



Swimming for SGOs

SEND

What's unique about swimming

Swimming is a life-saving skill and a lifelong activity that promotes safety, fitness, and confidence in, on and around water. Aquatic activity is fully inclusive and supports the physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing of young people, enabling everyone to participate and progress in ways that meets their individual goals. Swimming and aquatic activity align with the School Games vision of helping every young person achieve their personal best through sport and physical activity. As a multi discipline sport, aquatics develops resilience, self-belief, and essential water safety skills while encouraging teamwork, enjoyment, and lifelong participation. It also supports young people to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence needed to meet the national curriculum expectations for swimming and water safety.

What is the intent of your format



Build social skills and connections (i.e. sense of belonging)



Provide inclusive opportunities



To engage/influence wider stakeholders

The SEND Swimming Festival has been designed to promote success, celebrate personal achievements and encourage participants to celebrate one another. Playing their part within a team and working alongside others helps to develop social skills, communication and meaningful connections between participants, regardless of ability level.

The format and activities are fully inclusive, allowing participants to develop confidence and competence through enjoyable and achievable individual or team-based challenges that can be adapted to suit individual needs and abilities. This enables all young people to participate in a way that supports success and promotes a positive experience in aquatics.

Delivering a SEND Swimming Festival provides opportunities for special schools, mainstream schools and alternative provision to work collaboratively to deliver inclusive events. It also supports the development of continued connections between local stakeholders, including schools and pool operators., helping to strengthen local pathways into aquatics participation.

Target group benefits



Pupil premium



SEND

This format is designed to support young people who may face barriers to participation in swimming and aquatic activity outside of curriculum lessons.

The SEND Swimming Festival provides inclusive, enjoyable and achievable opportunities for participants to develop confidence, water competence and social connections through a range of adapted activities and challenges.

The festival includes fewer activities and increased flexibility within the schedule to allow additional time for all participants to engage in a manner that suits their individual needs, abilities and preferences, ensuring that everyone can experience success and make a positive contribution to their team.

It's just not swimming if you...

1

Don't get in the water – water-based movement is fundamental; aquatics must involve buoyancy, propulsion, but out of the water practice can support with knowledge and understanding and prepare participants for key swimming and safe self-rescue skills!

2

Don't have fun. Being in the water gives you a sense of freedom to move your body in different ways which aren't possible on land creating fun positive experiences!

3

Don't focus on water safety and confidence – swimming is more than a sport; it's a life skill!





How to run inter-competition: SEND Swimming Festival

- Use the resource cards to select which activities you want to set up
- Gather all required equipment ahead of the session
- Be prepared with flotation equipment for participants that require it
- Some activities require lane ropes to safely section off areas. Either run these activities first or last in the schedule to ensure smooth transitions between activities and equipment required
- Ensure that the lifeguard(s) are poolside before commencing the festival
- Deliver each activity as per the resource card, ensuring all teams have a go at all activities throughout the festival
- Carry out a risk assessment before undertaking any of the activities contained in this resource. Further support can be found in the afPE resource “Safe Practice in PESSPA”
- Identify safe supervision arrangements, for example required lifeguard arrangements. Refer to the Safe Supervision of Programmed Swimming Lessons and Training Sessions in Swimming Pools, by [clicking here](#), and Health and Safety in Swimming Pools, by [clicking here](#).



Age group

- KS2 (7-11 years old)
- KS3 (11-14 years old)
- KS4 (14-16 years old)



Gender

Mixed



Participant numbers

Maximum number of participants is based on:

- The maximum bather load of the pool you intend to use
- The risk assessment
- The number of available staff, volunteers and helpers available to support participants
- Staffing levels and ratios required for the participants needs.



Target audience

The SEND Swimming Festival is for children and young people with SEND who would benefit from attending an event where they can participate in a manner which suits their individual abilities, and at a pace that suits them.



