

Synchronized Swimming

ELEMENTARY - CURRICULAR 2025

- Consult [Disability-Centred Safety](#) if your groups of students include students with disabilities.
- For Class A pools.
- Consult [Risk Management](#).
- The safety standards for this activity must be presented to the activity provider prior to the activity taking place. The activity provider must meet the minimum requirements listed in the safety standards. For more information on planning trips using outside providers, consult [Outside Activity Providers](#).
- All pools are governed by the [Ontario Public Pool Regulation 565](#). Sections of this regulation have been highlighted, as they are of the utmost importance for the safety of students as they participate in swimming programs.
- Consult [Outdoor Education \(Swimming - Instructional\)](#) if the activity occurs in a lake or pond.
- Consult [Swimming \(Recreational\)](#) for a definition of Recreational time and safety standards for recreational swimming if, during an instructional synchronized swimming session, the focus moves from instructional to recreational.

Equipment

- Determine that all equipment is safe (for example, no sharp corners, cracks, or splinters) and all assistive devices (e.g., a walker) are in good working condition and properly adjusted for the height and mobility needs of the student prior to participation.

- Must have accessibility to standard safety equipment as stated in [Ontario Public Pools Regulation 565](#).
- A correctly fitting, properly secured/fastened and Canadian approved personal flotation device (PFD) or lifejacket must be worn at all times on the deck and in the water by students who do not successfully complete the In-Water Swim Assessment or do not have a Bronze Star certification or higher. Refer to [In-Water Swim Assessment](#) within the Special Rules/Instructions section.
- The electrical equipment (for example, MP3 players) must be properly grounded.

Refer to the [First Aid](#) section for first aid equipment requirements.

Clothing/Footwear/Jewellery

- Appropriate swimwear must be worn.
- Follow the rules of the pool for wearing jewellery.
- When long hair poses a safety risk it must be secured. Devices (for example, hair pins, elastics and barrettes) used to tie back long hair must not present a safety concern.
- Students must not participate when the length of fingernails poses a safety risk to themselves or others.

Facilities

-Use Class A pools or pools privately owned and operated by an educational institution.

-Apartment, backyard, club, condominium, campground, or hotel pools must not be used.

- Determine that all facilities are safe and accessible for the students participating. Students must be encouraged to report facility problems to the teacher.
- Pool deck must be kept clear of obstacles and excess water.

Special Rules/Instructions

- Be aware of students whose medical condition (for example, asthma, anaphylaxis, casts, previous concussion, orthopaedic device) may affect participation. Consult [Medical Conditions](#).

School Board Policies and Procedures

- Prior to participation, the Teacher must reference and apply their school board's policy on equity and inclusion as it affects student participation and makes appropriate accommodations/modifications to provide a safe learning environment. Consult the Intent subsection within the [About section](#).
- Students must not participate in the activity until they receive information on concussion prevention specific to the activity, inherent risks of the activity (for example, outline possible risks and ways to minimize the risks), and procedures and rules for safe play. Students must receive instruction on the importance of reporting symptoms related to a suspected concussion.
- Refer to school board policies and procedures (i.e., transportation, excursion/field trip) for parent/guardian communication and permission (for example, the location of an off-site activity, description of the activity and physical environment, means of transportation, inherent risks of the activity, supervision).

Teacher Awareness/Preparation

- Activities must be modified according to the age, ability level, language, and experience of students, number of participants, and the facility available.
- Previous training, fitness level, and the length of time and intensity of physical activity must be taken into consideration.
- Activities must be based on skills that are taught.
- Skills must be taught in proper progression.
- A warm-up and cool-down must be included.
- The activity may include organized games (for example, relay activities, tag games which incorporate skills) but cannot include a recreational/free swim.

- Teachers and all individuals who assist the Teacher with the activity must be aware of the possibility of pressuring Students. Students must be informed not to coerce a reluctant student into participating in any component of the activity with which they display or vocalize reluctance.
- When a student displays or vocalizes reluctance about participation, at any time, before or during any component of the activity, they must be provided with alternative ways to participate in the activity (for example, permit Students to select a role within the activity, remain at or return to a different component of the activity, break down new experiences/ components into smaller steps, be introduced to a new component with which they are comfortable).
- Adequate liquid replacement (personal water bottles, water fountains) must be accessible for students before, during, and after physical activity to prevent dehydration.
- Prior to participation in the activity, an In-Water Swim Assessment of students' swim ability must be completed (refer to the [In-Water Swim Assessment](#)).

