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Swim England Guidance

Water Depths, Diving Entries & Competitive Starts

Swim England recommends that publicly accessible pools should meet the whole needs of the community therefore provide both shallow and deep water. This can be achieved either with the addition of moveable floors or pool with a traditional profile of a shallow end and a deep end.

This type of profile would usually provide deep water at a minimum of 1.8m, which will allow:

- Teaching of a shallow dive, which is the preliminary to the teaching of all other diving activities and which requires a minimum depth of 1.8m.
- Treading 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. 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 requiring a depth of 1.8m.
- Local aquatics clubs to;
 - Practice and become competent at racing starts (Competitive Start Award) requires a minimum depth of 1.8m.
 - Practice the introductory and basic skills for artistic swimming which requires a minimum depth of 1.5m
 - Practice and play water polo which also requires deep water
- Canoe clubs to practice rolls and other water safety procedures.
- Sub-aqua clubs to practice under-water training and safety techniques.

Activities and Required Water Depths

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

- Parents, carers and toddlers requiring water familiarisation and confidence - 0.2m to 0.6m.
- Learning to swim - for smaller children and others short in height - 0.6m to 0.8m.
- Learning to swim older children and others taller in height, including adults 0.9m upwards.

- Tumble turns - minimum depth of 0.9m.
- Swimming for fun and enjoyment minimum 0.9m plus, preferred 1.0m plus.
- Swimming for fun and enjoyment with floating play equipment preferred minimum 1.0m plus.
- Swimming for fitness - Aquacise and exercise in water classes for adults 0.9m plus, preferred 1.0m plus.
- Swimming for fitness - lane swimming 0.9m plus, preferred 1.0m plus.
- Use by persons with a disability - depth depends upon type of disability but for adults with spinal problems a minimum depth of 1.2m is required.
- Entry level Artistic Swimming training sessions – preferred 0.9m plus depth.
- Artistic Swimming training - preferred 2.0m or minimum 1.8m deep and preferred minimum depth at shallow end of 1.2m.
- Entry level / novice / low level Artistic Swimming competition aimed at individuals under the age of 16 – 1.5m plus depth.
- Artistic Swimming, higher standard of swimmer above training or other low-level competition – minimum 2.0m deep.
- Entry level water polo training sessions – preferred 0.9m plus depth.
- Water polo, adult training - preferred 1.8m.
- Water polo Local league – preferred 2.0m or minimum 1.8m deep and preferred minimum depth at shallow end of 1.2m.
- Water polo Entry level / novice / low level water polo competition aimed at individuals under the age of 16 – 0.9 plus depth.
- Water polo, higher standard of play above training, local league or other low-level competition - 2.0m deep throughout the playing area is required.
- Sub-aqua training - an area of water minimum 1.5m deep.
- Canoe practice - Refer to Paddle UK
- Lifesaving and practice – 1.8m deep.
- Octopush – minimum 1.2m, ideal 2.0m deep.

Diving into Swimming Pools

The following includes detailed information on the safe delivery of diving into swimming pools. Including references to industry guidance from FINA and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

It is a requirement under the Health and Safety in Swimming Pools HSG179 (Fourth edition, published in 2018) for every swimming pool to undertake a written risk assessment identifying hazards, quantifying their risk and managing the safety process.

Safety considerations

The head first nature of diving means that it must be risk assessed and fully supervised at all times, with participants also made aware of its potential dangers.

Safety considerations include:

- Water Depth
- Pool space
- Organisation and discipline
- The dive itself
 - Spacing the participants out sufficiently
 - Ideally participants should not wear goggles when learning to dive
 - Participants should be stationary on the poolside – no running and diving
- Racing starts and shallow dives in programmed sessions, for club swimmers that hold Competitive Start Award – minimum depth 1.35m
- Competition swimming – FINA states that a minimum depth of 1.35m, extending from 1.0m to at least 6.0m from the end wall is required for pools with starting platforms. A minimum depth of 1.0m is required elsewhere within the pool tank.

The points below give key depths and distances to support swimming pools with writing Pool Safety Operating Procedures (PSOP) and risk assessment of the diving activity. All depths and distances relate to diving from the poolside or starting block unless specifically referenced. Diving in from boards and springboards should comply with FINA standards.