Benefits for YP

Young people will:

- Develop teamwork, communication, and collaboration skills
- Develop water confidence and core aquatic skills
- Aspire to improve and challenge themselves
- Progress towards the Foundation Awards from the Swim England School Swimming and Water Safety Charter.



Roles for YP

Young people can:

- Event organise – prepare and organise the equipment for each activity
- Team manage – ensure teams are in the correct place at the correct time, and lead the reflection questions at the end of each activity – supporting answers to be given in a method that suits them e.g. visually, via demonstration, using British Sign Language or Makaton
- Coach – encourage participants to perform the skills correctly, and to the best of their ability
- Keep score – for effort and teamwork. Identify participants who are being creative in the way that they move. Hand out certificates and awards at the end of the event.



Progression

The SEND swimming festival aims to improve confidence, communication, swimming and floating skills. Those participants wanting to explore continued participation should contact the appropriate NDSO to identify appropriate opportunities. All websites available [via this link](#).





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Additional support

Swimming is a fully inclusive sport. To support you to adapt your practice, check out the [SEND Inclusion Toolkit](#) co-created by Youth Sport Trust and the National Disability Sports Organisations (NDSOs) who are the leading experts within inclusive sport. They provide advice, support, and opportunities for people of all ages with specific impairments. [The toolkit](#) provides you with an introduction to each special educational need and disability, key top tips for creating an inclusive environment and signposting to further training and development opportunities within each NDSO. It will help you adapt any practice in addition to our suggestions to make it inclusive for all.

Physical Literacy

We have designed these formats with physical literacy at their heart. We want all young people to have a positive experience with physical activity from an early age. As far as possible, we've considered opportunities for young people to move, think, feel and connect through our activities, and given you suggestions to make adaptations. But, if they don't work for you and your young people, then use the THRIVE principle to remove barriers, make changes and give ownership to your young people to have a positive experience with the activities to see their true value.

For further support, look to the Physical Literacy Enactment Guide - Community, which can be found by [clicking here](#), and going to the "Getting Started" guide section to download it.

NGB regional contacts

- If you have any questions relating to school swimming and water safety, please contact Schoolswimming@swimming.org. The team can help you with your school games offer or help identify opportunities for young people to engage further within the sport
- There are eight Swim England regions. Each region is made up of the affiliated clubs and associations which are at the heart of our fantastic sports. The Swim England regions support the clubs affiliated to the region, the volunteers who run the clubs, and club members within their region to take part in their sport. If you are a member of a club, an affiliated club or just interested in finding out more, please visit your Swim England Region by [clicking on this link](#).

Personal development

- The Swim England Learn to Swim Helper course is aimed at anyone aged 14 and upwards who wants to gain experience or volunteer in swimming lessons. It is perfect for those wishing to pursue a career in swimming teaching and sports management or anyone looking for volunteering and training opportunities as part of their Duke of Edinburgh Award or other volunteering programmes. To find out more, [click here](#)
- The Support Teacher of School Swimming Course is developed to help school teachers, school staff and volunteers in a school setting to gain the right skills and knowledge to deliver quality school swimming lessons to meet national curriculum requirements. To find out more, [click here](#).

Where to participate next?

- Use PoolFinder to identify local swimming pools by [clicking here](#)
- Use the Swim England Club Finder to discover local clubs in your area, by [clicking on this link](#)
- View the relevant National Disability Sport Organisations websites [via this link](#).

Where to compete next?

- To find out more about competitive swimming opportunities visit:
 - English Schools Swimming Association website, by [clicking here](#).
 - Special Olympics UK, by [clicking here](#)
 - Swimming – Panathlon Challenge, by [clicking here](#).





Why swimming for your school?

Swimming and water safety is an essential element of the key stage two national curriculum. Swimming is a vital life skill which builds confidence and resilience in young people. The water provides a low-impact, full-body workout that improves cardiovascular health, coordination, and muscular strength in a fully inclusive environment. It supports mental well-being, reducing stress and anxiety while boosting focus and self-esteem. Swimming's unique individual and team-based nature, combined with the therapeutic benefits of water, helps schools develop healthy, motivated, and well-rounded pupils who strive to achieve their personal best.

