

From www.diving.about.com

So you're interested in getting your child involved in competitive springboard diving. Maybe you have noticed your son or daughter flipping off a diving board at the neighborhood pool, or they have shown interest after seeing a local springboard diving competition.

Many diving programs offer "Learn to Dive" or springboard diving lessons geared toward teaching the basic fundamentals of diving. In these programs, the goal is to teach basic diving skills in a fun and exciting environment with the safety of the participant being the primary concern.

Assess Your Child's Ability to Handle Springboard Diving

Learning the skills needed to succeed in diving requires many physical attributes, but above all is the ability to feel comfortable in deep water. Of course the ability to swim is a must, but a prospective diver needs to feel as comfortable in 15 feet of water as they do in the shallow end. This comfort level allows the child to concentrate on learning proper diving skills and to enjoy their time in the pool.

If you feel unsure about your ability to judge your child's readiness for diving, a local coach can help you assess their current abilities and make recommendations about the future.

Learning to Dive Takes Time

Being able to flip and twist are great attributes in the sport of diving, but fundamentals are the tools that create successful divers. While this is many times lost on young divers who want to throw themselves off the diving board with reckless abandon and limitless energy, it is the role of the parent to help them understand that learning to dive correctly takes time and patience.

The sport of diving has an exemplary record when it comes to safety. Why is this? Divers and coaches have placed a premium on safety! In order that each diver reach their potential and have an exciting and fun experience, they must to be able to practice in a safe training environment.

DIVERS

Each time a competitive diver steps onto a springboard during practice he or she should follow three simple rules to ensure the safety of themselves and their teammates.

1. Check the Water before Diving

Always make sure that the diver before you has made it to the side of the pool and is out of way before proceeding with a dive. The last thing a diver wants to happen is to go off the diving board and land on another diver. Obviously, this can be as devastating for the diver going off the board as the one who is in the water. So once you have finished your dive, swim to the side of the pool once you come to the surface.

2. One Diver on the Board at a Time

Diving boards were meant for one person at a time! You may have heard this a million times and for good reason. Nothing good can happen if two people are on the board at the same time. Not only is this a safety issue but it can slow an efficient practice down to a snail's pace. Be patient, and wait until the diver before you finishes his or her dive. Then get ready for your turn.

3. Focus on the Dive

Once you are on the springboard, concentrate on diving! There is always time to talk to your friends, but standing on the diving board prior to a dive is not one of them. Diving is a difficult sport that requires concentration, and the more time a diver spends socializing or engaging in "horseplay" while on the diving board, less time is spent focusing on executing a dive to the best of your ability.

Getting started in the sport of competitive diving can be a confusing and often times, daunting adventure. Here are five of what I consider, important concepts that a beginner or inexperienced diver should understand when learning to dive. These are by no means the only important aspects, but come from my personal coaching experience. And these not just for the beginner, even experienced divers should be diligent about keeping these ideas in mind during their career.

1. Enjoy the Time

As with any sport, diving is not always fun. If you are going to be good at diving, you should accept the fact every day at the pool will not always be as much fun as hanging out with friends. You may have a bad day and not want to practice, and if a diver tells me they are having fun learning a dive that scares them to death, I might be a bit skeptical.

Enjoy all parts of the process ... the good, the bad and the ugly. Enjoy the successes and the struggle to improve. Enjoy learning things that you did not think were possible. Enjoy finding out things about yourself that you didn't know. Having fun does not always mean success, but if you enjoy all aspects of learning to dive, you will always become a better diver, and a better person.

2. Patience is Golden

Not many divers are successful from the minute they step onto the pool deck. Even Greg Louganis had his ups and downs. It takes time to be a good diver and every beginner needs to be patient and trust the process.

Many times a diver will do many things that seem to be a waste of time. Doing a front double on your first day to impress all the other kids may be more fun, but learning how to stretch and do a proper line-up is more important. You will get to the double in time, but have patience.

When you do get there and are ready to do the dive the correct way, the double flip will impress everyone instead of getting them wet. If you listen, follow instructions and have patience, good things are bound to happen.

3. Ask Questions

If you don't understand something in diving, don't be afraid to ask. It is important to understand what you are learning, and how it fits into the grand scheme. Many times coaches and instructors are dealing with multiple divers, and may not be able to explain every aspect of their coaching philosophy. So take the initiative and ask the question.

Why is learning a jump important? Why do we do a million back tuck kick outs? Why do I need to learn a dive in tuck when I can do it in layout? Remember, there are no dumb questions! Chances are if you don't understand something, there is someone else who doesn't understand it either.

4. Embrace Flexibility

If there is one key physical element that will help a new diver – or any diver for that matter, it is learning how to stretch and increasing flexibility. Flexibility will help a diver more than learning an inward 1 ½, or an inward 2 ½. Once you learn how to increase your flexibility, not only will you learn an inward 1 ½, or an inward 2 ½; the process will be easier and the dives will be better.

