



TEACHING ACTIVITIES, DRILLS AND GAMES

Teaching Activities

Water Adjustment, Underwater Exploration and Breath Control

Safety Note: Do not let participants hyperventilate or have breath-holding contests. Limit participants to a single inhalation whenever you ask them to hold their breath or submerge.

Rocker or Tidal Wave

Purpose: To help participants adjust to the water

Skill Level: Preschool Aquatics Levels 1 and 2; Learn-to-Swim Level 1

Class Formation: Line formation along the pool wall

Equipment: None

Additional Safety Considerations: Make sure participants' hold on the side is secure. Start with small rocking motions, then progress to larger motions as participants feel comfortable.

Description:

1. Have participants line up along the pool wall.
2. Have them hold on to the side and place their feet on the wall.
3. Have them rock back and forth to make waves.
4. As they feel comfortable, have them make bigger waves.

Blowing Bubbles with Imagination

Purpose: To help participants with blowing bubbles, rhythmic breathing and bobbing

Skill Level: Preschool Aquatics Levels 1 and 2; Learn-to-Swim Level 1

Class Formation: Line in a semicircle

Equipment: Straws and small objects that float, such as Ping-Pong balls

Description:

Have participants imagine doing the following to encourage them to blow bubbles, at the surface of the water or while submerged:

- Blow out a candle
- Blow away a dandelion
- Blow through a straw
- Make a tugboat motor noise
- Play an instrument that you have to blow into, such as a trumpet, saxophone or bugle
- Blow a bubble with bubble gum
- Blow a watermelon seed



- Blow like the wind
- Blow crumbs off the table
- Blow the ladybug off your hand
- Blow like Superman to send the bad guys away
- Blow the flour off your nose as you cook

Float Blow

Purpose: To help participants with water adjustment and breath control

Skill Level: Preschool Aquatics Levels 1–3; Learn-to-Swim Level 1

Class Formation: Line

Equipment: Ball, small float or duck

Description:

1. Place object in front of the participant.
2. Have participants place their faces close to the object and water, then blow.
3. Assign a specific distance to travel or set up as a relay.

Transformers

Purpose: To help participants with water adjustment

Skill Level: Preschool Aquatics Levels 1–3; Learn-to-Swim Level 1

Class Formation: Line, stagger

Equipment: Large balls, kickboards or barbell

Additional Safety Considerations: Organize the participants in a way that they will not propel themselves into one another or into water that is beyond their levels of ability.

Description:

1. Ask participants to choose an action character to portray.
2. With support from an instructor or a floating object such as a large ball, kickboard or barbell, have participants propel themselves to another part of the pool as that action figure. They can jump, use arm strokes or kick to propel themselves.
3. As they become confident, have participants work on the skill without support.

Treasure Hunting

Purpose: To promote underwater exploration, opening eyes under water and confidence building

Skill Level: Preschool Aquatics Levels 1–3; Learn-to-Swim Levels 1 and 2

Class Formation: Any

Equipment: Variety of objects that sink

Additional Safety Considerations: Organize participants to ensure that they do not collide while retrieving objects. If water is too deep, hold items so they are suspended in the water. You may assist participants gently with a press on the back to help them submerge. Be sure to let them know that you are going to assist them. Do not let



participants hyperventilate. Limit participants to a single inhalation whenever you ask them to hold their breath or submerge.

Description:

1. Place a variety of objects that sink on the bottom of the pool.
2. Have participants retrieve them.

Finding Fish

Purpose: To promote rhythmic breathing

Skill Level: Preschool Aquatics Levels 1–3; Learn-to-Swim Level 1

Class Formation: Line up along the wall

Equipment: None

Description:

1. Have participants line up along the wall; if participants can stand in the water, have them form a circle.
2. Have participants “listen to the fish”—have them put their heads in the water so one ear is in the water and their faces are to the side.
3. Have participants “talk to the fish”—have them turn their heads so their faces are toward the bottom and blow bubbles.

Fireman’s Pole

Purpose: To promote submersion, breath control and underwater exploration

Skill Level: Preschool Aquatics Levels 2 and 3; Learn-to-Swim Levels 1 and 2

Class Formation: Any

Equipment: Reaching pole, object that sinks, such as rings, weighted eggs or cutout shapes

Additional Safety Considerations: Do not force participants to go all the way to the bottom of the pole. Encourage them to go as far as they are able. Do not let participants hyperventilate. Limit participants to a single inhalation whenever you ask them to hold their breath or submerge.