How to use activities in curriculum time

The Swim England School Swimming and Water Safety Charter provides free digital resources to support the delivery of school swimming and water safety lessons. The Charter includes certificates, videos, lesson plans, guidance documents and a range of classroom-based activities that develop key swimming skills and water safety knowledge away from the pool. To find out more, and to sign up, [click here](#).

Within this digital resource are the Foundation Awards, which are a set of inclusive and progressive awards that provide recognition to participants who are participating in a manner that suits their abilities.

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Thrive isn't a checklist – it's a lens to help you sense check quality and inclusion, so consider the following when choosing which format to deliver and how it supports your young people to have a positive experience with physical activity:

- **TAILORED:** does your event support the needs, strengths and circumstances of the group?
- **HOLISTIC:** do the selected activities support young people to move, connect, think and feel?
- **REFLECTIVE:** have you built in time to allow young people to reflect on their engagement and to make choices about what they want to take part in next?
- **INCLUSIVE:** does your event support all young people to engage, feel welcome and included to take part?
- **VARIED:** have you planned for activity differentiation with equipment, space, task and outcome to provide appropriate challenge and maintain interest for all?
- **EMPOWERING:** have you consulted your young people to ask what they want to do, and how they want the event to run? Often, they create better rules and adaptations than we do, which gives them ownership and a positive experience.

For further support, look to the Physical Literacy Enactment Guide - Education, which can be found by [clicking here](#), and going to the "Getting Started" guide section to download it.



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Swimming for Schools

SEND



Progression

The SEND swimming festival aims to improve confidence, communication, swimming, floating and aquatic breathing. It supports participants to work towards individual targets, for example, turn taking, listening, aquatic breathing and grip strength.

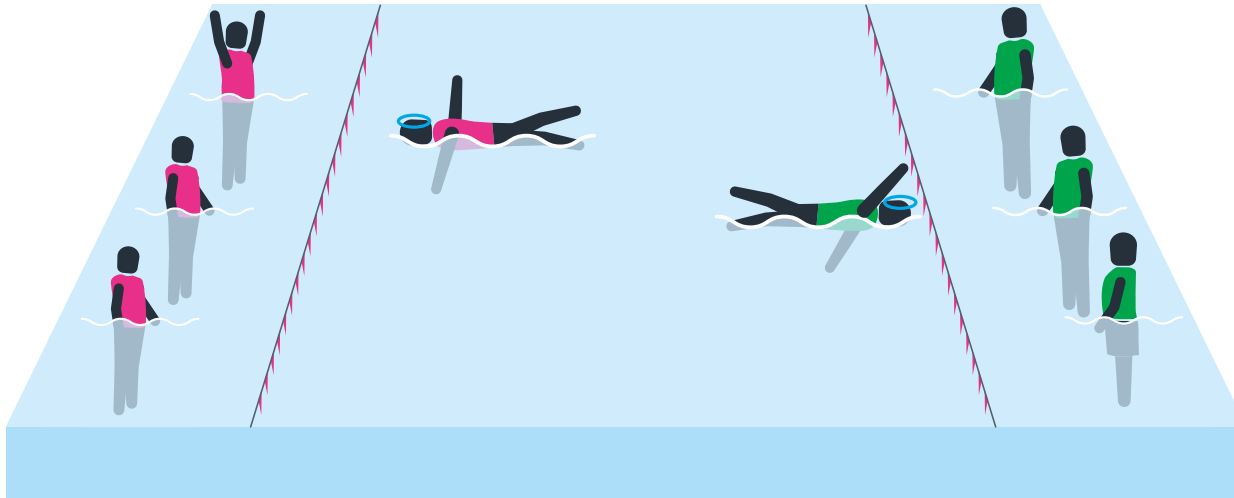
The type of movement, length of time completing the activity or use of equipment can all change the level of challenge, therefore allowing for progression within the activity itself.

