

# A WALK ON THE WETSIDE: TEACHING 'FLOTATION'

A closer look at exploring and discovering 'buoyancy' using tried and tested practices to develop and improve flotation and rotation skills

## PART ONE



Spoiler Alert

**SUBCUTANEOUS BODY FAT FLOATS**...everything else that is 'you', more or less **SINKS** – especially 'muscle' legs!!

**AIRBAGS** are often used to give extra **BUOYANCY** to canoes and kayaks mainly for when their occupants are not on board.

The **LUNGS** of a 6-year-old child can hold about 2 LITRES of AIR....

## TRIED, TRUSTED AND TESTED PRACTICES

**CARDS ON THE TABLE** from the start:

- I'm not a fan of **STATIC** practices in Learn to Swim. You get a much more useful 'feel' for what's going on, when you are **ON THE MOVE**; balancing, rolling, adjusting, pulling, sweeping and pushing, changing direction etc[1].
- Buoyancy aids can be used to offer a taste of things to come [2] but they have limitations. [3] There are plenty of engaging, challenging and active practices for children to explore and discover fundamental flotation skills on front and back *without* the use of buoyancy aids.

**Previously** pupils will have learned – and are confident and comfortable - to hold their breath and submerge their heads; bob rhythmically and sink head and shoulders beneath the surface.

**NOW**...When ready.... Try this amazing **WHOLE BODY SUBMERSION** practice.[4]

**Depth of water ideally is 'chest height' [5]**

**1. "Take a deep breath and try to sit on the bottom of the pool" ('Seat drop')**



First attempts often don't last long- the swimmer bobs right back up to the surface!!! But there's a lot of learning going on....

- Does it matter how big a breath is taken?
- Does it make a difference if you start with both hands held high above your head?
- Does it make a difference if you keep your hands high above your head until you have sunk as far as you can?
- Does it help to start with a small jump upwards, hands stretched high?
- Does it make a difference if you make a small tight tucked shape as you 'sit' or a wide flat one? (Legs and arms out wide)

**Teacher/observer perspective; (for you to know and for your pupils to discover- but maybe not a topic for conversation?): Does body 'type' [6] or composition make a difference?**

Can you connect this practice with push and glides...? Look out for my answer in a later piece.

**There is a progression and extension activity for this in part two.**

## **2. Introduce 'recovery' from a floating position to standing upright again.**

This is often achieved with the use of woggles or other buoyancy support from front and back layout body positions.

I teach, "sweep your hands/arms down or up" depending on your layout. Try " Knees Up – Head Up - Stand Up".

Colleagues use 'Nose to Toes" from a back layout; "Sit up as fast as you can"

### **Notes:**

[1]] This idea is explored further in [Learning to Ride your bike..](#)

[2] [3] [4 Covered on cards which are part [of the Small Steps to Successful Swimming cards](#).

[5] The **buoyant force** on a submerged object is equal to the weight of the liquid displaced by the object. When you get into your overfull bath. Check out Archimedes' Eureka moment. If like me you like explanations a child will understand and you can put up with the ads., try <https://www.science-sparks.com/what-is-the-archimedes-principle/>

[6] Ectomorph / mesomorph / endomorph.

Remember, body fat floats .So too do airbags – and we have two big ones on board !

<https://goinghorizontal.org/float-like-a-butterfly-sink-like-a-brick/>

