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Safe Diving Principles

Posted in [Issues In Safety & Rescue](#) by [Gerald M. Dworkin](#)

by Gerald M. Dworkin



The following information is reprinted from an April 1995 brochure published by the National Swimming Pool Foundation in cooperation with the National Spa and Pool Institute and the National Safety Council.

Think Ahead

Once you've started your dive, you don't have time to think. Know the depth of the water. Plan your dive path. Never dive where you don't know the water depth or where there may be hidden obstructions.

Steer Up

When you dive down, you must be ready to steer up. As you enter the water, your arms must be extended over your head, hands flat and aiming up. Hold your head up and arch your back. This way, your whole body helps you steer up, away from the bottom. Plan a shallow dive, immediately steering up. Don't try the straight vertical-entry dives you see in competition. These dives take a long time to slow down and must be done only after careful training and in pools designed for competitive diving.

Head and Hands Up

Your extended arms and hands not only help you to steer up to the surface, they can also protect your head. If a diver's head hits bottom, major injury to neck and spine can result. So always remember, head and hands up!

Control Your Dive

Sometimes divers lose control through improper use of hands and arms. Practice holding your arms extended, hands flat and tipped up. Like learning to swim or ride a bicycle, you have to learn to make the right moves automatically. Carefully rehearse the proper diving technique before you dive.

Do's and Don'ts of Diving

- Do know the water depth before you dive.
- Do plan your dive path.
- Do be sure there are no submerged obstacles or surface objects.

- Do hold your head up, arms up, and steer up with your hands.
- Do keep arms extended and head and hands up during the dive.
- Do practice carefully before you dive in
- Do swim and dive with a “buddy”
- Do test the diving board for its spring before using
- Do remember that when you dive down, you must steer up
- Do keep your dives simple
- Don’t dive into an aboveground pool or into the shallow end of a pool. Nine of ten diving injuries occur in six feet of water or less.
- Don’t dive off the side of a diving board – dive straight ahead
- Don’t dive from the edge across the narrow part of a pool without having at least 25 feet of clear dive path in front of you.
- Don’t run and dive. That can give you the same impact as a dive from a board
- Don’t do a back dive
- Don’t try fancy dives or dives with a straight vertical entry
- Don’t dive at or through objects such as innertubes
- Don’t put diving equipment on a pool that wasn’t designed for it
- Don’t dive from retaining walls, ladders, slides or other pool equipment
- Don’t dive from rooftops, balconies, ledges or fences
- Don’t dive from racing starting blocks without direct supervision and the training of a qualified coach
- Don’t dive into unfamiliar bodies of water. Remember, 3 out of 4 diving accidents happen in natural bodies of water like lakes and rivers
- Don’t swim or dive alone
- Don’t drink and dive. The slowing effects of alcohol or drugs on reaction times can be extremely dangerous in diving

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