Those participants wanting to explore continued participation, explore SGO lead events, or contact the appropriate NDSO to identify appropriate opportunities. All websites available via [this link](#).



Equipment Travel

SEND



How to play

- The aim of this activity is to move equipment from one side of the pool to the other
- Participants can move the equipment in any way that works for them, for example by holding, pushing, kicking, blowing, towing or balancing it
- Participants can take part individually, with a partner, in small groups or as part of a team relay
- In the relay version, one participant moves the equipment across the pool before passing it to the next team member
- Continue until all equipment has reached the finish area
- Success can be measured in different ways, including teamwork, creativity, communication or completing the challenge.

Safety

- Follow your pool's risk assessment guidelines and Pool Safety Operating Procedures
- Ensure appropriate lifeguard supervision is in place
- Ensure participants are spaced appropriately to reduce the risk of collisions
- Ensure in water support is available where required
- Follow best practice when providing physical or manual support, using pre-agreed methods
- Use backstroke flags and staff on poolside to avoid participants bumping their head on the wall.

Equipment required

- Floats
- Floating toys
- Sinking toys
- Backstroke flags
- Small rings or toys to balance on the head
- Large floating hoops (optional)
- Cone or bucket per team
- Equipment for the quiet area, such as waterproof bean bag or fidget toys (optional)
- Lane ropes if required to section off the pool
- Whistle
- Optional:
 - Floatation equipment; discs and noodles
 - Speaker and microphone
 - Picture of the activity



How to make it easier

- Allow participants to choose how they move through the water
- Use larger or easier-to-hold equipment
- Reduce the distance travelled
- Provide flotation equipment or manual support where required
- Reduce group sizes for relay activities
- Work with a partner or supporting adult
- Use visual cues or demonstrations to support understanding
- Provide access to a quiet area for rest or regulation breaks

How to make it harder

- Increase the distance travelled
- Use smaller or more challenging objects to move
- Introduce sinking objects that need to be retrieved
- Encourage participants to use different methods of movement or swimming strokes
- Combine multiple pieces of equipment within one journey
- Explore activities from the aquasplash festival to provide additional challenge

Space required

- Swimming pool space (12m x 5m).

Estimated set-up time

- 2 minutes.

Difficulty level



- What are you proud of today?
- How did you feel taking part in that activity?

Spirit of the Games



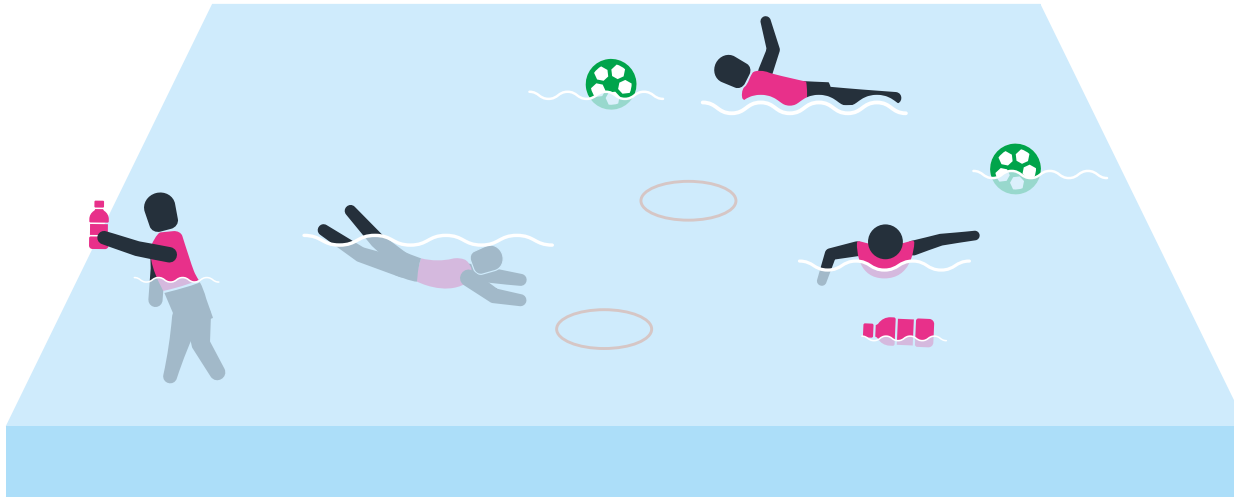
- Tell me about something that was tricky in this activity?
- What did you do when something didn't go quite right?