Description:

1. Place the reaching pole straight up and down in the water with one end on the bottom of the pool. At the base of the pole, place one or more objects that sink.
2. One at a time, have participants “climb” down the pole hand over hand going as far as they can.
3. If they are able, have them retrieve one or more of the objects. If they are unable to go to the bottom or retrieve any object, encourage them to open their eyes to see what they can see.
4. Once they return to the surface, have them give you the objects they retrieved or tell you what they saw.



Egg Hunt

Purpose: To promote underwater exploration

Skill Level: Preschool Aquatics Level 3; Learn-to-Swim Levels 2 and 3

Class Formation: Line starting against wall

Equipment: Plastic eggs and weights (such as pennies)

Additional Safety Considerations: Be careful in the placement of the eggs. They should not be so close together that participants will collide when attempting to recover them. On the other hand, do not spread them out so far that you are unable to maintain adequate supervision of all participants. Do not let participants hyperventilate. Limit participants to a single inhalation whenever you ask them to hold their breath or submerge.

Description:

1. Fill each egg with about 10 pennies. It may be necessary to tape the seams.
2. Assign each participant to a different color egg and drop the eggs into shallow water. (If there are more participants than colors, mix different color tops and bottoms to make more options.)
3. Tell participants they are going on an egg hunt.
4. Explain that on the word “go,” they are to gather as many eggs in their assigned color as possible.

Basic Locomotion

Washing Machine

Purpose: To help participants with water adjustment, introduction to arm movement, rhythmic breathing, floating, kicking and changing direction

Skill Level: Preschool Aquatics Levels 1–3; Learn-to-Swim Level 1

Class Formation: Any

Equipment: None

Additional Safety Considerations: Work to the level of the participants

Description:

1. Have participants pretend to attach a rope with a laundry basket to the back of their waists.
2. Tell participants to walk around their rooms (water) and pick up the laundry by using front crawl arm strokes and placing it in the basket behind them. Remind them to remember to pick up the clothes under the bed. (Some participants will go under water or bob to pick up the clothes.)
3. Ask participants to separate clothes into baskets of dark clothes and light clothes by using arm strokes.
4. Have each participant clasp his or her hands together to make a circle with their arms to make the tub. Have them bob to fill the tub with water. (Some participants may go under; some may not.)
5. Tell participants to place clothes in the tub by using arm strokes again.



6. Explain that they should blow bubbles to put suds into the tub. (They may blow at the surface or while submerged.)
7. Have participants place their hands on their waists and turn back and forth to wash the clothes.
8. Tell them they can spin the clothes by performing circles or log rolls in the water.
9. Repeat steps 4, 7 and 8 to rinse the clothes.
10. To dry the clothes, have participants float on their fronts and then on their backs.
11. Finally, have them kick as the breeze blows through the clothes to dry them.

Soft Kick, Hard Kick

Purpose: To help participants with flutter kicking and endurance

Skill Level: Preschool Aquatics Level 3; Learn-to-Swim Levels 2 and 3

Class Formation: Bracketed on side of pool with legs extended

Equipment: None

Description:

1. Have participants bracket themselves on their fronts with their legs extended.
2. On your command, have them kick as slow as they can and with as small of a kick as they can.
3. On your command, have them kick as hard as they can.
4. Repeat the drill 2 or 3 times.
5. Have participants rotate so they are bracketed on their sides, all facing the same direction, with their legs extended.
6. On your command, have them kick as slow as they can and with as small of a kick as they can.
7. On your command, have them kick as hard as they can.
8. Repeat the drill 2 or 3 times.
9. Have participants rotate so they are bracketed on their backs with their legs extended.
10. On your command, have them kick as slow as they can and with as small of a kick as they can.
11. On your command, have them kick as hard as they can.
12. Repeat the drill 2 or 3 times.
13. Have participants rotate so they are bracketed on the side opposite of what they were in step 5, all facing the same direction, with their legs extended.
14. On your command, have them kick as slow as they can and with as small of a kick as they can.
15. On your command, have them kick as hard as they can.
16. Repeat the drill 2 or 3 times.