More importantly, if you learn to embrace flexibility early, it will not seem like drudgery later in your diving career. Any will coach will tell you; if you want to be good you have to be flexible.

PARENTS

There are many factors that determine the success of a diver: physical abilities, determination, desire, aquatic facilities, coaches. One factor that should always be a benefit is the way parents conduct themselves, and how they react with their child. Here is a list of dos and don'ts that will help parents give a beginner or an advanced diver an advantage each time they head to the pool.

What A Parent Should Do

- **Stay Off the Pool Deck**

Parents should make every effort to stay off the pool deck during diving practice. By staying off the pool deck or training site and in the designated area for parents and spectators, you will not disrupt the training of the diver.

- **Have Your Child at Practice on Time**

Practice times are not open-ended. They begin and end at set times and by making sure a diver is on time he or she will receive the full benefit of the coaching they receive. Divers who come to practice late may also disrupt the practice time of other divers. So be courteous to others and be on time.

- **Encourage Your Child Without Pressure**

Diving is supposed to be fun! Added pressure and expectations from parents may cause a diver to become overly concerned about meeting those expectations. The result is usually counter-productive to a diver's success. Happy and enthusiastic divers are productive divers, so encourage your diver to do the best they can without the pressure of meeting your expectations.

- **Support Your Child**

What every diver needs is unwavering support from their parent. If a diver is a triangle, the three points of that triangle are talent, determination, and support. No matter how talented or determined a diver may be, without the emotional support that comes from a parent or guardian, that diver may not be able to make use of an abundance or talent or gritty determination.

What a Parent Should Not Do

- **Do Not Criticize the Coach or Official**

Criticism of a coach or an official is a no-win situation. Criticism of a coach to another parent or diver erodes the unique bond of trust between a coach and a diver. Derogatory comments made to an official will inevitably become a detriment during competitions. Trust between a diver and the coach is one of the most important elements in diving. In order for a diver to get over fears and to understand what is required to become a successful competitive diver, this trust in the coach must be developed. Try your best, no matter what you believe, to encourage that trust. If you have questions or comments, address those concerns with the coach and not members of the team.

- **Do Not Distract the Coach or Diver**

Just as in any teaching environment, coaches use structured lesson plans that lead to a divers development and success. Anything that distracts the diver from the lesson plan for that day can result in the athlete falling behind in their development.

- **Do Not Communicate with the Divers**

Focus is an important element in diving. In a sport where serious injury can occur, a divers unwavering focus is paramount not only to ensure the success of a dive, but also for the safety of the diver. Have you ever tried to practice your golf swing or serve in tennis while someone is talking to you at the same time? It is very difficult to concentrate. If you miss-hit your wedge, you have a bad golf shot. If you mess up your dive, you might hit the board!

- **Try Not to Miss Practices**

Distraction of divers during a practice can break-up the structure of a daily lesson plan, but missing practices will erode the overall concept of goal-oriented teaching. By missing practices, your diver may miss out on a key building block that leads to overall success. Each practice is part of a blueprint for success, so make sure you miss practices when only absolutely necessary.

- **Do Not Coach the Divers**

A diver, or any athlete for that matter, cannot serve two masters. By attempting to coach your diver, you force a child to choose between the most important person in their life – the parent, and the coach. It is a pretty sure bet who will win

in that battle, especially with younger divers. Diving coaches are trained and skilled professionals. Let the coach do the job for which you are paying them.

Learning and practicing dives, just as in any other learning process, should be based on fundamental building blocks or skills. These building blocks in the sport of diving are vital, but to make effective use of them, these skills should be implemented in a series of progressions – hence the term Skill Progressions. Here are eight reasons why.

1. Skill Progressions allow a diver to learn a solid base of fundamentals such as front jumps, line-ups, somersault kick-out, etc.
2. Skill Progressions break down dives into smaller more easily managed parts, or aspects of a dive.
3. Each broken down skill that is part of a dive is easier to learn, thus increasing the chance that it will be learned correctly.
4. Each skill can be practiced independently. If a diver is having problems with a particular part of a dive (entry, kick-out, take-off) they can spend time working on that part without effecting other parts of the dive.
5. Progressing from one skill to the next allows a skill to be added that has been perfected.
6. Skill Progressions allow the coach to evaluate each skill as it is added to a dive.
7. Skill Progressions allow a diver to progress safely from an easier dive to a more difficult dive.
8. Learning a dive without proper progression can lead to bad habits that often compromise a divers' safety.

Sudbury Swim & Tennis is excited about offering diving instruction to club members from 5-17 years old. Please complete a release form before taking lessons this summer. Thank you!