Equipment Challenge

SEND



How to play

- The aim of this activity is to collect equipment from the pool and return it to the poolside
- Equipment can include a mixture of floating and sinking objects, either placed within floating hoops or spread around the designated area
- Participants can take part individually, with a partner, in small groups or as part of a team relay
- In the relay version, one participant travels to collect an item and returns it to the poolside using a method that suits them
- They then hand over to the next participant, who collects another item
- Continue until all equipment has been collected and returned to the starting area
- Success can be measured in different ways, including teamwork, communication, creativity or completing the challenge.

Safety

- Follow your pool's risk assessment guidelines and Pool Safety Operating Procedures
- Ensure appropriate lifeguard supervision is in place
- Ensure participants are spaced appropriately to reduce the risk of collisions
- Ensure in water support is available where required
- Follow best practice when providing physical or manual support, using pre-agreed methods.

Equipment required

- Floating toys
- Textured balls or equipment
- Equipment for the quiet area, such as waterproof bean bag or fidget toys (optional)
- Whistle
- Optional:
 - Floatation equipment; discs and noodles
 - Speaker and microphone
 - Picture of the activity

Space required

- Swimming pool space 7m x 12m.

How to make it easier

- Use floating items only
- Place items closer to the starting point
- Position items on a large floating mat
- Use fewer items
- Allow participants to collect multiple items during each journey
- Use flotation equipment where required
- Provide in-water or manual support where appropriate
- Reduce group sizes for relay activities
- Provide access to a quiet area for rest or regulation breaks

How to make it harder

- Use more items or use sinking items only
- Place items further away from the starting point
- Allow participants to collect only one item at a time
- Encourage participants to use different methods of moving or swimming to return items to poolside
- Explore activities from the aquasplash festival resource to provide further challenge

Estimated set-up time

- 2 minutes.

Difficulty level



Spirit of the Games



- What items do you think float?
- Are there any items we could recycle and use in the pool as floating toys?



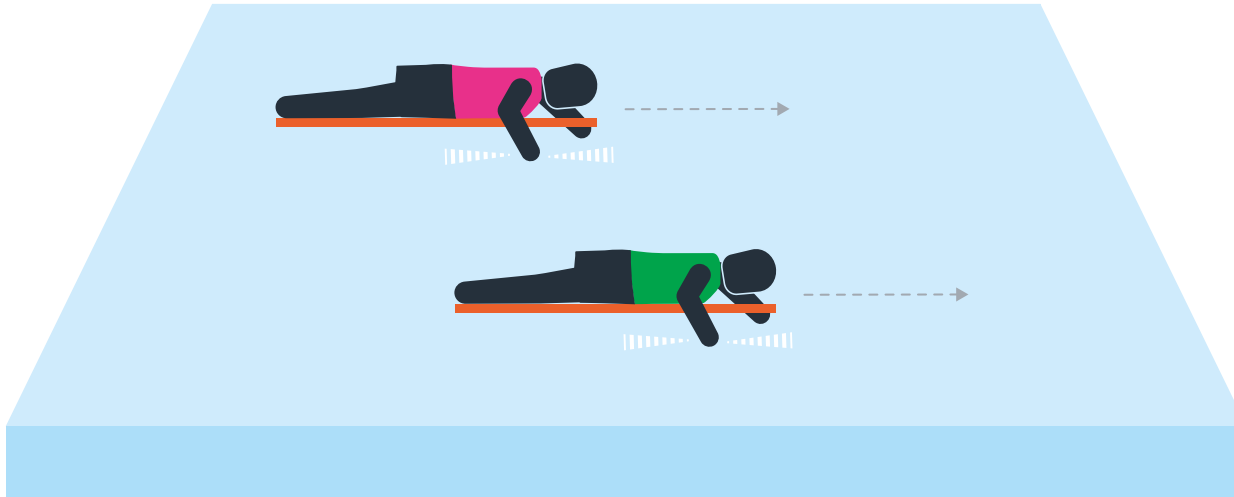
- What was your favourite part of this activity?
- Did you try something new today? How did it go?





