

# Swim Instructor interview questions

careertips.com.au: common questions and what they're really testing

## What to expect

Swim Instructor interviews focus on how you teach and manage safety in a live pool environment, since assessors can't always watch you in the water during the interview itself. Expect a mix of questions about your teaching process, how you handle behaviour and safety issues, and how you'd manage a difficult parent or student situation.

- **Process:** Questions about how you plan, run and adapt a lesson, including assessing skill level and structuring a class.
- **Behavioural:** Questions asking for a real example from past teaching or coaching, using specific situations you've handled.
- **Scenario/safety:** Hypothetical situations testing judgement around pool safety, supervision and emergency response.
- **Client-facing:** Questions about communicating with parents, carers or students about progress, concerns or difficult feedback.

Most swim school interviews start with a short chat about your qualifications and experience, move into scenario and behavioural questions about teaching and safety, and often finish with a practical component: a poolside demonstration, a mock lesson with a volunteer 'student', or a walkthrough of how you'd handle a specific age group or ability level.

## 1. Walk me through how you'd plan and run a lesson for a group of mixed-ability beginners.

### Why they ask

Tests whether you can structure a lesson that keeps every student engaged and progressing, not just the strongest swimmers.

### How to structure your answer

Walk through the process step by step: how you'd assess the group at the start, how you'd group or differentiate activities, how you'd sequence skills within the session, and how you'd check progress before the next lesson.

### Example answer

*"I'd start with a quick water-confidence check, watching who's happy submerging their face and who's holding the wall. I'd group students loosely by comfort level within the same lesson, giving the more confident ones extension drills with a kickboard while I work one-on-one with the hesitant ones on breath control. Toward the end I'd bring everyone together for a shared activity so it still feels like one group lesson, and I'd jot quick notes on each student straight after so next week's plan builds on today's session."*

## 2. Tell me about a time you had to adapt your teaching approach for a student who wasn't progressing.

### Why they ask

Behavioural question checking your ability to read individual learning styles and adjust rather than repeating the same method.

### How to structure your answer

Use STAR: describe the situation, the specific task or goal, the action you took to change your approach, and the result for the student.

### Example answer

*"I had a seven-year-old who was anxious about putting his ears underwater and had stalled on that skill for a few weeks despite standard cues. I switched from verbal instruction to letting him copy me doing the skill first on dry land, then paired him with a slightly older student he looked up to for peer demonstration in the water. Within two lessons he was submerging fully and by the end of term he'd moved up to the next level."*

### **3. A student starts coughing and looks distressed mid-lesson while you're teaching a group of six. What do you do?**

#### **Why they ask**

Direct safety scenario testing whether you can supervise a full group while responding to one student in trouble, which is core to the role.

#### **How to structure your answer**

Talk through your judgement under pressure: immediate priority, how you keep the rest of the group safe while dealing with the incident, and when you'd escalate to a lifeguard or supervisor.

#### **Example answer**

*"My first move is to get to that student and get their head above water, moving them to the wall or shallow end if needed. I'd instruct the rest of the group to hold the wall or float quietly while I check the student's breathing and colour. If it's more than a minor cough clearing, I'd signal the lifeguard on duty rather than trying to manage it alone, and I'd document what happened afterwards for the centre's incident records."*

### **4. How do you handle a parent who's frustrated that their child hasn't moved up a level yet?**

#### **Why they ask**

Client-facing question checking your communication skills and how you handle feedback conversations that could otherwise damage the centre's relationship with the family.

#### **How to structure your answer**

Describe your approach to the conversation: how you'd listen first, what evidence you'd bring, and how you'd frame the path forward.

#### **Example answer**

*"I'd listen to their concern fully before responding, then walk them through the specific skills their child still needs to consolidate, using notes from recent lessons rather than a vague impression. I'd point out what's improved so it doesn't sound like no progress at all, and agree on one or two things we'll both focus on, so the parent leaves with a clear next step rather than just a no."*

### **5. How do you keep a group of young children engaged and safe when some are easily distracted?**

#### **Why they ask**

Classroom and behaviour management is a core specialist skill for this role, especially with school-age groups.

#### **How to structure your answer**

Describe your general approach to managing group behaviour in the water, including how you set expectations and redirect attention without losing safety oversight.

#### **Example answer**

*"I set clear, simple rules at the start of term, like staying on the wall until I say go, and I keep instructions short so attention doesn't drift. I use games and short bursts of activity rather than long explanations, and I position myself so I can see the whole group at all times, even when I'm giving one-on-one correction. If a student keeps disrupting the lesson, I'll give them a specific job, like counting laps for a partner, to redirect their energy without pulling my attention off the rest of the*

group.”

## **6. What qualifications and certifications do you currently hold, and are they up to date?**

### **Why they ask**

Direct check on compliance with Austswim or Swim Australia accreditation and first aid requirements, which most centres cannot roster you without.

### **How to structure your answer**

Give a straightforward factual answer: list your current qualifications, their status, and any renewal dates coming up.

### **Example answer**

*“I hold my Austswim Teacher of Swimming and Water Safety qualification and a current Provide First Aid and CPR certificate, both up to date. I also have a valid Working with Children Check for this state. I keep track of renewal dates well ahead of expiry so there's never a gap in my ability to be rostered on.”*