

Swim England Guidance

Water Depths and Activities that can take place in different depths

This lists the safe and acceptable depths for various aquatic activities.

Swim England recommends that pools, which are to meet the whole needs of the community should provide both shallow and deep water. If the cost of a moveable floor is prohibitive it is preferable to provide a pool with a traditional profile of a shallow end and a deep end.

If a learner pool is not to be provided the shallow end should have a minimum depth of 0.9-metres and a deep end of 1.8-metres. However, where a learner pool is provided a minimum depth of 1m at the shallow end wall should be provided with the floor then having a continuous gradient slope down to 2-metres at the deep end.

This type of profile will provide deep water which will allow:

- the teaching of a shallow dive, which is the preliminary to the teaching of all other diving activities and which requires a minimum depth of 1.8-metres
- the treading of water which is a part of the safety skills required in the DfES National Curriculum for Swimming
- the opportunity for all swimmers to experience swimming in deep water and gain confidence in their ability to cope with water where they can't stand as a preparation for swimming when on holiday in deep pools, the sea and lakes etc. where they may inadvertently get out of standing depth
- advanced Aqua-fit courses in deep water
- the practice of surface dives which are a part of lifesaving skills which requires a depth of 1.8-metres
- for local swimming club members
 - to practice and become competent in racing dives (Competitive Start Award); practice before they are assessed as competent requires a minimum depth of 1.8-metres
 - to practice the introductory and basic skills in synchronised swimming which requires a depth of 2.0-metres
 - to practice for and play water polo which also requires some deep water.
- for canoe clubs to practice rolls and other water safety procedures
- for sub-aqua clubs to practice under-water training and safety techniques

In fact it would be true to say that a shallow pool, whilst suitable for health and fitness clubs where members are more interested in fitness swimming, is less effective for children being introduced to the various aspects of swimming and water depth.

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Activities and Water Depths

The following is a list of activities and the depths of water required.

- Parents, carers and toddlers requiring water familiarisation and confidence - 0.2 to 0.6-metres
- Learning to swim - for very small children - 0.6 to 0.8-metres.
- Learning to swim older children and others, including adults 0.9-metres upwards.
- Competition swimming - training and events preferred depth - 1.0-metres; minimum depth of 0.9m to permit tumble turns. Racing starts permissible in this depth for those competent to the standard of the "Competitive Start Award". However a preferred minimum depth for starts off a starting block would be 1.2-metres.
- Teaching shallow dives and racing starts - minimum depth of 1.8-metres.
- Swimming for fun and enjoyment minimum 0.9-metres plus, preferred 1.0-metres plus.
- Swimming for fun and enjoyment with floating play equipment preferred minimum 1.0-metres plus.
- Swimming for fitness - Aquacise and exercise in water classes for obese persons 0.9-metres plus, preferred 1.0m plus.
- Swimming for fitness - lane swimming 0.9-metres plus, preferred 1.0-metres plus.
- Use by persons with a disability - depth depends upon type of disability but for adults with spinal problems a minimum depth of 1.2-metres is required.
- Synchronised swimming – low level training 1.8-metres deep
- Synchronised swimming – advanced training 1.8-metres deep with an area of 10-metres x 12-metres x 2.4-metres deep.
- Mini water polo – water 0.9-metres plus.
- Water polo: for training, local league or other low level competition requires a pool including an area of water 1.8-metres or deeper and preferred minimum depth at shallow end of 1.2-metres.
- Water polo - higher standard of play above training, local league or other low level competition, 1.8-metres deep throughout the playing area is required

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- Sub-aqua training - an area of water minimum 1.5-metres deep.
- Canoe practice - an area of water minimum 1.5-metres deep.
- Lifesaving and practice – 1.8-metres deep.
- Octopush – minimum 1.2-metres, ideal 2.0-metres deep.

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