Float Race

SEND



How to make it easier

- Use a larger mat or float
- Allow participants to use their arms, legs or a combination of both to move
- Reduce the distance travelled
- Work with a partner to help or supporting adult
- Allow participants to walk or travel through the water holding the float

How to make it harder

- Use a smaller float or mat
- Complete the activity individually rather than with a partner
- Increase the distance travelled
- Explore activities from the aquasplash festival resources to provide additional challenge

Estimated set-up time

- 2 minutes.

Difficulty level



Spirit of the Games



- Show me how you moved on the float, was that allowed within the rules of the game?
- Why did you choose to perform the skill correctly? What would you do if you accidentally broke the rules of the game?



- What did you enjoy the most about that activity?
- Would you like to do the activity again? What would you do differently next time you had a go?





How to play

- The aim of this activity is to move across the water whilst sitting or lying on a float or large mat
- Participants can take part individually, with a partner, or as part of a team
- Participants sit or lie on the float or mat and use their hands, arms or legs to move themselves through the water. Participants should travel to the end of the designated area
- If working in teams or pairs, participants can share a float or mat, taking turns to complete the challenge
- Success can be measured in different ways, including teamwork, communication, creativity or completing the challenge.

Safety

- Follow your pool's risk assessment guidelines and Pool Safety Operating Procedures
- Ensure appropriate lifeguard supervision is in place
- Ensure participants are spaced appropriately to reduce the risk of collisions
- Ensure in water support is available where required
- Follow best practice when providing physical or manual support, using pre-agreed methods.

Equipment required

-  Large and small floats
-  Equipment for the quiet area, such as waterproof bean bag or fidget toys (optional)
-  Lane ropes
-  Whistle
- Optional:
 - Floatation equipment; discs and noodles
 - Speaker and microphone
 - Picture of the activity

Space required

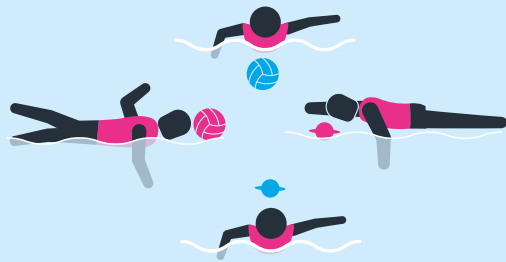
- Swimming pool space 12m x 5m.





Blowtastic Circle

SEND



How to play

- The aim of this activity is to work together to keep the floating toys in the middle of the circle
- Participants form a circle in the water
- Floating toys or objects are placed in the centre of the circle
- Participants must work together to keep the objects in the centre of the circle by blowing them across the water.

Safety

- Follow your pool's risk assessment guidelines and Pool Safety Operating Procedures
- Ensure appropriate lifeguard supervision is in place
- Ensure participants are spaced appropriately to reduce the risk of collisions
- Ensure in water support is available where required
- Follow best practice when providing physical or manual support, using pre-agreed methods
- Ensure participants are given opportunities to rest between blowing activities.

Equipment required

- Egg flips
- Beach balls or large balls
- Floating toys
- Equipment for the quiet area, such as waterproof bean bag or fidget toys (optional)
- Lane ropes
- Whistle
- Optional:
 - Floatation equipment; discs and noodles
 - Speaker and microphone
 - Picture of the activity

Space required

- Swimming pool space 12m x 5m.

