

## A graded approach to a definition of 'Can Swim'

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### Introduction

The search for a universal definition of 'can swim' has gone on for some time (3). Wide disparity in what we teach confirms that such a definition still does not have wide consensus. Defining 'can swim' has also recently been related to the causes of drowning (4). Notions about what it really entails are usually rooted in a certain distance (2), usually from 25m–200m. A conceptual model does exist which identifies other elements than simply stroking over a certain distance (1). It may be more productive to define 'can swim' as a developmental zone rather than a single sharp demarcation. The aim of this paper is to describe how the existing model can be expanded to a 'zone' while retaining all of the critical elements.

### Methods

The model cited above was accepted as a valid construct of a definition of 'can swim'. A new model is presented integrating essential elements into a 'zone', from a pedagogical - philosophical view point.

### Results

The developmental zone is described as between 25m–200m. At any given distance, the model includes a balance of essential elements, for example:

1. At 25m the learner should also be able to:
  - jump or dive into deep water, surface, level off
  - swim two strokes, at least 12.5m on the front, and 12.5m on the back
  - turn 180°, left and right, front and back
  - roll over, front to back and vice versa
  - stop and rest, ca 30 sec., minimal movement
2. At 100m the learner should also be able to:
  - fall into deep water
  - swim three strokes including 50m on the front and 50m on the back
  - stop and rest ca 90 sec, both on front and back
  - surface dive and swim 3–4 body lengths underwater
  - jump or dive into deep water, surface, level off
  - swim two strokes, at least 12.5m on the front, and 12.5m on the back
  - turn 180°, left and right, front and back
  - roll over, front to back and vice versa
  - stop and rest, ca 30 sec., minimal movement
  - fall into deep water
  - swim three strokes including 50m on the front and 50m on the back
  - stop and rest ca 90 sec, both on front and back
  - surface dive and swim 3–4 body lengths underwater
3. At 200m the learner should also be able to:
  - roll into deep water
  - swim 4 strokes, including 2 on front, 2 on back (100m on front, 100 on back)
  - stop and rest ca 3 min, both on front and back
  - surface dive and swim 5-6 body lengths under water

For 1, 2 & 3; accomplish the above wearing a) shirt, b) long armed shirt or trousers, c) shirt and trousers, respectively; Climb out over side of pool.

### Discussion and Conclusions

It is possible to think of a zone describing 'can swim', rather than a sharp dividing line. However, at any given distance, a balanced development should be achieved. It is possible that the higher criterion (200m comb) corresponds roughly to the lower, when translated to an open water situation.

### References

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