In-Water Swim Assessment

- Students must successfully complete the following in-water swim assessment in its entirety, in sequence, and without any aids or stops to be permitted to swim without a PFD/lifejacket:
 - Swim 50m (164') continuously any stroke
 - Tread water for 1 minute
- In lieu of completing the In-Water Swim Assessment Students must provide proof of Bronze Star certification or higher.
- If the public aquatic facility has a swimming competency test (i.e. an alternative to the In-Water Swim Assessment) schools must adhere to the components of this in-water swim assessment as well as those of the facility.

- The In-Water Swim Assessment must be administered by a Certified Aquatic Instructor or a Certified Lifeguard. If the Aquatic Instructor does not hold a Lifeguard certificate or an assistant Lifeguard certificate, a Certified Lifeguard must also be on deck during the In-Water Swim Assessment.
- The In-Water Swim Assessment must be completed within the school year in which the activity is taking place.
- Results of the In-Water Swim Assessment must be documented and communicated as per school board policy (for example, to the Student, Teacher, Principal, Parents/Guardians, Trip Guide(s), Lifeguards, Aquatic Instructor, and Outside Provider [if applicable]).
- Students who do not successfully complete the In-Water Swim Assessment or who do not have a Bronze Star certification or higher must be identified and wear a correctly fitting, properly secured/fastened, and Canadian approved PFD or lifejacket at all times on deck and in the water, or must not participate in the activity.

Safety Rules and Emergency Procedures

- Prior to participation, students must be familiar with safety rules and emergency procedures.
- Students must adhere to the following rules:
 - No running or pushing on deck
 - No chewing gum
 - No food in pool area
 - Stay clear of diving area
 - No diving off deck into water less than 2.8m (9') in depth
 - No street shoes on deck

- Students must ask permission to leave pool/swimming area
- Showers must be taken before entering the pool.
- After initial instruction, students who must wear a PFD/lifejacket must demonstrate the ability to select a correctly fitting PFD/lifejacket and to properly secure/fasten it.
- Teachers must be knowledgeable of the school board's procedures for emergency, accident or injury in a pool.

Supervision

- All activities must be supervised.
- The type of supervision must be commensurate with the inherent risk of the activity. The level of risk is related to the number of participants, the skill level of the participants, the type of equipment used, and environmental conditions.
- Direct Supervision is required during the safety and initial skill instruction.
- On-Site Supervision is required by the Teacher when an Aquatic Instructor(s) is providing safety and initial skill instruction, and monitoring.
- On-Site Supervision is required for the duration of all other components of the activity (e.g., equipment setup and take down, warm-ups/cool downs, application of the skills and games).
- A Teacher/Monitor must accompany pupils to the pool.
- The Teacher must be located on the deck or in the pool.
- Close and frequent monitoring of change rooms must take place, but not by the Lifeguard.
- A Volunteer, under the direction of a Teacher, can monitor students during physical education activities. Refer to your school board's policy on Volunteers assisting with students' physical activities.

- Responsibilities must be clearly outlined for additional Teachers and Volunteers who are monitoring the activity.
- Where a Qualified Instructor is used and the Teacher is not directly with the Qualified Instructor, the Qualified Instructor must provide safety and initial skill instruction, and monitoring for the safe application of skills and student behaviour for the duration of the activity.

Supervision Ratios for Instructional Time

- There must be a minimum of 2 Certified Aquatic Instructors/Certified Aquatic Coaches on deck or in the pool.
- Supervision ratio is 2 Certified Aquatic Instructors/Certified Aquatic Coaches per 1-25 students (grades 1-3), per 1-35 students (grades 4-8) with both Instructors also certified as Lifeguards or one Lifeguard and one Assistant Lifeguard.
- In situations where there are 26-50 students (grades 1-3) or 36-70 students (grades 4-8) an additional Certified Aquatic Instructor/Certified Aquatic Coaches is required.
- If Assistant Lifeguards are used, the number of Assistant Lifeguards on deck may never exceed the number of Lifeguards.

Refer to the definition of **Instructional Time**.

