



Teaching Head First Entries and Racing Start Safety

Before You Teach, Be Sure:

1. Swimmers can jump feet first into deep water, surface, turn around, level off and swim 10 feet.
2. Swimmers can demonstrate correct hand, arm and head position. Practice a tight streamline on dryland.
3. Swimmers can hold their arms in a tight streamline on a forceful push and glide underwater.
4. You and the swimmers know the water depth. USA Swimming requires that you teach in 6 foot depth.
5. Starting blocks are tightly secured to the pool deck and meet size and height regulations.

When You Teach:

1. Instruct swimmers in the step by step progression BEFORE using the starting blocks.
 - a. Sitting
 - b. Kneeling
 - c. Compact
 - d. Stride
 - e. Shallow Angle Dive
2. Make sure swimmers can enter water with control at each step before moving to the next step.
3. Always have swimmers hold arms fully extended overhead during entry.
4. Do not do head-first entries over stationary objects like poles, lane lines or kickboards. (Note: Coaches with additional training might use advanced techniques with experienced swimmers, by having them practice over a soft item, such as a noodle, in water at least 12 feet deep.)

Do You Know?

1. Swimmers of all ages can adjust the depth of their entry when they are aware of the water depth.
2. "Going off the side" is NOT safer. Swimmers who cannot control their depth from the starting blocks also cannot control their depth from the pool deck. They go just as deep.

Teach Your Swimmers the "Do's and Do Not's":

DO:

1. Use starting blocks only during controlled swim practice, instruction, supervised warm-up or competition.
2. Know the water depth and location of slopes. Use feet first entry if unsure
3. Use feet first entry in warm-up and always enter at the starting end of the pool.
4. Look before entering the pool.
5. Enter the water only with permission of marshal at a meet or the coach at practice.
6. Use a shallow angle entry and hold arms fully extended overhead.

DO NOT:

1. Start a water entry until the preceding swimmer has come to the surface and moved away from the entry area.
2. Do a head first entry into cloudy water
3. Fool around on the starting blocks or the pool edge
4. Attempt to abort a poor start or a false start by somersaulting, pulling up quickly or rolling to the side
5. Attempt a somersault or flip entry into a competition pool
6. Enter head first with the arms at the side