



NATIONAL BENCHMARKS FOR SWIMMING AND WATER SAFETY



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The Australian Water Safety Council has established three National Benchmarks for Swimming and Water Safety Education as the desired competency standards every Australian should have the opportunity to acquire and maintain.

Purpose of National Benchmarks

National Benchmarks in Swimming and Water Safety identify key performance metrics that are achievable at certain ages. These benchmarks are underpinned by research into swimming and water safety that validated what skills and knowledge were being achieved and are capable of being achieved. Continued research using these benchmarks can provide an increased understanding of the achievement of swimming and water safety skills and knowledge and the system(s) required to maintain and improve skills and knowledge.

Benchmarking swimming and water safety:

- Provides an insight into the ability of an individual to attain particular skills and knowledge compared to children of a similar age.
- Allows for the comparison of different programs or the same program over time to ensure that individuals are achieving a required level of skill and knowledge.
- Identifies gaps in achievement or provision of skills and knowledge in lessons.
- Provides guidance to teachers and parents on individuals that may require remediation as their skill and knowledge level is below the standard.
- Forms an essential tool for continuous improvement and best practice for those providing and delivering swimming and water safety education.

Assessment of National Benchmarks

Irrespective of when and where the assessment takes place, all individuals should be submitted to the same assessment. To assist with a fair and consistent assessment of each of the Benchmark skills, a 'Must See' performance criteria guide is provided. This should be used as the basis for reporting on progress and achievement against the National Benchmarks.

Assessing Competency

Competency should be assessed using an unbiased system against a standard set of criteria. Competency is at the time and place of assessment and may differ in other locations or periods of time. The level of competency will depend on the level of skills, knowledge, understanding, attitudes and behaviour.

When assessing students' skills and abilities, the teacher should observe the 'Must See' assessment criteria in the guide provided before deeming the student to be competent. Teachers should be confident the performance of skills can be consistently repeated at that standard.

In the performance of skills, teachers must ascertain whether students have the knowledge and understanding that underpins the skills. Students should be able to explain why, when and how and at the higher stage provide a level of analysis. Teachers should assess whether students are capable of applying the knowledge and understanding in the execution of skills.

Although difficult to assess attitudes and behaviours, teachers should observe whether students display a positive approach towards learning water safety; follow rules for behaviour around water; take responsibility for their own personal safety; and acknowledge personal aquatic ability and limitations.

THE NATIONAL BENCHMARKS

Every Australian at the age of 6 years should be able to:



Identify rules for safe behaviour at aquatic environments at or near the home



Submerge the body and move through an obstacle



Enter and exit shallow water unassisted



Identify people and actions to help in an aquatic emergency



Float and recover to a standing or secure position



Perform a survival sequence to simulate an accidental entry



Move continuously for 5 metres

Every Australian at the age of 12 years should be able to:



Understand and respect safety rules for a range of aquatic environments



Surface dive, swim underwater and search to recover an object from deep water



Enter and exit the water for a range of environments



Respond to an emergency and perform a primary assessment



Float, scull or tread water for 2 minutes and signal for help



Rescue a person using a non-swimming rescue technique with non-rigid aids



Swim continuously for 50 metres



Perform a survival sequence wearing light clothing

50% of all Australians at the age of 17 years should be able to:



Understand behaviours that affect personal safety in aquatic environments and activities



Search in a deep water environment and recover a person



Assist others to exit deep water using bystanders



Respond to an emergency and provide first aid



Float, scull or tread water for 5 minutes and signal for help



Rescue an unconscious person in deep water



Swim continuously for 400 metres



Perform a survival sequence wearing heavy clothing

'MUST SEE' ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR THE NATIONAL BENCHMARK: FUNDAMENTAL STAGE

HAZARDS AND PERSONAL SAFETY



BENCHMARK CRITERIA	EXPLANATION	MUST SEE
Identify rules for safe behaviour at aquatic environments at or near the home	This includes describing rules for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult supervision • Safe play around water (e.g. no pushing, no running) • Home pool safety (e.g. shut the gate, no climbing, remove toys) • Water safety signs in the area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correctly answer questions (may be written or oral) <p>Note: Verbal prompts and visual aids may be used to assist with assessment of knowledge (e.g. images of safe and unsafe behaviour)</p>

ENTRY AND EXIT



BENCHMARK CRITERIA	EXPLANATION	MUST SEE
Enter and exit shallow water unassisted	This includes demonstrating unassisted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A slide in entry • Climbing out of shallow water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enter and exit shallow water unassisted • Sit on pool edge • Twist body to face the wall • Slowly lower body into the water • Feel for depth and obstacles with feet • Remain holding onto pool edge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climb out by fully extending arms to support body; place knee or foot on pool edge to lever the body out