Qualifications

Aquatic Instructor Qualifications

- An Aquatic Instructor must possess both an Aquatic Instructor certificate and a Lifeguard/Assistant Lifeguard certificate that are dated not more than two years prior to the date on which they are required to instruct and lifeguard. If the Aquatic Instructor does not hold a Lifeguard certificate or an Assistant Lifeguard certificate, a certified Lifeguard must also be on deck during the aquatic instruction.
- Aquatic Instructor Certificates:
 - Lifesaving Society - Instructor Certificate

- YMCA - Instructor Certificate
- Ontario Teachers Aquatic Standard (OTAS) - for pool situations only
- Verified copies of certification must be available in the pool area.

Lifeguard and Assistant Lifeguard Qualifications

- A Lifeguard/Assistant Lifeguard must be 16 years of age or older and possess a current (the date on the certificate must not be older than two years) Lifeguard/Assistant Lifeguard certificate issued by one of the following organizations:
 - Lifeguard Certificates:
 - Lifesaving Society - National Lifeguard - Pool
 - Equivalent certificate approved by Minister of Health and Long Term Care
 - Assistant Lifeguard Certificates for Pools:
 - Lifesaving Society - Bronze Cross
 - Equivalent certificate approved by Minister of Health and Long Term Care
- A student may not act as a Lifeguard/Assistant Lifeguard if they are participating in the activity.
- Verified copies of certification must be available in the pool area.

First Aid

- A fully stocked first aid kit must be readily accessible. (Consult [Sample First Aid Kit](#))
- A working communication device (for example, cell phone) must be accessible.
- At least one Aquatic Instructor, Lifeguard, or Assistant lifeguard must have a minimum of a current (not more than three years prior to the day on which the holder is on duty) first aid certificate (standard or higher) issued by one of the following agencies: St. John Ambulance; Canadian Red Cross; Lifesaving Society; Canadian Ski Patrol; or an organization whose certificate is deemed equivalent by the medical officer of health in the local health unit.

- Follow the school's first aid emergency response ((consult [First Aid Plan and First Aid Emergency Response](#)) and the school board's concussion protocol (consult [Concussions](#))).
- An emergency action plan and response to deal with evacuations and lockdowns, including specific direction for participants with accessibility needs, must be followed and communicated to all students.☒

Definitions

- **In-charge Person:**

- Some activities refer to an "In-Charge" person. While the teacher is in-charge and responsible for the overall safety and well-being of students under their care, sometimes there are other personnel who must be identified as "In-Charge" related to specific situations (for example, a pool lifeguard). In activities where an "In-Charge" person is designated, that person, in consultation with the teacher, must make final decisions regarding safety of the students

- **Instructional Time:**

- Time during which there is formal instruction and/or instructor led activities. Examples of instructional time are lessons, events, practice, and games.

- **Lifejacket:**

- Canadian-approved lifejackets are designed to turn an unconscious or incapacitated person face-up in the water. Lifejackets are available with varying amounts of flotation and turning ability. Canadian approved Lifejackets are stamped or labelled indicating that they are approved by Transport Canada, the Canadian Coast Guard or the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

- **Monitor:**

- An individual who assists the Teacher with a group of students, (e.g., Volunteer, Qualified Instructor) and has a responsibility to monitor student behaviors for the duration of the activity.

- **Monitoring:**

- The role of monitoring is to observe, identify, act, and report:
 - Observe: Observe with attention to detail the actions of the students.
 - Identify: Identify the student and the unsafe behaviour.
 - Act: Take appropriate actions to safeguard students and others (e.g., stop the activity).
 - Report: Provide the name of the student and the unsafe behaviour to the teacher for management and direction.

- **Outside Activity Provider:**

- A commercial company, volunteer organization, or individual, not associated with the school board, who possess the required qualifications to provide safety and initial skill instruction, and monitoring for the duration of an activity.

- **Personal Flotation Device (P.F.D.):**

- Canadian-approved P.F.D.'s are designed for use in recreational boating and are generally smaller, less bulky and more comfortable than lifejackets. They may have less flotation than lifejackets and may have no or little self-turning ability (the ability to turn an unconscious or incapacitated person face-up in the water). Canadian approved P.F.D.'s are stamped or labelled indicating that they are approved by Transport Canada, the Canadian Coast Guard or the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

- **Qualified Instructor:**

- An individual who provides safety and skill instruction, and monitoring for an activity, and possesses the required qualifications (e.g., experience, certifications). This role could be fulfilled by a teacher, volunteer, or an employee of an outside provider. An instructor does not have the authority to supervise.

