

AQUAZONE CRITERIA: WHY IS SWIMMING TECHNIQUE IMPORTANT?

“You are in the pool one day, enjoying being in the water and working on your freestyle swimming. You are pretty happy with the progress you have been making and swimming is definitely becoming easier and a little quicker too – which is really satisfying. You set off for a few more laps and then suddenly in the next lane over a young girl jumps in the water, probably about 11 years old, and comes flying past you like you are barely moving. Before you know it she has executed a perfect tumble turn and comes back past you the other way, a near blur of fast moving, perfectly synchronized arms and legs”.

“How can she do that? She is just a kid! Kids are not as physically strong as adults and don’t have the option of muscling their way through the water; instead they must use a good stroke technique to propel themselves quickly forwards” (Swim Smooth).

In fact, studies show that swimming is 80% technique and 20% fitness. In other words, in the water, good, efficient technique is far more important than fitness. In comparison, when running and cycling, fitness is arguably more important than technique. People can perform those sports well, relying mainly on fitness while neglecting good technique. Not so in swimming.

But why? Put simply, water is 800 times more dense than air. So figuring out how to move through the water efficiently determines how well you swim far more than being in great shape does. Consequently you can be a really excellent swimmer just by learning a few basic principles, and you don’t have to be in amazing shape to do that.

Because of that, until you are an efficient swimmer, it’s paramount that you learn proper technique before you worry about improving your swimming fitness. In other words, you gain the most working on your technique instead of just swimming endless laps with poor technique. A good rule of thumb is that unless you can consistently swim faster than 2 minutes per 100 meters, you should be working almost exclusively on technique.

When a child joins a squad (competitive or non-competitive) too early without mastering the correct technique, it is usually too late to make any change to the technique or provide efficient stroke correction.

As a result, the child will develop and reinforce the technical faults even more and therefore increase the risk of injuries later.

LEARNING WELL

By learning, developing and practicing technique at Miramar and Newtown pool, you will ensure that your child will master the fundamental swimming skills and adopt the correct technique for the rest of his/her life.

Our progression charts (posters) have been developed over the last few years to ensure that each child learns all swimming techniques step by step and correctly.

It is very important that each child finishes his or her poster before considering joining a squad or any other aquatic activity. The right age to join a squad is around 10 years old (depending on individual progressions and maturity).

Below is a brief explanation of our Freestyle criteria and technical expectations for each Aquazone level:

- **Dory level:** Learn the fundamental skills such as breath control, kicking action, arms circles correctly and how to co-ordinate them.
- **Stingray level:** 30m. Freestyle or 2 lengths of the pool without stopping and showing the correct basic technique (e.g. hands catching up, head on shoulder when breath-in, co-ordination of arms, kick and bubbles)
- **Dolphin level:** 60m. Freestyle or 4 lengths of the pool without stopping and showing “fluent” technique (e.g. head flat on shoulder while breathing with front arm leaning on the top of the water)
- **Hammerhead level:** 100m. Freestyle (approximately 7 lengths) showing efficient technique (e.g. good body alignment and head position, efficient pull through the water)
- **Great White level:** 200m. Freestyle (approximately 14 lengths) showing an excellent technique and being ready for transition into a squad or any other aquatic activity. Below is a link (Freestyle breathing video) showing great tips and what we are trying to achieve at this level:
<http://www.aquazone.co.nz/articles-videos--tips.html>

As explained above, it’s not just about being able to swim two or four laps at the pool but mostly about building a better technique through each Aquazone level.