FLOTATION



BENCHMARK CRITERIA	EXPLANATION	MUST SEE
Float and recover to a standing or secure position	This includes demonstrating: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Floating in a front float position with face submerged • Floating in a back float position • Floating on the back for 30 seconds using a buoyant aid • Recovering from floating into a standing or secure position 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Float on front with face in water, exhaling slowly • Legs at water surface, arms positioned to balance body • Relaxed body • Recover slowly and unassisted to either a standing or an upright position <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold the buoyant aid securely • Float on the back with eyes looking up and ears below the surface • Legs at water surface • Relaxed body • Float for 30 seconds • Continue to hold the aid, recover slowly to either a standing or an upright position

SWIMMING



BENCHMARK CRITERIA	EXPLANATION	MUST SEE
Move continuously for 5 metres	This includes demonstrating: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moving a distance of 5 metres without assistance or buoyant aids 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any method of propulsion may be used Continuous movement (no stopping or standing) Distance of 5 metres Without assistance or buoyant aids

UNDERWATER



BENCHMARK CRITERIA	EXPLANATION	MUST SEE
Submerge the body and move through an obstacle	This includes submerging: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The body fully underwater and moving horizontally through a hoop or under a flotation mat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Body fully underwater Eyes open Exhaling through mouth and nose Moving through or under an obstacle

LIFESAVING



BENCHMARK CRITERIA	EXPLANATION	MUST SEE
Identify people and actions to help in an aquatic emergency	This includes being able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify what is an emergency Identify types of emergencies (e.g. drowning incident, injury, collapse, allergic reactions, choking, fire, crime) Recall the emergency number Triple Zero (000) Recall their home address 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correctly answer questions (may be written or oral) <p>Note: Verbal prompts and visual aids may be used to assist with assessment of knowledge (e.g. images of safe and unsafe behaviour)</p>

SURVIVAL SEQUENCE



BENCHMARK CRITERIA	EXPLANATION	MUST SEE
Perform a survival sequence to simulate an accidental entry	This includes being able to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Simulate an accidental entry Surface and orientate to a floating position Move to a position of safety Exit the water safely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safely enter the water simulating accidental immersion (e.g. step-in from side) Remain calm throughout sequence Manoeuvre body into a floating position Any method of propulsion may be used Recover to a standing position or to pool edge ready for exit Safe exit out of the water (e.g. using ladder, stairs, climbing out over edge)

'MUST SEE' ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR THE NATIONAL BENCHMARK: ACQUISITION STAGE

HAZARDS AND PERSONAL SAFETY



BENCHMARK CRITERIA	EXPLANATION	MUST SEE
Understand and respect safety rules for a range of aquatic environments	<p>This includes (but not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closing the pool gate and removing toys • Wearing a lifejacket • Listening to Lifesavers/ Lifeguards • Swimming between the flags • Swimming with adult supervision or never swim alone • Not playing in drains or pipes • Obeying water safety signs in the area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correctly answer questions (may be written or oral)

ENTRY AND EXIT



BENCHMARK CRITERIA	EXPLANATION	MUST SEE
Enter and exit the water for a range of environments	<p>This includes demonstrating whilst wearing light clothing a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step in entry • Stride in entry • Compact jump • Fall in entry • Deep water exit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of environment for safe entry and exit (e.g. checking for depth, conditions or obstacles) • Select an appropriate entry for the environment <p>Step in entry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at point of entry • Flex knees slightly on entry • Relax legs when feet touch the bottom <p>Stride in entry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lean body forward • Hips flexed and arms extended to side • On entry, scissor legs together and bring arms to side to slow downward movement • Head remaining above water <p>Compact jump</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use protective hold of mouth and nose and arm crossing over to opposite shoulder • Keep body vertical and streamlined • Tuck or pike body on entry to slow downward movement <p>Fall in entry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuck chin to chest • Protect head and chest with hands and forearms • On entry, surface and orientate body in the direction of safety <p>Deep water exit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exit unassisted and independently using edge • Kick vigorously and extend arms fully to support the body. • Place a knee or foot on pool edge to lever the body out.

