

All Hands on Deck

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No voice? Achy Body? No Problem! In this hands-on session, you will sharpen all of your Deck Teaching Skills and learn how to utilize different cueing techniques to lead your participants through a motivating and effective workout. You will fine tune your deck demonstration skills by incorporating a variety of impact options that will save your body without sacrificing class content.

Course Objectives

- ✓ Review the importance of utilizing varied cueing techniques while teaching
- ✓ Practice different cueing techniques and how to implement them
- ✓ Practice and improve technical skills for effective deck demonstration options
- ✓ Learn how to use a variety of impact options while teaching
- ✓ Review the importance of music tempo and how to integrate the correct cadence to our movement

Introduction

'All Hands On Deck' is a lab that takes you away from the pool and into the classroom to have a focused "hands on" session of various physical components of aquatic fitness instruction. We will be discussing cueing styles, demonstration skills, impact options and many other tips and tricks to master your delivery of aquatic movement.

TEACHING SKILLS

CUEING

Cueing is a substantial part of leading any type of fitness class. How effectively we cue directly relates to how successful our participants feel. We are aware of the different types of cueing: Audible (Verbal), Visual (Non-Verbal) & Tactile (Touch/for our purposes we will focus on audible and visual today). Your class, format, teaching style, environment and equipment available will help dictate which cueing style (or combination of cueing styles) you use the most.

Verbal		Non-Verbal	
Pros	Cons	Pros	Cons
Comes naturally to most instructors	Environment issues (acoustics, no mic, large classes) will decrease the ability of being heard	Acoustics or lack of mic won't affect the delivery of the cues	Requires more practice
Participants who are visually impaired can still follow	Participants with hearing issues will struggle to follow	Participants with hearing issues can still follow	Participants who are visually impaired will struggle
Instructors can describe challenging movement without having to demonstrate at a high impact level	Too heavy worded cues can turn into white noise and lose the attention of the participants	Most people are visual learners, and will follow more easily	Some exercises may warrant more explanation

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Benefits of Combing Non-Verbal & Verbal Cues

- Saves us from straining our voice
- Keeping the class focused instead of drifting off into conversation
- Allows the class to hear and enjoy the strategically selected playlists we have created for them uninterrupted
- Ensures that all types of learners will benefit from instruction

Using a combination of clear, well placed Verbal cues, along with an array of Non-Verbal cues allows the instructor to lead an effective and exciting class that is inclusive and fun for everyone.

DEMONSTRATION SKILLS

As instructors, we have options on how we choose to show the movement. Examples include demonstrating a move full out for a time or two, then progressing to just using our arms. Using a verbal cue to compliment a modified movement (lower impact) and utilizing one leg only (like in a cross country ski). Not to mention being aware of our own posture when showing these movements.

Below are some impact options when demonstrating movement (not to be confused with impact options to vary intensity of exercises in the water).

IMPACT OPTIONS

- High Impact (Full out with feeling) ie: demonstrating a Jumping Jack as is
- Low Impact (Modified to decrease intensity) ie: demonstrating Jumping Jack with one leg
- Zero or No Impact (Adjusted to eliminate impact) ie: demonstrating a Jumping Jack while seated on a chair or stool

Demonstrating with low and zero impact options simply means we reduce, lower, or eliminate the intensity of the impact on our bodies, **not the energy** of the delivery itself. Reduced impact or zero impact options are also very useful when we are injured, tired, and demonstrating movements in Level 3.

POSTURE AND BODY LANGUAGE

A few questions we should be aware of as instructors: Are we directing our voice down to the pool? Is this causing a slouch in our posture? Are our movements large enough that the entire pool gets the benefit? Are we giving off a positive, larger than life vibe to our students? It has been said that 80% of what people interpret is based on our body language. With correct posture, projection of our voice, a lifted eye line, and a spring in our step, we are unstoppable.

From the participants view, the addition of non-verbal demonstration i.e.: hand signals, signs, demonstrative movements (including low and zero impact options) can really change the experience for the participants and make them feel successful in class. A little extra time spent on the instructor's end will make a world of difference our participants.

MUSIC

An instructor's musicality can make a world of difference when teaching aqua classes, especially when doing formats that are **not interval** driven. Being able to hear, understand and move to the music correctly makes the entire class experience flow smoother. When talking about music in aquatic fitness, we use three different tempos: Land Tempo, Water Tempo & Half Water Tempo. When we can put our movement to the correct tempo, not only do we improve the experience for our participants, but we are also able to ensure the movements are being done correctly and safely. We will practice all of the above teaching techniques listed above with music to

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increase our understanding of aquatic musicality. When teaching HITT and Tabata type formats, staying on the beat of the music is not a priority, however it is helpful to have energizing and motivating movement in the background.

