

## 1. Why are instructors so different from each other in style and experience?

The instructor teaching your class may be an experienced Mentor, Assessor or Instructor Trainer. She may also be a newly trained instructor, working to develop her skills in preparation for certification. **Please feel free to provide your instructor with polite feedback** that will help her understand how the class felt for you. Instructors of all levels are interested in improving their skills and offering the best possible aqua fitness experience.

## 2. Why do instructors demonstrate only one or two moves and then stop moving?

Your instructor teaches from the deck so that you can clearly see the exercises being taught, while the instructor can clearly see how everyone in the class is moving. In the water, you are cooled and supported. The pool deck is hot, humid, wet and slippery. It is not appropriate for the instructor to participate in movement at a high level of intensity due to heat stress and fall risk.

## 3. Why do instructors demonstrate moves like ski or jacks using only one leg?

Ski and jack – as well as some other aqua fitness movements – involve taking both feet off the floor at the same time, to move the legs in, out, forward or backward. In the water, class participants are supported as they lift both feet off the floor. On deck, the instructor must lift their body against gravity, landing on a slippery cement floor. For safety, moves cued from the pool deck are adapted to reduce or eliminate jumping. This decreases impact on the instructor's joints and reduces fall risk.

## 4. Why does the instructor sometimes ask us to slow down and *anchor* our movements, eliminating bouncing? Isn't faster movement with jumping more intense?

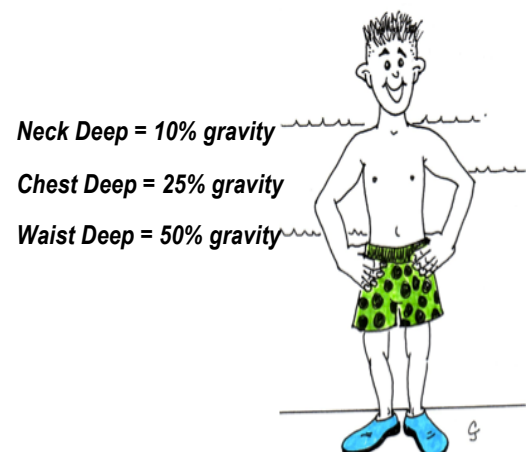
Slower, anchored exercises are very beneficial because they allow you to move your arms and legs through a full range of motion with a stable torso. In order to do this powerfully, your core must be engaged. It's like moving with weights on your arms and legs while working on a stability ball. Anchoring is usually done specifically for muscle strengthening of the core, shoulders and hips. Faster movements, with a choice of buoyancy options (light bouncing, propulsive, anchored (no bounce at all) or unweighted (water up to neck level) will be taught during the cardiovascular component of your aqua fitness class. You may still choose to eliminate bouncing while doing cardiovascular work (in shallow water), since this protects your joints while working your core.

### Depth of Immersion and relative body 'weight':

Depending on your depth of immersion, gravity is offset by buoyancy. Below is a useful guide regarding how your body 'weight' changes depending on depth of immersion. For example, a person that weights 70 kg (154 pounds) standing on land:

- Standing in water that is NECK DEEP = 10% gravity so 7 kg (15.4 pounds)
- Standing in water that is CHEST DEEP = 25% gravity so 23 kg (50.6 pounds)
- Standing in water that is WAIST DEEP = 50% gravity so 35 kg (77 pounds)

This is useful information for people with joint pain. In shallower water, bouncing or jumping off the floor results in substantial joint stress! To reduce joint loading, people with painful joints are advised to **anchor** (eliminating bouncing altogether), **unweight** (in neck deep water) or **suspend** (with a flotation belt).



### **5. Do instructors actually get in the water and try out the moves they teach?**

Yes! Instructors spend several hours of their training course in the pool, learning how to do aquatic exercises correctly. The exercises learned in their AQX training course are well established to be effective and appropriate for aquatic training. In addition, they are encouraged to attend other instructors' classes on a regular basis to continue to develop their understanding and skill.

### **6. Why don't instructors teach from the water so they are cooler and safer?**

When the instructor is teaching on deck, you can see the instructor's movements and hear all cues much better. The instructor can see what each participant is doing. Sometimes, an instructor will teach IN the pool – usually to a very small group of experienced participants. The instructor may choose to teach from the pool (rather than the deck) if she is pregnant, or has health issues restricting her from teaching on the hot, humid deck.