FLOTATION



BENCHMARK CRITERIA	EXPLANATION	MUST SEE
Float, scull or tread water for 2 minutes and signal for help	<p>This includes demonstrating whilst wearing light clothing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removing clothing then; • Interchanging between floating, sculling and treading water for 2 minutes • Signalling for help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove clothing in water starting from bottom to top without hindering breathing • Interchange between floating, sculling or treading water (at least 2 of the 3) • Keep face clear of the water • Effective arm and leg actions (e.g. hand sculling, eggbeater kick) • Duration of 2 minutes • Arm raised with open hand above head to signal for help – may shout and wave to attract attention <p>Note: Light clothing may include shorts and t-shirt, pyjamas, or long sleeved shirt/top and long pants</p>

SWIMMING



BENCHMARK CRITERIA	EXPLANATION	MUST SEE
Swim continuously for 50 metres	<p>This includes demonstrating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moving for 50 metres using a combination of swimming and survival strokes <p>Note: recognised stroke techniques should be used</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combination of both swimming and survival strokes • Swimming stroke techniques that can be used are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Freestyle - Backstroke - Breaststroke - Butterfly • Survival stroke techniques that can be used are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Breaststroke (head above water) - Survival backstroke - Sidestroke • Recognised stroke techniques (i.e. has all elements but may not be technically correct) • Continuous movement (no stopping or standing) • Distance of 50 metres

UNDERWATER



BENCHMARK CRITERIA	EXPLANATION	MUST SEE
Surface dive, swim underwater and search to recover an object from deep water	<p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An extended feet-first surface dive and swimming underwater for up to 5 metres • A head-first surface dive and swimming underwater for up to 5 metres • Using the hands to search and recover an object 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep body vertical in the surface dive • Body fully submerged • Sweep hands in front of body to feel for obstacles • Open eyes underwater to locate and retrieve object • Distance of up to 5 metres swimming underwater

LIFESAVING



BENCHMARK CRITERIA	EXPLANATION	MUST SEE
Respond to an emergency and perform a primary assessment	<p>This includes being able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check for any dangers • Check if someone is responsive • Send for help • Open and clear the airway • Check for breathing • Place a person in the recovery position 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check for and remove any dangers to casualty and themselves • Assess response by squeezing casualty's shoulders and giving commands (e.g. can you hear me, open eyes etc.) • Simulate calling Triple Zero (000) or requesting bystander to assist • Casualty placed on back • Open mouth and look for foreign material • For airway obstruction (fluid or matter), casualty rolled on side and finger sweep • Tilt head and lift chin to open airway • Head positioned to check for breathing - look for chest rising, listen and feel for air escaping from mouth and nose (normal breathing) • Place casualty in recovery position step-by-step • Maintain open airway • Continue to monitor casualty

RESCUE



BENCHMARK CRITERIA	EXPLANATION	MUST SEE
Rescue a person using a non-swimming rescue technique with non-rigid aids	<p>This includes demonstrating a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach rescue using a non-rigid aid • Throw rescue using a weighted rope • Throw rescue using an unweighted rope 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the emergency situation • Provide reassurance and effective instructions to casualty • Practise self-preservation by positioning safely and securely • Reach non-rigid rescue aid to casualty • Coil rope efficiently • Throw rope accurately to casualty • Casualty pulled to safety and secured

SURVIVAL SEQUENCE



BENCHMARK CRITERIA	EXPLANATION	MUST SEE
<p>Perform a survival sequence wearing light clothing</p>	<p>This includes being able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Scull, float or tread water for 2 minutes; signalling for help intermittently b) Swim survival strokes slowly for 3 minutes c) Exit the water d) Reflect on actions and acknowledge aquatic strengths and limitations <p>Note: Light clothing may include shorts and t-shirt, pyjamas, or long sleeved shirt/top and long pants</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scull, float or tread water for 2 minutes (may change from one to other) • Keep face clear of the water • Intermittently signal for help • Swim slowly for 3 minutes, changing stroke every minute • Use survival strokes; breaststroke, survival backstroke and sidestroke • Select appropriate exit for the environment • Safe exit out of the water (e.g. using ladder, stairs, climbing out over edge) • Explain their actions • Self-reflection of skills and areas for improvement <p>Note: Questioning may be used to elicit responses for assessment.</p>

'MUST SEE' ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR THE NATIONAL BENCHMARK: APPLICATION STAGE

HAZARDS AND PERSONAL SAFETY



BENCHMARK CRITERIA	EXPLANATION	MUST SEE
Understand behaviours that affect personal safety in aquatic environments and activities	<p>This includes understanding and evaluating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of alcohol and drugs • Peer influences and group pressure • Personal health and wellbeing • Safe and unsafe behaviours including risk-taking • Poor decision making • Personal abilities and limitations • Impacts on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The individual – Family and friends – Local community (e.g. school, workplace, sporting teams) – Health and social system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correctly answer questions (may be written or oral) <p>Note: Questioning should elicit some analysis of safe and unsafe behaviours and the consequences associated.</p>

ENTRY AND EXIT



BENCHMARK CRITERIA	EXPLANATION	MUST SEE
Assist others to exit deep water using bystanders	<p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An assisted lift 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enlist bystanders to assist • Provide clear instructions • Take control and organise lift • Support around waist, upper arms and wrists • Slowly lift the casualty onto the edge • Protect and support head • Move to a safe area • Provide after care

