

Young people may be able to achieve and experience ways of moving in water that would not normally be possible.

## Ideas & Strategies

### Adjustment to the water

This can begin out of the water; for example:

- in the classroom or by the poolside, try some water pouring games; pour water from a jug or watering can over a young person's hands or arms;
- place wet sponges where young people can squeeze out the water for themselves, such as on their lap or lap tray.
- even a small paddling pool can be used on the poolside before moving into the water.
- light clothing can help to insulate young people.

### Movement concepts

Moving in water with assistance can be used to develop an understanding of abstract concepts that may not be possible on land. For example:

- *up/down* – moving gently up and down in the water supporting young person in a vertical position;
- *over/under* – moving over or under a rope tied loosely near the water surface;
- *big/small* – collecting big or small objects floating in the water;
- *push/pull* – maintaining contact, a helper can gently push the young person away, or pull towards themselves;
- reinforce these concepts verbally throughout.

### Group work

Supported group activity can create a stable platform in which young people can experience movement and stillness.

**Think about** – how young people can be best supported, for instance by experienced helpers, with swim aids, or both.



## STEP

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### Space

- Some pool environments can limit the number of young people who can participate at the same time; the ability to move freely is important, but interaction with others can be positive and enable helpers to provide mutual support.

### Task

- The sensation of water moving over and around the young person can provide stimulation. This can be achieved in many ways, for example:
  - gently towing and swishing a young person around the pool; variations in speed can change the perception; match voice or music to these variations.
  - some helpers can create gentle waves through which young people can move or be moved – like surfing!
- Achieving stillness can also be important, particularly towards the end of a session. Some floatation aids, or the gentle support of an experienced helper, can enable a young person to enjoy brief moments of independent balance.

### Equipment

- There are many floatation and propulsive swim aids available; these can provide total or partial support. A key is that the young person should still be able experience the up-thrust and support of the water itself.
- Some teaching philosophies eschew the use of swim aids, preferring to use manual support and work with the young person to achieve moments of disengagement.

### People

- Immersion in warm water is generally pleasurable for most human beings. However, care must be taken to get to know an individual's preferences and tolerance to water activity. Spending time acclimatising young people with pre-entry water games can help to calm and reassure.

### Safety

- Always be aware of the proximity of the young person's airway to the water surface.

### How to improve

- Water time can be restricted initially to ensure that the lasting impression is not one of cold or feeling uncomfortable.
- It's important to recognise signals indicating that a young person has had enough exposure.

### Communication

- Constant reassurance can calm and relax young people in water.
- Equally important, providing physical support in a controlled but relaxed manner can reduce tension in the swimmer.



## Links

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For more information, see the Links section.