- Shallow dives in un-programmed sessions – 1.5m
- Diving should not be permitted into water with a vertical depth of less than 1.5 metres during recreational and unprogrammed swimming (public/open sessions).
- Teaching of diving should not take place with a vertical depth of less than 1.8m during Learn to Swim sessions.
- Diving and jumping should not be permitted from the poolside where the freeboard exceeds 0.38m unless FINA pool depths apply for the appropriate platform height and water depth. This is during recreational and unprogrammed swimming (public/open sessions) and Learn to Swim sessions.
- Diving should not be allowed in pools where there is a forward clearance of less than 7.6 metres. This applies to both recreational and unprogrammed swimming (public/open sessions) and programmed session (swimming lessons).

Starting Platforms and Competitive Starts

- Diving entries, including when racing should not start from the shallow end of the pool.
- Diving entries should not be performed in water depth of less than 1.35m
- Starting Platforms should comply with FINA standards
- Starting Platforms should be restricted to swimmers skilled in performing flat racing dives or those that have completed the standard of the Swim England Competitive Start Award
- Starting Platforms fitted in a pool where the water depth is less than 1.5m should have a notice attached stating “DANGER SHALLOW WATER BELOW”
- The conditions of the Swim England/ASA Safety Laws – Swimming Officials Prompt Card – Announcer to read out prompt card on depths and profiles

Below is a summary of industry guidance documents that reference diving.

- Health and Safety in Swimming Pools HSG179 (Fourth edition) Published 2018 <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg179.htm>
- FINA <https://www.fina.org/rules/facility-rules>
- The Swim England Handbook <https://www.swimming.org/swimengland/swimengland-handbook/>
- The Swim England Learn to Swim Programme
- Competitive Start Award <https://www.swimming.org/learntoswim/swim-englandcompetitive-start-awards/>

Health and Safety in Swimming Pools HSG179 (Fourth edition) Published 2018 – refers to diving, in unprogrammed sessions or general public use. It highlights the need to risk assess diving in all pools and to display the appropriate signage prohibiting diving in water of insufficient depth.

It states starting platforms should be located at the deeper end of the pool and should not be available for use in unprogrammed sessions.

This document also includes health and safety recommendations relating to diving pits with moveable floor:

- Electrically-operated ‘no diving’ signs should be provided in the statutory format which should be clearly visible whenever the floor is in its swimming modes and a manual back up should also be available.
- Diving facilities should not be accessible to bathers unless the floor is at its full diving depth and depth signs appropriate to the operational depth are necessary.

The Swim England Handbook - Under the heading Technical Rules of Racing the Swim England generally refer to the FINA Swimming Rules above. However, there is one notable addition and that is the Swim England Safety Laws – Swimming Officials Prompt Card – Announcer.

The main purpose of this prompt card announcement is to ensure that competition swimmers know the water depth beneath and in front of the starting platform and the height of the starting platform above the water. Where the water depth is 1.35m or more but less than 1.5m coaches and team managers are reminded that only those swimmers who have reached the standard of the Swim England Preliminary Competitive Start Award are permitted to start with a shallow racing dive from the side of the pool and those swimmers who have reached the standard of the Swim England Competitive Start Award are permitted to start with a shallow racing dive from a diving block.

The implication of this announcement is that by enrolling a competitor in an event where shallow water diving is required there is a tacit declaration by the coach or team manager that the swimmer is competent to the appropriate Competitive Start Award. The onus and duty of care is clearly with the coach or team manager.

There is no requirement for the swimmer to have the appropriate Competitive Start Award only to be competent to the standard. The competency is proven by the coach or team manager and clearly if proof was demanded it could only be offered by way of (a) producing the achieved award certificate, (b) producing records of training, and (c) the verbal and/or written affirmation of the coach. Coaches need to ask themselves if they could meet this burden of proof if challenged in court.

The implication from all this is that swimmers entering competitive events should have already undertaken training in shallow racing dives from a competent coach/teacher in a competitive setting and has achieved a safe level of performance both in deep and shallow water.

Diving (Sport)

For teaching diving into swimming pools a depth of 1.8m is required however when completing Stage 10 Award (optional skill 7) a depth of 3m is required. For any diving undertaken from platform or springboards the pool must comply with the FINA guidance

FINA Requirements

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