FLOTATION



BENCHMARK CRITERIA	EXPLANATION	MUST SEE
Float, scull or tread water for 5 minutes and signal for help	<p>This includes demonstrating whilst wearing heavy clothing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removing clothing (heavy or all items) then; • Interchange between floating, sculling or treading water for 5 minutes. • Signalling for help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove clothing in water starting from bottom to top without hindering breathing (may be all or heavy items only) • Interchange between floating, sculling or treading water (at least 2 of the 3) • Keep face clear of the water • Effective arm and leg actions (e.g. hand sculling, eggbeater kick) • Duration of 5 minutes • Arm raised with open hand above head to signal for help – may shout and wave to attract attention <p>Note: Heavy clothing includes long sleeved shirt/top, jumper or jacket, long pants, socks and shoes</p>

SWIMMING



BENCHMARK CRITERIA	EXPLANATION	MUST SEE
Swim continuously for 400 metres	<p>This includes demonstrating at least:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two swimming strokes and; • Three survival strokes <p>Note: efficient stroke techniques should be used</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum of two swimming strokes and three survival strokes • Swimming stroke techniques that can be used are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Freestyle – Backstroke – Butterfly – Breaststroke • Survival stroke techniques that can be used are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Breaststroke (head above water) – Survival Backstroke – Sidestroke • Efficient stroke techniques • Continuous movement (no stopping or standing) • Distance of 400 metres <p>Note: There is no time limit</p>

UNDERWATER



BENCHMARK CRITERIA	EXPLANATION	MUST SEE
Search in a deep water environment and recover a person	<p>This includes demonstrating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A search pattern • A surface dive to recover a person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify signs or possible location of submerged casualty • Conduct an individual or team search • Conduct search safely, methodical and coordinated (e.g. parallel pattern, backing-up, clear instructions etc.) • Select appropriate surface dive for environment (e.g. head-first or feet-first) • Grasp casualty under armpits from behind • Push off the bottom to assist with recovery • Recovery of submerged casualty to surface • Support casualty ready for tow or exit

LIFESAVING



BENCHMARK CRITERIA	EXPLANATION	MUST SEE
Respond to an emergency and provide first aid	<p>This includes being able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and assess dangers • Assess the situation and person • Send for help • Perform CPR • Apply appropriate first aid • Monitor the person and situation • Hand over to emergency services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the emergency situation • Identify and remove any dangers to casualty and themselves • Assess casualty (primary survey) • Simulate calling Triple Zero (000) or requesting bystander to assist • Perform CPR following Australian Resuscitation Council's guidelines • Provide first aid as per assessment (e.g. treatment for shock, bleeding, hypothermia etc.) • Continue to monitor casualty • Complete an incident report • Communicate with emergency services on situation, casualty and provision of CPR/First Aid

RESCUE



BENCHMARK CRITERIA	EXPLANATION	MUST SEE
Rescue an unconscious person in deep water	<p>This includes demonstrating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting and turning over an unconscious person who is face down (non-spinal) A contact rescue; at least two of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cross-chest tow Clothing tow Armpit or double armpit tow Wrist tow Head tow <p>Note: may include tube rescue</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess the emergency situation Practise self-preservation Turn casualty into face-up position Support casualty's back and chin when moving into towing position Select appropriate contact rescue technique suitable for conditions, casualty and rescue ability Follow principles of rescue: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Casualty's mouth kept clear of water Reduce resistance by keeping in streamlined position Allow freedom of swimming movements Assess ability and endurance in relation to conditions and distance Maintain an open airway for unconscious casualty Casualty towed to safety and secured ready for exit

SURVIVAL SEQUENCE



BENCHMARK CRITERIA	EXPLANATION	MUST SEE
Perform a survival sequence wearing heavy clothing	<p>This includes being able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Scull, float or tread water for 3 minutes; signalling for help intermittently Remove heavy items of clothing Swim survival strokes slowly for 4 minutes Exit the water Reflect on actions and acknowledge aquatic strengths and limitations <p>Note: Heavy clothing includes long sleeved shirt/top, jumper or jacket, long pants, socks and shoes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scull, float or tread water for 3 minutes (may change from one to other) Keep face clear of the water Intermittently signal for help Remove clothing in water starting from bottom to top without hindering breathing Swim slowly for 4 minutes, changing stroke every minute Use survival strokes; breaststroke, survival backstroke and sidestroke Select appropriate exit for the environment Safe exit out of the water (e.g. using ladder, stairs, climbing out over edge) Explain their actions Self-reflection of skills and areas for improvement <p>Note: Questioning may be used to elicit responses for assessment.</p>



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