Swimming Teachers and Coaches Resource
Guidance Notes for working with wheelchair users

Learn to Swim:

Pool Entry:
• Be prepared and have a hoist in position
• Don’t assume all swimmers require a hoist to enter water
• It is the swimmers choice how they enter and exit the pool

Considerations:
• Can the swimmer enter the pool unaided or do they require the use of a hoist or some other assistance
• Participants range of controlled movement in relation to swimming (if they are new to swimming they will not know this and therefore needs to be established)
• Find out what the swimmer is able to do by talking to the swimmer and/or parent/guardian/personal assistant before they get into the water
• Don’t assume that the participant needs support in the water even if they say that they do
• Focus on ability not disability
• Concentrate on water stability/balance
• Remain in communication with swimmer to ensure sessions are appropriate
• Work with the swimmer and/or parent/guardian/personal assistant to identify ways to achieve the best technique
• Treat them as an individual and do not be afraid to differentiate to an appropriate adaptation for a disabled swimmer
• When organising group activity consider adaptation using the STEPS principle which is universally used within disability sport. The following should be considered when adapting your session:

Space
- What is the effect of the size of the pool on the activity?
- Decrease targets and distances to make things easier.

Task
- Ensure the demonstrations/communication methods used will enable understanding
- Adapt the task for some participants where appropriate

Equipment
- Use of floatation device to sport different strokes and activities

People
- Ensure group dynamics – working in pairs and small groups
- Vary groups – use mixed-ability groups and similar pairings, and ensure these are not the same for every session
- Let them try – never assume they can’t do it, and work with them on adaptations; what works and what doesn’t?
- As a coach, your position is important for people to hear and see

Safety
- Know your individual/group, their ability and potential.
- Know what precautionary action to take (eg medical, behavioural)
- Be aware of further potential heat loss and dehydration with some groups
- Where a swimmer is physically unable to achieve the requirement of a stroke or skill, the teacher should adapt requirements of skill or stroke criteria or ignore that aspect.
- Expect high standards

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Pool Entry:

- Be prepared and have a hoist in position
- Don’t assume the swimmer requires a hoist to enter water but if swimmers are wanting to compete they need to learn to enter and exit without a hoist
- It is the swimmers choice how they enter and exit the pool
- If the swimmer uses the hoist, use this lane for their training to ensure all time in the session is utilised
- Focus on ability not disability
- Disabled swimmers need to train with other swimmers of like ability/trainability, however consideration regarding age should be taken into account
- Be aware of disability specific opportunities and development pathways, for example disability competitions
- Drills may need to be adapted, for example kicking drills to arm drills
- Incorporate active rest due to higher intensity of demand on arms within sessions
- Expect high standards and push swimmers to achieve their best
- Do not underestimate the swimmers ability

- Be aware of the balance between training and overtraining
- Focus on upper body but do not forget lower limbs as there maybe some movement especially in the water, however recognise whether it is reaction to water movement or actual movement
- Adapt strokes to maximise efficiency within swimmers range of movement
- If unsure seek advice from:
  - Swimmer
  - Parent/Guardian/Personal Assistant
  - WheelPower
  - British Disability Swimming
  - Senior coach at your club
- Remember all swimmers are individuals and all have different needs