

Respect is the first step in Water Safety

Force is not the way!

Safer swimming and water safety lessons for infants and children

Frequently Asked Questions

What is AUSTSWIM's position on forced back float and submersion techniques?

- AUSTSWIM is opposed to forceful conditioning which is harmful to the developing infant/child
- AUSTSWIM seeks to raise awareness of the importance of developmentally appropriate and respectful teaching methods being utilised by appropriately trained and licensed AUSTSWIM Teachers
- AUSTSWIM will promote continual parent or carer in water participation and supervision for infants and pre-school children

What are the components of a child-centred approach to lessons?

- Non-threatening
- Aligned with infant and pre-school motor, cognitive, intellectual and personal development
- Appropriate for age, cultural background and experience
- Supports parental education and provides ongoing messaging for safer participation in, on and around water
- Respects the rights of the infant/child

What are the key considerations for infants under 12 months in a back float position?

- The infant's airway is vulnerable and there is a higher risk of drowning and stressful events occurring
- Water over the face, nose and mouth in a back float position is not acceptable as a teaching practice
- An infant's protective airway reflex will not be fully activated in a back float position as water will only be intermittently over the face. With the added effect of gravity, there is a significant risk of a compromised airway with water flowing into the stomach and lungs. Signs that an infant is not relaxed or engaged include:
 - a stiff body;
 - clenched fists;
 - open, outstretched fingers;
 - crying;
 - not responding;
 - arching of the back;
 - attempting to sit up;
 - calling out;
 - grabbing hold of parent/teacher;
 - coughing.

- Postural righting reactions generally cause babies to become uncomfortable and unpredictable on their back. Adults must provide support to prevent water flowing over the nose and mouth whilst in a back float position.
- Readiness will indicate the degree of support required which may range from full to fingertip support.
- Force is never an acceptable teaching method. Restraining an infant in a back float position does not equate to readiness, relaxation or engagement.

What is essential for the infant/child before commencing in the back float position?

- The infant/child is relaxed and engaged.
- The parent/carer is aware of hold strategies.
- The nose and mouth of the infant/child are clear of the water.

What is important before submersion of an infant/child?

- Infants/children, regardless of age, must demonstrate readiness before being submerged in water.
- Infants/children who cry, cough or gag immediately after submersion may not display readiness.
- Progressive steps towards submersion must be continued until the infant/child shows readiness for submersion.

What happens if I am currently teaching forced back float and submersion techniques that are not endorsed by AUSTSWIM?

- AUSTSWIM will provide an education and communication phase for teachers until 31 January 2019. This will enable teachers to meet the endorsed teaching methods for back float and submersion teaching techniques.

What happens if I continue to teach forced back float and submersion techniques that are not endorsed by AUSTSWIM?

- You will have the opportunity to voluntarily return your licence and receive a refund for the outstanding period remaining on the licence.
- Continuing to teach forced back float and submersion techniques beyond the education and communication period that are not endorsed by AUSTSWIM will be in breach of the AUSTSWIM Teacher Code of Conduct. This will result in disciplinary processes and potential suspension of your AUSTSWIM Teacher Licence.

Where can I get more information?

- An updated AUSTSWIM Teacher Code of Conduct that endorses a non-threatening child-centred approach to swimming education, that respects the rights of infants/children and prohibits forced back floating and submersion techniques, can be viewed at:
<http://austswim.com.au/AboutUs/IndustryGuidelines/Policies.aspx>