How to make it easier

- Participants can use or wear flotation equipment
- Use larger items such as beach balls
- Use textured or easier to see items
- Participants can stand or float in their preferred position
- Participants can hold or tap the object
- Make the circle smaller
- Work with a partner to move the same object

How to make it harder

- Blow the equipment whilst travelling through the water
- Introduce movement challenges whilst keeping the objects moving
- Make the circle larger
- Work individually rather than with a partner
- Explore activities from the aquasplash festival resources to provide additional challenge

Estimated set-up time

- 2 minutes.

Spirit of the Games



- How did you keep the toys in the circle? Show me what you did.
- What did you do when something felt hard?

Difficulty level



- How did you work with your teammates to keep the toys in the circle? Show me what you did.
- What did you do to help your team?





Sensory Circuit

SEND

How to play

- Set up four sensory stations around the pool
- Divide participants equally between the stations
- Allow time for participants to explore each station before moving on to the next
- Rotate groups so that everyone experiences all stations.

Station 1: Mirror Exploration

- Participants explore their reflections using floating mirrors
- Participants may look at themselves while floating on their back, looking underwater or sharing the mirror with a partner
- If mirrors are not available, use visually interesting objects instead.

Station 2: Noodle Bridge

- Create a bridge or arch using connected noodles
- Participants travel under the noodle bridge in a manner that suits them
- Water can be poured over the bridge to create additional sensory experiences if appropriate.

Station 3: Feeling the Water

- Participants explore moving the water using their hands, arms or equipment
- Place objects on the pool floor or water surface and observe how the water movement affects them
- Encourage participants to explore movement, splashing and creating waves in different directions.

Station 4: Sound Creation

- Participants explore making sounds in and around the water
- Try blowing bubbles, dripping water from fingers or pouring water through equipment
- Participants can experiment with tapping equipment gently against the water or poolside and listening to the sounds created.

Safety

- Follow your pool's risk assessment and Pool Safety Operating Procedures
- Ensure appropriate lifeguard supervision is in place
- Ensure participants are spaced appropriately to reduce the risk of collisions
- Consider individual participant abilities and support needs when planning the activity
- Ensure in-water support is available where required
- Follow best practice when providing physical or manual support, using pre-agreed methods.

Equipment required

- Ball Textured balls Noodles and noodle connectors
- Floating mirrors Watering cans Toys which squirt water
- Brightly coloured bath toys Optional shimmering ribbon
- Optional metal objects e.g. sieve, colander, spoon
- Sinkable items Large mat
- Equipment for the quiet area, such as waterproof bean bag or fidget toys (optional)
- Lane ropes Whistle

Optional:

- Floatation equipment; discs and noodles
- Speaker and microphone
- Picture of the activity

Space required

- Swimming pool space 7m x 12m in the shallow end.

Estimated set-up time

- 2 minutes.

Difficulty level



Spirit of the Games



- How did you communicate with your friends? What did you say? Did it make your performance better?
- How did you help someone today? What did you do?



- What is something you felt confident doing today?
- When did you think "I can do this" today?

