

## Dual Depth Tool Kit

By Ashley Bishop

Pools come in a variety of depths, shapes and sizes. They may slope gradually from one end to the other or they may have an aggressive drop-off. They may be shallow on the far ends and deep in the center, or vice versa. Regardless of the layout, they are filled with endless opportunities for our aquatic fitness classes.

Our participants also come with a variety of water depth and impact intensity preferences. Trying to accommodate everyone can be a challenge. Rather than limiting our class sizes or our programming schedule, why not maximize our teaching power and offer classes that work for both depths, deep water and shallow simultaneously?

The first time I heard of this glorious idea was when attending my AEA Aquatic Fitness Professional Practical Course with AEA Aquatic Training Specialist, Mark Grevelding. I was extremely intrigued by this notion and decided to apply the same type of format in my local pool. My pool was outdoors with about 50 percent of the space ideal for deep-water classes, a steep slope, and a very narrow segment suitable for shallow-water training before it finished off at three feet. At best, we could fit 8-10 people in a shallow-water class, and about 15-18 for a deep-water class. Both groups of participants wanted a 9:30am class and we weren't sure which class to put on the schedule. I pitched the dual depth idea to my fitness director and off we went!

The class was launched in January and it took off instantly. We had our core group of deep-water participants that would come out rain or shine, we had a solid few that would bounce between the depths during class, and we had a great group of shallow-water participants that would attend during the warmer months only. This dual depth option allowed us to maintain consistency in our programming and offer a class for nearly every type of participant all year long.

Here's the steps we used to create a fun, effective and dual depth friendly program!

- 1) Select the pool, the day and time for the class.
- 2) Ensure there are enough flotation belts for the maximum capacity of the deep end.

### Flotation Belts

AEA Standards & Guidelines recommend that deep-water exercise should be performed with flotation equipment attached to the trunk of the body (flotation belt or vest) or attached to the upper arms (flotation upper arm cuffs, not inflatable water wings). Selecting this type of equipment is the safest option, as it eliminates the potential for a participant to let go of the equipment, even if they are panicked or distracted.

Flotation equipment that requires the participant to hold on to or balance on the device (such as a noodles, kickboards, or hand buoys) can create a false sense of security and could lead to a potential water emergency. With proper progression and training, ankle cuffs may be an appropriate flotation option for some participants. The participant's swimming skills, core strength, form and personal comfort while exercising in deep water should all be considered when selecting equipment.

*NOTE: Flotation belts come in a wide range of design, which will help accommodate a variety of participant sizes, shapes and body composition. Check out AEA's eSource Guide to connect with vendors who support our association. The eSource Guide can be found under Articles & More at the AEA website.*

- 3) Name your class. You want the name to indicate that both depths can be utilized and also provide an idea of what the clients will expect from the format. For example: Dual Depth Cardio or Dual Depth Aqua. Titles such as these allow the instructor flexibility in class content creation. Other options could be a more specific programming option like Dual Depth Circuits or Dual Depth Intervals. Titles such as these are more limiting for the instructor as they are committed to what is on the schedule, however can serve well if there are multiple dual depth classes on the schedule each week.
- 4) Schedule a sampler event and invite all the facility's aquatic instructors to teach 10-15 minutes each. All members (and possibly guests if your facility is open to this option) are invited to attend as you can debut your format. Maybe you will get some land folks in the pool too!
- 5) Promote, post & prosper! Get the word out via facility newsletters and social media, attend other classes at your facility and talk up the new program. Invite the rest of the instructors to announce the new class when they are teaching and sub classes to spread the news and offer tastes of what's about to come.

### **Class Content**

The thought of teaching a dual depth class can be daunting. When first starting out, stick to the basics and get in the pool to test things out in both depths. Before you know it, you've created a lesson plan ready to debut! Here's some tips to get started:

Stick to the base moves. Most base moves work effectively in both shallow and deep-water classes:

- Jog/Knee Lifts
- Jumping Jacks (can offer opposition arms for deep water)
- Cross-Country Skis
- Kicks (Karate & Straight Leg)
- Core Twists
- Moguls/Front-Back Jumps
- Basic Arm Patterns

Create fun combinations and intervals by selecting two (or more) moves and deliver them in a choreography style that is most natural to you (freestyle, pyramid, patterned, add on, etc.)

Add variety to the combos with impact options for shallow-water and deep-water modifications simulating impact options. Not sure how to do that? Read chapter 9, Deep-Water Exercise in the new AEA Aquatic Fitness Professional Manual, Seventh Edition.

Add more variety with the five basic methods for adjusting the basic arm patterns (these can be found in the AEA Manual too!)

Always keep modifications, progressions and regressions in your back pocket. For example, when working on a jack combo: Ask the shallow end to take the jack to level II (shoulders submerged) or level III (suspended). Go over to the deep end and ask them to add a power tuck with each movement.

