



Early-years swimming **FACT SHEET** by Robyn Jorgensen

A Quality Swim Environment

What should I look for when going to a swim school?

Swim schools vary considerably – from back yard swimming pools, commercial swimming centres with lanes roped off through to purpose-built swimming pools. So, a key consideration is how can such diversity also convey what makes for a quality swimming environment. Safety is a key consideration when looking at the swim environment.

Safety

Upon entering the swim school, is the overall set up one that supports children's safety as they leave the car and move to the pool facility.

- Once in the facility, are there safety features that prevent children from falling into the pool areas- safety fences and barriers for example.
- Water quality is important. Young children need to wear nappies but will urinate or defecate from time to time, so the water must be treated well so as to ensure high levels of hygiene.

Swim Environment

- Many swim schools have posters on the walls displaying the levels of swimming and describe the skills that are part of the program.

- The swim school should have change areas so that children can be dressed after lessons, and that these areas are well maintained.
- The ambient temperature of the pool area (and pool itself) need to be warm enough to coax children into the water and enable them to remain in the pool for the duration of the lesson. Children feel the extremes in heat easily so the temperature needs to enable them to participate fully.
- The swimming area needs to have adequate provisions for the children to move safely between lessons and while in the pool itself.
- Most swim schools have areas where the children can sit/stand in the water – such as ledges or pontoons. These serve many tasks but also keep the students engaged in water activities throughout a lesson.
- Brightly coloured toys act as stimuli for the children with which they are enticed to play.

Floatation Devices and Goggles

There is a wide diversity of views on these devices across swim schools. Swim schools will have different policies so check with the swim school and their justification for use (or not) of floatation devices and goggles.