

# Water babies

Swimming and Para Swimming at the Commonwealth Games takes place inside a 50-meter-long swimming pool divided into eight lanes. Swimmers race each other at varying distances using one (or all, for medley events) of four strokes: freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke and butterfly.



**Swimming practice** provides lots of opportunities to boost language skills. From listening to instructions, answering questions, interacting with peers and taking turns, swimming is a great opportunity for develop language by reinforcing the prepositions such behind, beside, up and down as well as parts of the body.

Swimming provides loads of health benefits which can help to keep young children healthy and happy; it also helps to keep heart and lungs healthy, improves strength and flexibility, increases stamina and even improves balance and posture.

Swimming requires a very specific set of skills that involve highly complex and co-ordinated, whole-body movements. However, these activities can help children develop abilities that will make learning specific swimming techniques more natural (and easier) to accomplish and will prevent them from being frustrated when they learn to swim. Here are some ideas for **Getting Ready on Dry Land**

- Jumping Skills
- Breathing Skills
- Arm Movements
- Kicking Co-ordination



**Active Together  
Wales**  
Cymru'n Actif  
Gyda'n Gilydd

#### Practicing Jumping Skills:

Some children are hesitant to jump in the water and **Jumping** requires **co-ordination** and **practice**. Jumping is a good skill to practice so try using small steps or balancing beams, encouraging them to jump off of low surfaces.

This will help children become comfortable with the feeling of jumping into the water.



#### Encouraging Breathing Skills:

**Blowing bubbles** is an important water safety skill that focuses on helping children learn to control their breath. This is a good activity to practice anytime there is an opportunity to do so. **And most children love doing it!**

Blowing bubbles can be practiced using a straw and water in a cup or bubble solution and wands so that they create bubbles that stick around so they can - in essence - see the air they are blowing.



#### Encouraging Arm Movements:

In order to make the motion required to swim, **children must practice moving the water in front of them**. They need to understand that they must **push the water behind them** in a circular motion so that they move through the water - start by encouraging them to **stand** with one foot in front of the other and **bring both hands together and then swing back** behind them, swing in front and then push backwards again. The aim is for them to become comfortable with the front-to-back movement that swimming requires.



#### Encouraging Kicking Coordination:

If they can **kick their feet**, children can propel themselves underwater - and paddle to keep their head above water. Encourage this by kicking a ball or sitting on a chair and **kicking their dangling feet**. You could even encourage them to lie on their tummies with their feet hanging off the edge of a mat and kick from the ankles. This will help them to understand what they will be expected to do in the water. Repeating the words as they practice the kick, kick, kick reinforces the action.