STAYING FIT

Apart from practicing our class content in the water (to ensure that what we are instructing our classes to do is going to yield the desired results), we also must stay fit ourselves. As Aqua Fitness instructors, we often must deal with extraordinary circumstances and teaching conditions that are not the same when teaching land formats. Instructing from the deck provides its own challenges, not to mention when trying to demonstrate movements that are only possible in the water! To prevent injury, it is important that we also give ourselves a minimal “instructors” warm up before beginning our classes. Some suggestions:

- Sun Salutations (I do seven every morning - it's amazing and will change your life!)
- Simple Dynamic Movements (Heel Walks, Leg Circles, Arm Circles, Gentle Spinal Rotation and Lateral Flexion, Deep Breaths raising the arms above your head, etc).
- In some cases, removing the lanes can be an effective warm up!

Plank Variations are a great complement to aquatic teaching. Demonstrating at Zero impact has its benefits for our knees, but without a strong center we can cause total havoc in our lumbar spine.

- Standard Plank (Forearm or Hands) 30 seconds – 60 seconds
- Plank Rocks (rocking back and forth on our heels) 30 – 60 seconds
- Chocolate Covered Strawberries (Oblique Dips) 30 – 60 seconds

Start by holding executing each movement for 30 seconds each, and progress gradually from there.

Put It All Together

- **Say It and Show It:** Once you've chosen your cue, demonstrate the move as you say your cue. After a few repetitions, stand still and show your cue. Progress to just arms if you were demonstrating using your chair, or full impact. Then you can verbally add in any safety cues and any directional or rhythmic variations that are on the horizon.
- **Directions & Rhythmic Variations:** There are many ways to get your class to travel forwards, backwards, right, left, circle, etc. Start them in their base move and then cue the directions with just your arms. Saving you from yelling “Right!” when you actually mean “Left!” Doing a Ski in Three? Start them with the Ski and then use your fingers to indicate “Single, Single, Double”. The first couple of times you might have a few participants take a little longer to catch on, but by the third and fourth time, they will have mastered your cue.
- **Intensity** - Hold the hand close together, palms facing each other to show “small”, then draw the hands apart with resistance, making the space between them larger to show “bigger” or “more force”.
- **Countdowns** - My favorite! Verbally say your countdown as you show it. Hold your arm high in the air and count down the last four counts (water or half water tempo) 4 - 3 - 2 - 1. They see the count down, realize something is coming, and have time to react. Count Downs are extremely effective, especially when implemented with correct timing. They allow the participants to mentally prepare for a change in movement, therefore aiding in a smooth transition. If one solely counts down with their fingers, the participants may miss the cue. If you include raising your hand in the air, and physically show the 4 - 3 - 2- CUE, while saying “Four, three, two, JACK” you are more likely to reach everyone.
- **Extras:** Other Non-Verbal cues to get their attention could simply be a wave of the hand and pointing to your eye as if to say “Watch me, or pay attention”. If you pick a cue and stick to it, you essentially train your class in the way you cue. Subsequent classes get easier and transitions flow more effectively because they know what to expect.

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DRILLS & ACTIVITIES

Cueing Drill

Partner A: _____

Partner B: _____

Movement

Verbal

Non-Verbal

Jumping Jack:

CC Ski:

Core Twist

Pendulum

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POSTURE PRACTICE

"There's a pineapple under your chin!"

DEMONSTRATION TECHNIQUES

Thoughts to Jot:

MUSICALITY

LT – Land Tempo WT – Water Tempo ½ WT – Half Water Tempo

STAYING FIT

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Put it into Practice

Practice makes perfect. Make sure to use cues that are comfortable for you so that they come naturally (almost second nature) when teaching. Your cueing style will evolve with you as well as your class. OR The more you practice, the more you will master this technique therefore creating a more dynamic and exciting class.

Start Slow - Chose one combination, routine, or section of class where you start integrating your newly acquired cues. Slowly add on each week so that it's not overwhelming for you, nor a drastic change for your participants. You can also "prep" your class for what's ahead by training them during the warm up. It's a perfect time to get them going in a move and then preview how you will be cueing those same moves the rest of the class. This comes in especially useful when subbing for a class that's unfamiliar to you.

Key Points to Remember

Verbal Cueing

- Speak clearly; keep cues short and precise
- Cue ahead of the new move so your class knows that a change is coming
- Once they are in the move, scan the class for safety issues and cue appropriately
- Maintain eye contact with your class to keep them engaged
- Repeat cues using a few different ways of explaining it, everyone hears the same thing differently (e.g.: engage your core, contract your abdominals, stabilize your centre, draw your navel to your spine)
- Be aware of music volume and lyrics, speak loud enough to be heard, but never scream. Use a mic if available

Non-Verbal Cueing

- Demonstrate proper form and alignment as they will do what you do
- Music is a great motivator. Pick great music and use it to your advantage (e.g.: motivating tunes for circuits or high intensity intervals, choose songs they can sing to when doing repetitive combos, or songs that set the mood for cool downs and stretching).
- Choose a cue and stick to it. If a cue changes every week, the class will never know what to expect and may end up feeling unsuccessful
- Utilize all impact levels of demonstration. This will help save your body from injury and fatigue, while preserving your energy to lend toward class motivation.
- Be animated, be larger than life, be silly, have fun! Your classes' energy is a direct reflection from your energy. We give 150% to get 75% from them. 😊

References

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