Flying High

Purpose: To help participants with the front glide and flutter kick

Skill Level: Preschool Aquatics Levels 1–3; Learn-to-Swim Levels 1 and 2

Class Formation: Lined up on wall, then waves of 2

Equipment: Foam noodles

Description:

1. One or two participants pretend to be the engines of an airplane and decide where to fly.
2. Have participants hold onto your outstretched arm, which are the plane's wings.
3. Walk at a speed consistent with the speed of the participants' kicks to your destination.
4. As participants become comfortable with kicking, have them pretend that foam noodles are the plane's wings. Have two participants kick to their destination.

Foot Push

Purpose: To promote participants gliding on front

Skill Level: Preschool Aquatics Levels 2 and 3; Learn-to-Swim Level 2

Class Formation: Stagger

Equipment: None

Additional Safety Considerations: Be sure participants are in the streamlined position so that their arms reach the wall first. Be sure the push toward the wall is gentle so they are able to stop themselves with their arms at the wall. This activity is conducted with each participant individually. Be sure that even though you are working with one participant, you maintain supervision of all the participants in the class. A co-instructor could assist by conducting this drill with one participant.

Description:

1. Have the participant move into a face-down float with the arms extended over the head in a streamlined position. The participant should be a couple of body lengths from the wall.
2. Hold onto the bottoms of his or her feet and gently push him or her to the wall in a slow, steady action.
3. As the participant becomes more comfortable, have him or her start about 3 or 4 body lengths from the wall. Do the foot push to gain some momentum, then release your hold on the feet so that the participants glides, without support, the rest of the way to the wall.

Blasting Off

Purpose: To help participants with glides

Skill Level: Preschool Aquatics Level 3; Learn-to-Swim Levels 2 and 3

Class Formation: Line up along the pool wall

Equipment: None



Description:

1. Have participants pretend to be rocket ships. Have them extend their hands over their heads and place a foot on the side of the pool.
2. Begin a countdown and on your cue, have them blast off. To blast off, have participants put their faces and arms in the water, the other foot on the side, and push off.

Funky Chicken

Purpose: To support the beginning stages of learning alternating arm action on the front.
To promote good body position on the front.

Skill Level: Preschool Aquatics Level 3; Learn-to-Swim Levels 2 and 3

Class Formation: Line starting against wall

Equipment: None

Additional Safety Considerations: Shallow (standing) water activity

Description:

1. Have participants stand with their backs against the wall. Have them place their hands under the armpits so that their arms look like “chicken wings.”
2. On your cue of “go,” have participants swim a designated distance, keeping their hands under the armpits.
3. Line participants with their backs against the wall once more. Have them start with their hands at their armpits. Have participants extend their hands through the water. Their hands should be under water and their elbows high out of the water. Have them reach as far as they can and then pull the water back to their armpits. Repeat with other hand.
4. On your cue of “go,” have participants swim a designated distance, stroking in this fashion.
5. Line participants with their backs against the wall once more. Have them start with their hands at their armpits. Have participants extend their fingertips through and under water. Their elbows, lower arms and hands are out of the water. Have them reach as far as they can, pull the water back to their armpits and repeat with the other hand.
6. On your cue of “go,” have participants swim a designated distance, stroking in this fashion.

Row, Row Your Arms

Purpose: To support the beginning stages of learning alternating arm action on the back.
To promote good body position on the back.

Skill Level: Learn-to-Swim Level 4

Class Formation: Line against the wall

Equipment: None

Additional Safety Considerations: Shallow (standing) water activity



Description:

1. Have participants stand with their backs facing the wall. Have them push into a back glide with one arm extended overhead, the other along their sides.
2. Have participants maintain the arm position, kick and count to 10.
3. After 10 kicks, have participants change arm positions so that the overhead arm becomes the arm at the side and the side arm becomes the overhead arm.
4. Have participants maintain the arm position, kick and count to 10.
5. Repeat this sequence for a designated distance, such as across the length of the pool.
6. Repeat this drill, but reduce the amount of kicks from 10 to 6.
7. Repeat this drill, but reduce the amount of kicks from 6 to 3.

Puppy Race

Purpose: To improve combined stroke on the front

Skill Level: Preschool Aquatics Levels 2 and 3; Learn-to-Swim Level 2

Class Formation: Wave or stagger

Equipment: None

Description:

1. Have participants pretend to be their favorite dog.
2. Have them bark like puppies while they swim the combined stroke on their front.