### **Programming Options**

Many aquatic fitness program options can work in both depths including interval, high intensity intervals (e.g. Tabata formats), circuit training and choreography-based classes. That being said, formats specifically created around a certain depth may not translate as effectively. For example, shallow water formats like Aqua Zumba® do not work in the deep end. A deep-water boot camp may need substantial modifications to be effective in the shallow end.

Unsure if your lesson plan works? Get in the pool and try it yourself! This not only allows you to be sure that what you are offering is effective but will also give you unique insight for coaching tips from deck – what the participants should be feeling, ways they can modify the movement to feel successful, and options to increase or decrease intensity.

### Content Examples

One of my favorite ways to teach dual depth classes is to alternate choreography combinations with interval training and resistance circuits. Below is a template suggestion to help you create your first dual depth lesson plan.

- **Warm Up** – Linear Teaching Style. Run through the dual depth approved base moves for about 32 counts each, progressing from the shorter lever moves to the longer lever moves. Add travel and change of directions for environmental awareness and to gradually increase the heart rate over the course of 5-8 minutes.
- **Choreography Block 1** – Add On Teaching Style. Select three to four base moves that transition safely from one to the other and work well in both depths
- **Interval Block 1** – Tabata Style. 20 seconds of work followed by 10 seconds of rest and repeated eight times. Select two different moves and perform four rounds of one, and then four rounds of the other.
- **Choreography Block 2** – Pyramid Teaching Style. Select three to four base moves that transition safely from one to the other and work well in both depths
- **Equipment Circuit**. 45 seconds of work followed by 15 second of rest and repeated four times. Choose two different exercises appropriate to your resistance equipment. Do two rounds with equipment, and two rounds without to maximize muscle balance. For example, perform shoulder abduction/adduction while jogging/flutter kicking in place. One round with buoyant hand bars, one round without and repeat a second time.
- **Interval Block 2** – 45 seconds of work followed by 15 seconds of rest and repeated four times. Select one base move and change the arm pattern each round.
- **Choreography Block 3** – Pure Patterned. Select a well-known and fun song, assign a move to each song part (verse, chorus, instrumental) and voila, you have a choreographed routine. Repeat these blocks as many times as needed to fill your class duration.
- **Cool-down**. Lower the heart rate with a dynamic cool-down and stretch for the last five to seven minutes of class time.

Here are a few of my simple combos for a little inspiration!

#### Add On Choreography Style

(All Water Tempo)

- Jumping Jacks (4x)
- Jacks w/ 1/4 Turn (4x)
- Jacks w/ Modified Breaststroke Arm (Thumbs Up/Shoulder Externally Rotated) Travelling Forward (4x)
- Jacks w/ Modified Reverse Breaststroke Arm (Thumbs Up/Shoulder Externally Rotated) Travelling Back (4x)

#### Pyramid Choreography Style

(All Water Tempo)

- Front & Back Kicks R
- Front & Back Kicks L
- Tuck Jumps Front & Back
- Jump Jacks

\*Sequence 16x each move, 8x each move, 4x each move, etc.

### **Pure Patterned Choreography – “Physical” by Olivia Newton John**

- Verse – All The Jacks (any type you like!)
- Chorus – Jog Forward 16 counts – Bunny Hop Back 16 counts (repeat twice)
- Instrumental – White Water Run/Sprint

#### **Need more inspiration? Check out a few of my favorite video resources:**

**aeawave.com** – DVDs for purchase  
Cardio Designs for Deep & Shallow by Monique Acton

**Fitmotivation.com** – Online video streaming subscription service (*Reach out to me for a coupon code!*)  
ShaDeep & ShaDeep Seniors  
Dual Depth Pyramids & Dual Aqua  
Aqua 2 For 1 & Cardio Designs

**Bagelfit.com** – Digital Video Downloads for Purchase & CEC Workshops

### **RESOURCES**

Aquatic Exercise Association. 2018. *Aquatic Fitness Professional Manual, Seventh Edition*. Champagne, IL: Human Kinetics.

Fitmotivation / Mark Grevelding - [www.fitmotivation.com](http://www.fitmotivation.com)

### **ATUHOR**

*Ashley Bishop, originally from Vancouver, BC is an Aquatic Training Specialist for AEA, a Zumba Jammer™ with Zumba® Fitness (Aqua Zumba® & Salsa), and a CE Provider for ACE, AFAA & AEA. Recently relocated to Las Vegas NV, Ashley is the Fitness Director for uforia studios and can be found most weekends sharing her passion for education and fitness with instructors across the continent. Ashley absolutely adores teaching, learning and sharing knowledge with others. Find Ashley at [www.bagelfit.com](http://www.bagelfit.com)*

