

- Whenever a participant feels fear or anxiety, hold or support the participant in a position he or she finds comforting and secure.
- Make eye contact with the participant whenever you are interacting with him or her. This helps keep the participant focused on what you are asking of him or her, and it helps to keep you focused on the participant. Remember to be sensitive to cultural differences; in some cultures, making direct eye contact is not appropriate.
- Focus on the safety of the entire class even if you are providing support to an individual. Always position yourself so that you can see the other participants. Never turn your back on the other participants in class.



Instructor's Note: Teaching swimming skills is very hands-on. As a water safety instructor, you will use holding and support techniques to increase participants' sense of security in the water and to support them while they practice new skills. You will also help participants get used to new or unfamiliar movements by physically moving their arms, legs or other body parts so that they get a sense of how the movement is supposed to feel. Whenever you are using holding or support techniques or providing hands-on guidance, take care to follow the guidelines for positioning your hands carefully so that you avoid touching the participant in an inappropriate way. In addition, try to keep your hands as visible as possible when you are using holding or support techniques or providing hands-on guidance to minimize the chance that your handling of the participant could be construed as inappropriate.

Face-to-Face Positions

Face-to-face positions are most effective for children, especially those enrolled in Parent and Child Aquatics and the beginning levels of Preschool Aquatics and Learn-to-Swim. Use these positions to help introduce participants to skills on their front.

- **Hug position.** Use the hug position (Figure 3-8) for water adjustment and to practice kicking on the front. Position yourself so the water comes up to your shoulders and the participant's upper chest. Have the participant rest his head on your shoulder and place his arms loosely around your neck or over your shoulders. While supporting the participant's legs from underneath, have the participant extend the legs. You can use this position to manipulate the kick.
- **Chin support position.** Use the chin support position (Figure 3-9) to practice kicking on the front and bubble blowing. Position yourself so the water comes up to your shoulders and the participant's chin.



Figure 3-8 Hug position.



Figure 3-9 Chin support position.

Hold the participant under the upper chest and shoulders with your fingers and palms. Make sure the participant's chin rests on the heels of your palms so her chin does not accidentally submerge.

- **Hip support on front position.**

Use the hip support on front position (Figure 3-10) for water adjustment; to practice kicking on the front, the front glide, the front float and bubble blowing; and in preparation for kicking with the face down unsupported. Position yourself so the water comes up to your shoulders and the participant's chest. With your hands, support the participant in a horizontal position at the hips and abdomen from below. The participant's arms should be nearly fully extended and rest on top of your arms.



Figure 3-10 Hip support on front position.

- **Shoulder support on front position.**

Use the shoulder support on front position (Figure 3-11) for water adjustment and to practice kicking on the front, the front glide, bubble blowing, underwater exploration and rolling over. Position yourself so the water comes up to your shoulders and the participant's chin. Hold the participant under the armpits with your arms nearly fully extended. Grasp a heavier or fearful participant underneath the arms and upper chest with your thumbs up.



Figure 3-11 Shoulder support on front position.

Back-to-Chest Positions

Back-to-chest positions are used to introduce participants to skills on their backs. Participants often feel less confident on their backs, so introduce these positions gradually and provide firm support initially.

Positioning the participant so that the ears are above the surface initially may help the participant get comfortable with being on his or her back. Do not continue any holding position if the participant becomes distressed.

- **Cuddle position.** The cuddle position (Figure 3-12) is used for back float, back glide readiness, kicking on the back and rolling over. Position yourself so that the water comes up to your neck and the participant's ears. The back of the participant's head rests on your



Figure 3-12 Cuddle position.

shoulder, with her cheek or the side of her head touching or right next to your cheek. Place one hand on the participant's lower back and the other on her chest. The participant's legs point away from you. Hold the participant horizontal by "sandwiching" her between your hands.

- **Hip support on back position.** The hip support on back position (Figure 3-13A) is used for back float and back glide readiness and for kicking on the back. Position yourself so that the water comes up to your neck and the participant's ears. The back of the participant's head rests on your shoulder, with his cheek or the side of his head touching or right next to your cheek. Hold the participant with both hands on the back to bring the body horizontal. Your exact hand position on the participant's back depends on the participant's ability to relax. Placing your hands on the participant's lower back provides the most support, whereas placing your hands on the participant's upper back gives less support but allows greater freedom of movement. As the participant becomes more comfortable, his legs will relax and he will lay his head back and allow his ears to submerge. Once the participant relaxes, you may reach down to the participant's legs and manipulate the kick (Figure 3-13B).

