



Headfirst Entry - Diving and Sliding

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Do not allow any diving or headfirst entry into any pool until you are sure the pool is designed for diving and meets all standards for diving pools, such as the NSPI standards. Consult your pool builder or NSPI member if you have any doubts. Do not allow diving into a pool, or any part of the pool, that is not deep enough for diving. It is recommended that "No Diving" signs be placed at all areas of the pool where diving is not appropriate.

Your first entry into a pool should be feet first so you can determine water depth and pool configuration. As a responsible pool owner, pay special attention to headfirst entry - diving and sliding. Both activities involve headfirst entry into the water at high speed - a situation that can lead to very serious, life-threatening accident.

The chief danger for divers or headfirst sliders is serious spinal injury. They may hit their heads against the bottom or side of the pool or against some object or person. Injuries to the spinal cord may result, causing temporary or permanent paralysis or death. **Never use alcohol or drugs while diving or swimming.**

Research studies have shown that you cannot rely on the water alone to slow you down sufficiently to avoid injury. Protective action must be taken by the diver or headfirst slider. Serious spinal injuries can occur even at very slow speeds if the head strikes firmly against the pool bottom or side. The spine cannot absorb as great an impact as the skull can, especially if the head has been fixed against an immovable object. If you are diving or sliding headfirst and hit your head on a hard surface, your chin goes down (rotates) to your chest. Your head stops, but the rest of your body keeps on coming. You could break your neck, back and/or sever your spinal cord.

To properly supervise an inground pool that was designed to accommodate diving, you must also be able to identify "real divers" and areas or locations where diving is permitted. As with swimming, the most practical definition of a diver might be someone who has achieved minimum safe diving skills through training in a certified course of instruction. People may overestimate their abilities and claim to be "divers," so use extreme caution.

"Steer up for a safe dive."

"Too steep a dive can cause your head to hit the bottom. This can result in a broken neck and paralysis."

While there is no substitution for diving instruction and actual practice at poolside, it is important for you to familiarize yourself, youngsters and everyone who uses the pool with the following principles of headfirst entry.

Some do's and don'ts of diving.



Do's

- n Do know the shape of the pool bottom and the water depth before you dive or slide headfirst.
- n Do plan your path to avoid submerged obstacles, surface objects or other swimmers.
- n Do hold your head up, arms up, and **steer up** with your hands.
- n Do keep arms extended and head and hands up.
- n Do practice carefully before you dive or slide headfirst.
- n Do test the diving board for its spring before using.
- n Do remember that when you dive down, you must **steer up**.
- n Do dive straight ahead - not off the side of a diving board.

Don't

- n Don't drink and dive.
- n Don't dive into an aboveground pool.
- n Don't dive into a pool not meeting a "diving pool" standard.
- n Don't dive or slide headfirst in the shallow part of the pool.
- n Don't dive across the narrow part of pools.
- n Don't run and dive.
- n Don't dive from any place that is not specifically designed for diving.
- n Don't engage in horseplay on diving or sliding equipment.
- n Don't use diving equipment as a trampoline.
- n Don't do a back dive; backyard pools are not built for this dangerous dive.
- n Don't try fancy dives; keep the dives simple.
- n Don't dive or slide headfirst at or through objects such as inner tubes.
- n Don't put diving or sliding equipment on a pool that wasn't designed for it.
- n Don't swim or dive alone.
- n Don't dive into unfamiliar bodies of water.

Principles of Headfirst Entry



Diving and headfirst sliding require you to think ahead. Your personal safety depends on it. Because once you've started your dive or headfirst slide, you don't have time to think or change. Before you dive or slide headfirst, you should determine the shape of the pool bottom, find out how deep the water is and plan your entry path to avoid other persons or

obstructions.

Most headfirst entry accidents happen in shallow water. Don't dive or slide headfirst in the shallow part of the pool. A well-trained diver can execute a dive in shallow water, but for the majority of people, such a dive represents a serious risk of injury. Be concerned. Be smart - do not dive into shallow water. When appropriate, use a rope and float line to indicate where the shallow water ends. The pool owner is responsible for allowing diving only into the proper area of the pool. If you are not able to always supervise pool use, you should post "No Diving" signs where the water is too shallow for diving.

When you begin your dive or headfirst slide, you must get ready to **steer up**. As you enter the water, your arms must be extended over your head, hands flat and aiming up. Hold your head up and arch your back. This way, your whole body helps you steer up, away from the bottom.

By keeping your head and hands up, you help protect your head from striking bottom. If a diver's or slider's head hits bottom, serious neck and spinal injuries may occur. So always remember, head and hands up!

And finally, as you follow through, you must learn to control your entry path through proper use of hands and arms. The proper follow-through technique is arms extended fully, hands flat and tipped up.

Investigations have shown that many diving and headfirst sliding accidents have resulted when people were using the pool under the influence of alcohol or drugs. **No one should dive or slide headfirst after drinking alcohol or while under the influence of any drugs.**

Don't run and dive. That can give you the same impact as a dive from a board. And don't dive across the narrow part of pools. Remember that injuries have occurred after diving from strange places such as roofs, balconies, walls, fences

and other places that were not meant for diving. Therefore, never dive from any elevation other than a properly installed diving board.

Diving and sliding equipment must not be used improperly - absolutely no horseplay. Only one person at a time should use such equipment. The second person does not enter the water until the first person has cleared the entry area. Never allow diving equipment to be used as a trampoline.

General Use of Pool Slides

Improper use of pool slides can present the same potential dangers as improper diving techniques. The principles for headfirst sliding are the same as for diving and are covered in the preceding section of this booklet.

"Standing, diving, jumping or horseplay on or around a slide can lead to falls resulting in paralysis or other serious injury. Make sure your slide is right for your pool. Learn the correct ways to slide and enforce proper use."

If you use a pool slide, you must have a landing area with adequate clearance over the deck or the edge of the pool (the coping), and with an appropriate depth of water. Follow the slide manufacturer's specifications regarding clearance and depth, installation instructions and proper use.

If headfirst slides are to be attempted, the pool slide must exit into deep water. There are only two proper ways to use a slide - sitting, going down feet first, and lying flat on your belly, headfirst, pursuant to *16 CFR Ch. II (1-1-93 Edition) U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, Part 1207 Safety Standard for Swimming Pool Slides*. All other methods of using a slide are dangerous and present a risk of serious injury.

When you are writing your "pool rules," consider who will be using your slide and how. Enforce proper use of the slide.

Under all circumstances you should prohibit:

- n Any slide other than sitting, feet first, or flat on the belly, headfirst
- n Headfirst entries from a slide that exits into shallow water

n Horseplay

n Any slide entries by non-swimmers into deep water, to protect them from drowning

n Standing on the top of a slide or outside the guide rails

n Jumping from a slide

n Diving from a slide

n Sliding into areas with submerged obstacles, surface objects or other swimmers.



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