



Face In and Eyes Open in the Water

The first two steps in the Learn to Swim process involves your child being able to hold their breath, put their head under the water and open their eyes under the water.

The biggest challenge for the swimming teacher is to make this fun. Children who have a shower and are used to water going over their heads don't seem to have a problem with these first two steps. Nor do children who have lots of water over their heads at bath time, in fact it took me some years as a swimming teacher to recognize that the second child in the family seemed to be good at going under the water, where as the first born was reluctant. The answer to this puzzle came when my children were young. The eldest child tends to pour water over the head of the younger one, but in most cases is not too happy about the younger sibling pouring water over their heads.

The first forty weeks of our lives are spent totally immersed in a fluid, so the sooner we can get babies back into that environment the less chance they have of developing a fear of water going over their heads and in their eyes, nose, mouth and ears. Small quantities of warm clean water over babies' heads at bath time certainly helps prepared them for swimming lessons. As the baby gets older and more used to water going over their heads you can increase the amount of water you pour over their heads and or the amount of time their heads go under the water spraying from the shower. The concept we are working on here is to make sure the child does not develop a fear of water going over their heads, and they learn to hold their breath.

If your child is really struggling to put their face in the water, please be patient. Some children have a genuine fear of the water and the instructor, because they are in the water with your child, is best positioned to feel this fear, and will only be able to push your child's limits ever so gently. The other end of the equation is the child who is totally fearless of jumping into water. These children need to be handled entirely differently to the ones who are scared of the water, and at some stage need to experience how dangerous jumping into the water can be. The best place for this experience to take place is during a swimming lesson, where the situation can be controlled. Natural consequences can teach us some of life's great lessons.

After you child can hold their breath and put their head under the water, they need to be able to open their eyes under the water. The obvious reason is, so they can see where they are going, especially if they have to turn around and swim back to the side of the pool. The not so obvious reason is; it is much easier to balance in the water with your eyes open, and because swimming

Heated dressing rooms, private classes and parent viewing room.

Chris Shapland

Head Office: (07) 3284 1444

Mobile: 0414 273 497

www.shapswim.com.au



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is a combination of balance and breath control, it is essential that you child can swim with their eyes open (without goggles).

Unlike most amphibians, which have special membranes to protect their eyes when they go under water, humans do not. This means that the first time we open our eyes under water it can be an uncomfortable experience. Fortunately this feeling passes very quickly and a whole new underwater world opens up for your child. When you go under water without goggles the vision is very blurry, and it is important that your child gets used to the blurred nature of seeing underwater, who knows it may save their lives one day.

Patience and encouragement is the key to making your child's swimming lessons fun and rewarding, so stay positive and remember sometimes it can take a long time for a child to feel comfortable going under the water with their eyes open.

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