- **Back support position.** The back support position (Figure 3-14A) is used when the participant is comfortable on his or her back and maximum freedom of movement is

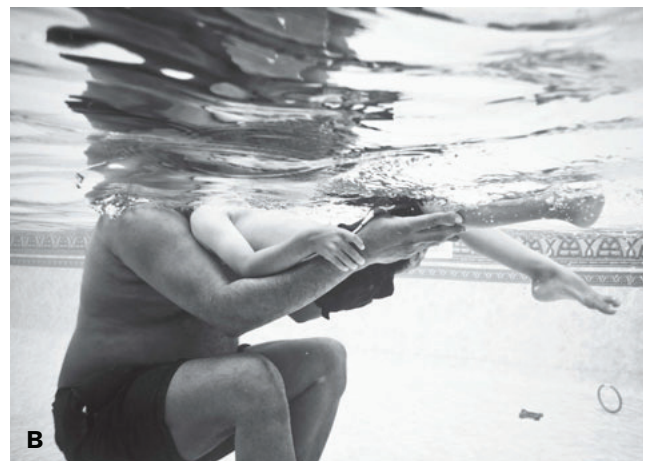


Figure 3-13 Hip support on back position. (A) Supporting the back. (B) Manipulating the kick.



Figure 3-14 Back support position. (A) Holding the participant away from the body so that the legs float up into a horizontal position. (B) Variation with participant held close for more support.

desired, but the participant still needs some support. Position yourself behind the participant so that your shoulders and the participant's ears are in the water. Support the base of the participant's head near the neck with one hand. Place your other hand in the middle of the participant's back to lift and stabilize him or her in a horizontal position. Tilt the participant's head back. Extend your arms to hold the participant perpendicular to and away from your body, smoothly moving backward to help the participant float to a horizontal position. If the participant has trouble relaxing and tilting his or her head, try using a variation of this position. Pull the participant close to you and position his or her head on your chest or shoulder for more support. Place one hand in the middle of the participant's back and the other hand around the chin or lower jaw and gently tilt the head back (Figure 3-14B). Resume the back support position when the participant relaxes.



Safety Note: Do not push on the fleshy part of the participant's throat.

- **Arm stroke position.** The arm stroke position (Figure 3-15A) is used to help young participants explore arm movements in the water. Brace your back against the side of the pool, sit on the steps or kneel on one knee in shallow water. The water should be up to your shoulders and the participant's upper chest or armpits. Sit the participant on your knee, facing away from you. Use one of your arms to circle the participant's chest and keep him upright. With your other hand, hold the participant's wrist from underneath and place your hand on top of the participant's hand. Move the participant's arm in a paddling motion and encourage the participant to imitate the movement with his other arm. If necessary, switch the arm you are using to support the participant and move the participant's other arm in the paddling motion. Balance a more secure participant on your knee and guide both arms in an alternating or simultaneous paddling motion (Figure 3-15B).



Figure 3-15 Arm stroke position. (A) Manipulating one arm. (B) Manipulating both arms.

Side-to-Side Positions

Side-to-side positions are used for water adjustment and for bubble blowing, kicking on the front, front glide, front float, beginning stroking, passing and practicing combined skills.

- **Hip straddle position.** The hip straddle position (Figure 3-16) is used for water adjustment, bubble blowing, and water entry and exit. This position is most appropriate for young participants and can be used in various depths of water depending on the skill the participant is learning. Have the participant face you and straddle your hip. Support the participant by reaching around the participant's back and placing your hand on the participant's upper thigh. You can hold the participant's hand with your other hand. Position yourself so the water level is appropriate for the participant. If the participant is cold or afraid of the water, begin by immersing the lower part of the participant's body. As the participant becomes more comfortable, gradually immerse yourself and the participant until the water reaches the participant's chest.



Figure 3-16 Hip straddle position.

- **Shoulder support on the side position.** The shoulder support on the side position (Figure 3-17A) is used for water adjustment, bubble blowing, kicking on the front, front glide, front float, beginning stroking, passing and for practicing combined skills. Position yourself comfortably so the water line is between your waist or shoulders and the participant's chin or neck. This position gives maximum mobility in a support position. With you and the participant facing the same direction, hold the participant to your side by wrapping your hands around the participant's torso at about the armpits. Keep the participant's head up; you should be able to see his face. You can gently rest your arm or elbow against the participant's buttocks and legs to keep them underwater. To provide more support, encircle the participant's torso with your arms, wrapping one arm underneath the participant and the other over top and placing your palms on the participant's chest (Figure 3-17B). As the participant becomes more confident and skilled, hold him with both hands on the waist.



Figure 3-17 Shoulder support on the side position. (A) Supporting the participant by wrapping your hands around the participant's torso at the armpits. (B) Variation to provide more support: place one arm underneath the participant and the other over top, with both hands on the participant's chest.