direction!

Ultimate responsibility for health and safety lies with the manager of the pool or leisure facility where your lessons are taking place. That doesn't mean that as a swimming teacher you are not responsible. You are responsible for the health and safety of your colleagues and assistants as well as the pupils you are teaching.

## **Normal Operating Procedure (NOP)**

The NOP for one particular swimming pool will vary from another as some pools are built within leisure complexes, containing many other sports facilities, and some pools are purpose-built. Most pools vary in their depth and size but all pools have their own NOP.

A typical swimming pool NOP should include the following:

- Emergency action plan (EAP)
- Staff responsibilities
- Temperature of water and surrounding air
- Rescue equipment available on poolside and the procedure for its use
- Pool loads: maximum bather load and pupil/teacher ratios
- Staff qualifications

## **Emergency Action Plan (EAP)**

Health and Safety law dictates that businesses employing staff all require an emergency action plan that can be put into use when dealing with all manner of incidents and accidents, however major or minor. Swimming pool EAPs will vary from pool to pool, depending on the NOP.

A typical EAP should include:

- Emergency signal
- Responsibilities of staff members at the time of emergency
- Location of rescue aids
- Procedure for reporting emergencies
- Location of other necessities (telephone, fire escape, first aid kits)

# Hygiene

**Maintaining a high level of hygiene on the poolside** is a matter of establishing some easy habits and regular practices. Very young children in particular need to be watched carefully as they have less control over their bodily functions.

Some basic cleanliness and hygiene checks to consider before the start of the lesson:

- Check that children have used the toilet before getting into the water. This applies especially to younger children.
- Ask if children have blown their nose.
- Long hair should be up inside a swimming cap or tied back.
- Check the cleanliness of the individual and their swimwear. This can be a sensitive issue and therefore has to be approached with discretion.
- Encourage younger children to use the toilet throughout the lesson if they need to. You will have to get an assistant or parent to take them to the toilet if they need to leave the lesson. Be warned though, that there will be children who use a 'toilet break' as an excuse to get out of swimming!

As a teacher you can advise swimmers to refrain from entering the pool and participating in the lesson if you feel they have a condition that puts the health and safety of others in the lesson, the pupil themselves or yourself at risk. This has to be done with tact and sensitivity.

Reasons for asking a pupil not to enter the pool could be:

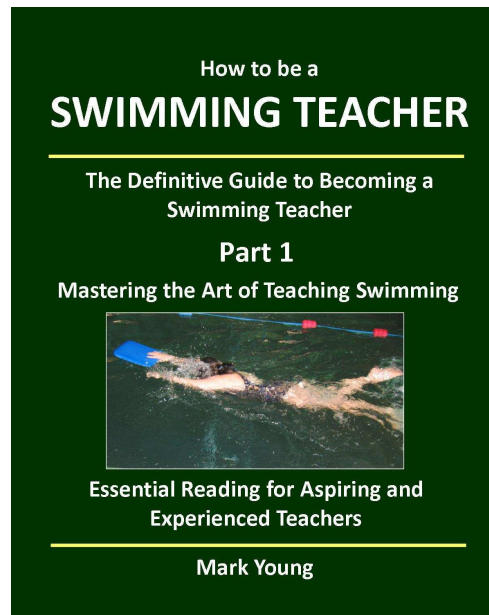
- Open wound
- Cough or cold
- Ear infection
- Contagious disease, e.g. measles etc

There may be many other reasons, conditions and ailments that may cause you to ask a pupil not to enter the pool for a lesson and they are all at the discretion of you, the teacher. It must be stressed, however, that we are swimming teachers, not doctors! We do not have the knowledge, expertise or indeed qualifications to diagnose or advise on any medical condition. The only sound piece of advice you can give, if you feel it is necessary, is that the pupil must go to their doctor for further advice if they have not done so already.

**As a swimming teacher, you are a trained professional** and represent everything that is associated with the standards expected of a fully qualified, trained professional. Therefore, it is important to set standards and have your own procedures in place. The following need to be considered:

- Check your rescue equipment is in place before pupils enter the poolside.
- Check lifeguard is present, if necessary. Some private pools do not require one.
- Check you are wearing appropriate uniform and the correct footwear.
- Tie back long hair.
- Check the pool area is roped off if necessary.
- Check you have all equipment for the lesson, e.g. floats/toys etc, before the lesson starts.
- Check number of pupils in the lesson. Take a register and recount/check regularly.
- Pupils' own safety checks: long hair, long baggy shorts, jewellery, costume straps, chewing gum.
- Check pupils that need medication have it near by, e.g. inhaler.
- Check pupils are in appropriate depth where possible.
- Monitor pupils throughout lesson for excessive fatigue.
- Discourage unruly behaviour and keep control of the class!

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