### **7. Why don't all instructors follow the same lesson plan?**

Muscles have memory. They like to do what they have done before, and they get good at movements they do frequently. If you participate in the same activity on a regular basis, you may note that your level of fitness reaches a plateau and improvement stops. The body needs to be challenged to move in new ways in order to continue improvement in strength, balance, coordination, and cardiovascular fitness. For functional fitness results, it is best to attend a variety of classes lead by different instructors.

### **8. Why do the moves need to be so complicated? I sometimes have trouble following!**

Challenging movement patterns require complex thinking. If things are 'routine' your mind does not have to exercise in order to learn new sequences. Coordination is an important component of fitness – especially as we age. If you are getting lost, try sculling (treading water) with your arms while you figure out the legs, and then add the arm actions. It's also important to relax, see the humour in your situation, and 'go with the flow'. Have fun!

### **9. How can one set of exercises be appropriate for all the different fitness levels, ages, and body types in an aqua fitness class?**

Your instructor will teach and remind you each class how to modify aquatic exercise intensity. By changing your hand shape (slice, fist, and flat hand), lever length, speed and range of motion, you can dramatically alter workload. When you maintain focus on your alignment, and work to achieve 'comfortable fatigue' using these choices, you will have the perfect tailor-made workout for your body!

### **10. Why does the instructor ask us not to talk during class? We are there for a good time! It is our class. We should be able to do what we want to do.**

Your instructor appreciates your need for socialization. However, to maintain awareness of your posture, alignment and exercise technique, you need INTERNAL focus on your body. Also, when you chat, others around you (who are trying to maintain focus), will have difficulty hearing the instructor. It isn't appropriate to chat during a movie or other gathering where people are attending to a speaker. It's even less appropriate to distract yourself, the instructor or other participants when movement and exertion are involved. When you devote your full attention to the instructor and your movements, you will get the MOST from your aqua fitness experience, and so will everyone else in the class. There is lots of time in the change room, as well as before or after class, to have a conversation with your friends. It is not appropriate to do so during the class.

### 11. Why does the instructor ask me to bring water to class?

Rehydration is crucial during vertical aquatic exercise. Exercising while standing vertically in the pool, causes your kidneys to work overtime because of fluid shift from your legs and feet toward your chest. As you move vigorously, you are also losing fluid due to breathing and sweating. Sip on water during the class, and have a big drink of water after every aquatic workout. Signs of dehydration include: dry eyes, fatigue, headaches, feeling light-headed, dark urine and muscle cramping.

### 12. What are the benefits of aquatic exercise compared to exercise on land?

Research tells us that exercise on land and in the pool are both beneficial. Some key differences with aquatic exercise are described below using the acronym: **C.A.B.**

**Challenging:** Core strength, balance, coordination – all components of fitness can be effectively trained in the pool. In the pool, balance, core strength, the respiratory muscles and heart experience unique training benefits different from land-based exercise. In the pool, cardiovascular conditioning and muscular strengthening exercises often happen simultaneously. Muscles can be worked in unique ways because any direction you move is resisted.

**Adaptable:** Aquatic resistance is easily altered to suit to a wide variety of needs, from Olympic athletes to weekend warriors, average people, and people in rehabilitation for health issues. Aquatic resistance, water depth, movement techniques and exercise intensity can be adjusted for a customized workout. You can choose the class and the pace within a workout that suits your specific needs on a given day!

**Buoyant:** Working vertically in water unloads your feet, knees, hips back and arms, allowing you to move freely. Many people who could not run on land can run in the pool, effectively training their cardiovascular system. Both buoyancy and hydrostatic pressure help circulation, allowing your heart to work more efficiently. Your heart will beat slower during aqua fitness than it would for an equivalent workload on land – yet your training results can be the same.

### 13. Why do some instructors use equipment when others don't?

A good aqua fitness program can be challenging and effective without any added equipment. Webbed gloves, resistance wands and buoyant dumbbells can be appropriate for participants whose fitness levels require additional challenge. However, this level of strength and fitness rarely applies to an entire group of participants. It is difficult for most people to stabilize their shoulder blades when working with hand-held equipment due to lack of strength and inadequate body awareness. When the shoulder blades are not properly stabilized, injury to the arms, neck and / or shoulders can result. In addition, instructors require specific training to be able to coach safe technique for participants using equipment. Hand held equipment is often a better fit in aquatic personal training sessions, where close supervision and the specific needs of one individual can be addressed.

#### Reference:

- AQX Aqua Fitness Leadership Training Manual, author Connie Jasinskis, M.Sc.
- City of Kitchener aqua fitness participant handout