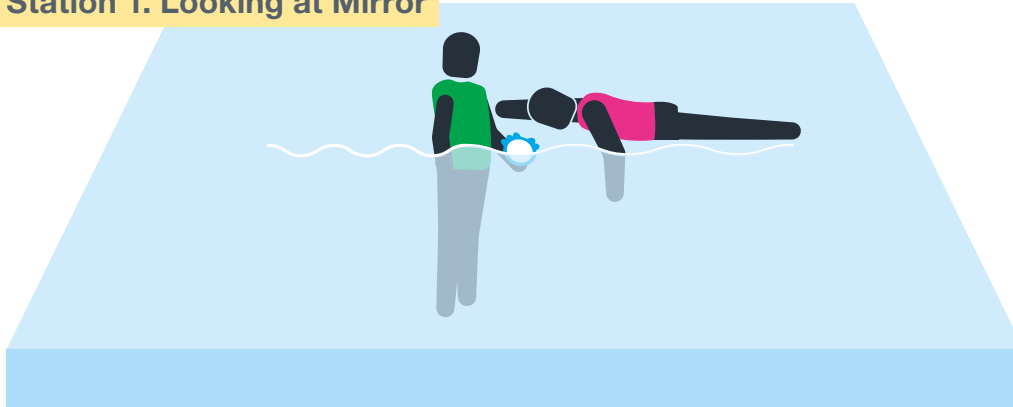




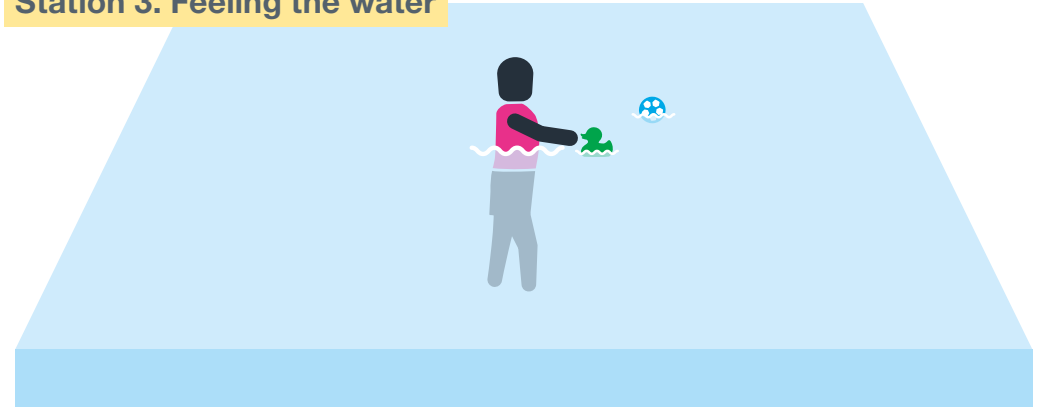
Sensory Circuit

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Station 1. Looking at Mirror



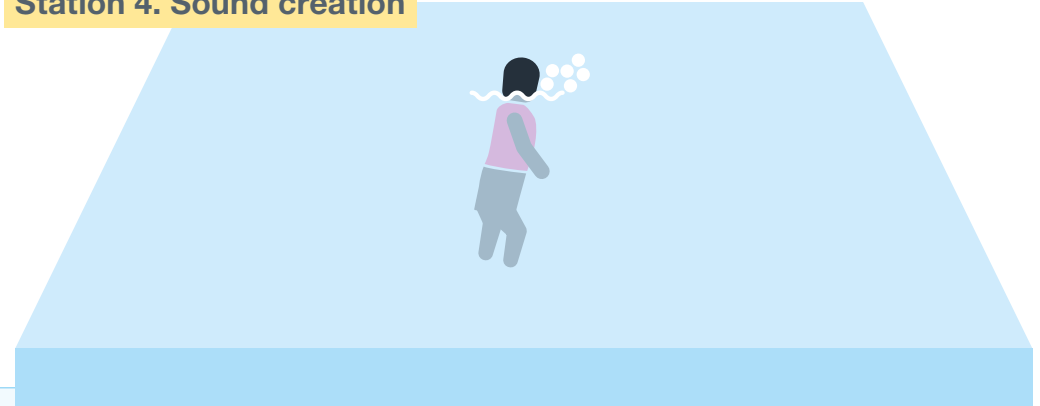
Station 3. Feeling the water



Station 2. Participants travel under a “noodle bridge,”



Station 4. Sound creation



How to make it easier

- Allow participants to remain in standing depth water
- Allow participants to work with a partner, supporting adult or peer
- Allow participants to spend longer at preferred stations
- Reduce the number of sensory experiences available at one time
- Use flotation equipment where required

How to make it harder

- Encourage participants to explore activities independently
- Introduce objects on the pool floor to investigate
- Encourage participants to make choices about how they interact with each station
- Encourage participants to move independently between stations
- Explore activities from the aquasplash festival resources to provide additional challenge