- **Recreational Time:**

- Time during which there is no formal instruction or instructor led activities.

- **Supervision:**

- The vigilant overseeing of an activity for management or direction. Activities, facilities, and equipment have inherent risks, but the more effectively they are supervised, the safer they become.
- The Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education includes three Types of supervision, Direct Supervision, On-Site Supervision, and In-the-Area Supervision. These types of supervision take into consideration the level of risk, which is related to the number of participants, the skill level of the participants, the type of equipment used, the environmental conditions, the age, and developmental stage.
- The three types of supervision described are not hierarchical but represent the type of supervision that activities require and the type of supervision that is inherently possible.
- Some activities in OPASSE transition from one type of supervision to another type of supervision (e.g., Direct Supervision to On-Site Supervision OR On-Site Supervision to In-the-Area Supervision).

- **Teacher:**

- A person with a current certification from the Ontario College of Teachers and under contract by the school/school board (i.e., teacher, vice-principal, principal). This person is legally responsible for the students and has the authority and responsibility to supervise.

- **Types of Supervision:**

- **Direct Supervision:**

- Direct Supervision requires that the Teacher is physically present at the activity, providing visual and verbal oversight for management and direction of both, the activity and student safety.

- Provisos:

- No other activity can occur when part of the activity or the entire activity is under Direct Supervision when there is only one Teacher supervising.

- The Supervision section of the relevant activity safety standards page in the Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education describes when parts of an activity are under Direct Supervision.
 - Where a Qualified Instructor(s) is providing the safety and initial skill instruction and monitoring for one activity and requires the Teacher to be present at that activity for management and direction.
 - An activity may be under Direct Supervision:
 - During the entire duration of the activity;
 - During the set up and take down of equipment; .
 - During the safety and initial skill instruction;
 - During the performance/practice of the activity skill; and
 - When the activities transition from Direct Supervision to On-Site Supervision.
- **In-the-Area Supervision:**
 - The Teacher is located in proximity to a combination of locations where the student activities take place, is circulating, and is accessible for providing management and direction of the physical activity and student safety.
 - **Provisos:**
 - The Teacher is circulating between the activities occurring at separate locations, and is readily accessible, or the location of the Teacher is communicated to the student.
 - Where a Qualified Instructor(s) is providing the safety and skill and instruction and is monitoring at a combination of locations, the Teacher is located in proximity to where the student activities take place, is circulating between the activity locations, and is accessible for management and direction.
 - Students may be out of sight for periods of time.

- An activity or a component of the activity is under In-the-Area Supervision:
 - Where the same activity is located in separate locations (e.g., Fitness activities);
 - Where two or more activities under In-the-Area Supervision occur in separate locations (e.g., Badminton, Table Tennis, Handball (Wall));
 - Where the skill application of the activity takes place at a separate location from the teacher (e.g., Cross Country Running, Skiing (Alpine), Cycling, hiking on trails);
 - When the activities occur in double or triple gymnasiums; and
 - Where more than one Qualified Instructor is providing activities at a combination of locations.

- **On-Site Supervision:**

- The Teacher is present at one location where the student activity takes place (e.g., gymnasium, sports field, climbing wall at an Outside Activity Provider's facility, campsite) and is accessible for providing management and direction of the physical activity and student safety.
 - Provisos:
 - Where more than one activity occurs in one location, the Teacher is circulating between the activities and is accessible for management and direction.
 - Momentary presence in adjoining rooms (e.g., equipment room, outdoor storage shed, boathouse, staff tent) is considered to be On-Site Supervision.
 - Where a Qualified Instructor(s) is providing the safety and initial skill instruction and monitoring for an activity or a combination of activities at one location and the Teacher is present and is circulating and accessible for management and direction.

- An activity may be under On-Site Supervision:
 - During the entire duration of the activity;
 - During the safety and initial skill instruction;
 - With activities using multiple stations while the Teacher is circulating;
 - When combining two or more activities at one location while the Teacher is circulating; and
 - When activities transition from On-Site Supervision to In-the-Area Supervision.

- **Volunteer:**

- A responsible adult (e.g., Educational Assistants, Retired Teachers, Co-op Students, Parents/Guardians, Teacher Candidates) approved by the Principal/Designate who is under the direction of a Teacher and has been instructed on their monitoring responsibilities. Refer to your school board's policy on volunteers assisting with student's physical activities.

Last Published

Fri, 03/27/26 11:34 am