

Swim instructor Job Description

A free job description template for the Fitness industry

Company Name: _____

Location: _____

Employment Type: _____

Reports To: _____

Date: _____

DISCLAIMER

This swim instructor job description template is designed to reflect Australian workplace standards and aquatic industry practices at the time of publication. Confirm the applicable modern award for your business and ensure compliance with all relevant employment laws.

1. Position overview

A swim instructor plans and teaches learn-to-swim and water-safety lessons for all ages, from infants to adults. The role builds swimming skills and water confidence, assesses progress, supervises swimmers closely and maintains a safe, well-run teaching environment in and around the water.

Award coverage depends on the employer. Swim instructors in a gym, studio or health club with a pool are typically covered by the Fitness Industry Award 2020 (MA000094), while those at council-run aquatic and leisure centres may fall under the Local Government Award or another instrument. Instructors are usually classified around Level 3 or 3A as qualified instructors under the Fitness Award.

This template provides a foundation for creating clear, compliant job descriptions that attract qualified instructors while setting appropriate expectations for the role. Once hired, manage your lesson timetable efficiently with rostering software.

2. Key responsibilities

Lesson planning

Planning structured learn-to-swim and water-safety lessons appropriate to each class level, age group and swimmer ability.

Lesson delivery

Teaching swimming technique and water safety with clear demonstrations, positive encouragement and effective in-water support.

Swimmer assessment

Assessing progress against level benchmarks, recording achievements and communicating with parents, carers or adult learners.

Water supervision

Maintaining constant, active supervision of swimmers, enforcing pool rules and preventing hazards during lessons.

Safety and emergency response

Following aquatic safety procedures, responding to incidents, and supporting rescue and first aid where required.

Equipment and setup

Setting up and packing down teaching equipment, checking the pool area, and reporting any hazards or maintenance needs.

3. Skills and attributes

- Swimming and teaching skill: Strong swimming ability and the knowledge to teach technique and water safety across ages and levels.
- Working with all ages: Patience and adaptability to teach infants, children and adults, adjusting the approach to each learner.
- Water safety awareness: Vigilant, active supervision and sound judgement to keep swimmers safe in and around the water at all times.
- Communication: Clear, encouraging instruction plus friendly updates to parents, carers and adult learners on progress.
- Patience and care: A calm, supportive manner that builds water confidence, especially with nervous or beginner swimmers.
- Reliability: Punctuality and dependability for scheduled lessons, including after-school, evening and weekend timeslots.

4. Qualifications and requirements

Swim instructor requirements combine a teaching accreditation with current safety and child-safety certifications. Some are mandatory, while others are preferred or desirable.

- Swim teaching accreditation (required) — A recognised swim teaching qualification (for example, AUSTSWIM or Swim Australia Teacher) is the standard requirement
- First aid and CPR (required) — Current first aid and CPR certification is required for teaching in and around water
- Working with Children Check (required) — A valid Working with Children Check (or state equivalent) is required for teaching children
- Working rights (required) — Eligibility to work in Australia
- Pool lifeguard qualification — A pool lifeguard/rescue qualification is desirable and sometimes required depending on the facility
- Infant/toddler accreditation — Additional accreditation for infant and toddler classes is advantageous for those programs

5. Working conditions

- Lessons concentrated in after-school, evening and weekend timeslots
- In-water and poolside teaching in warm, humid pool environments
- Split and broken shifts across multiple lesson blocks in a day
- Constant, active supervision of swimmers throughout each lesson
- Seasonal demand peaks, particularly in the warmer months

- Compliance with aquatic safety, child-safety and WHS procedures

6. Award information

Which award applies?

Award coverage for swim instructors depends on the employer. Instructors at a gym, studio or health club with a pool are typically covered by the Fitness Industry Award 2020 (MA000094), while those at council-run aquatic and leisure centres may fall under the Local Government Award. This modern award framework sets minimum pay rates, penalty rates and conditions. View current Fitness Award pay rates.

Under the Fitness Award, swim instructors are typically classified around Level 3 or 3A as qualified instructors. For FY2026/27, a Level 3 instructor earns about \$27.97/hr full-time/part-time and \$34.96/hr casual. Always confirm coverage before setting pay, and use award interpretation software to calculate rates accurately.

Penalty rates and allowances

Under the Fitness Award (MA000094), full-time and part-time staff receive Saturday at 125%, Sunday at 150% and public holidays at 250%. Casual employees instead receive a 25% loading on ordinary weekday hours and a single flat rate of about 130% of the base for ordinary hours worked on a Saturday, Sunday or public holiday.

Because instructors often teach split lesson blocks, a broken shift allowance of about \$18.07 per day may apply, plus a first aid allowance of about \$3.40 per day. Rates differ under the Local Government Award, so confirm the current rates and check whether an enterprise agreement applies in place of the award.

7. Frequently asked questions

About the role

Q: What does a swim instructor do?

A swim instructor plans and teaches learn-to-swim and water-safety lessons for all ages, from infants to adults. They demonstrate technique, build water confidence, assess progress against level benchmarks, communicate with parents and carers, and maintain constant, active supervision of swimmers. It is a hands-on, safety-critical role that combines teaching skill with vigilant water supervision.

Q: What award covers swim instructors in Australia?

It depends on the employer. Swim instructors at a gym, studio or health club with a pool are typically covered by the Fitness Industry Award 2020 (MA000094), while those at council-run aquatic and leisure centres may fall under the Local Government Award. Some businesses may instead be covered by an enterprise agreement. Always confirm coverage before setting pay.

Q: What classification level should I use for a swim instructor?

Under the Fitness Award, swim instructors are typically classified around Level 3 or 3A as qualified instructors. Rates and classifications differ under the Local Government Award, so first confirm which award applies to your facility. See our Fitness Award pay rates guide for current rates at each level.

Q: Do I need to include pay rates in a job description?

It's not legally required, but including indicative pay rates can attract more applicants and set clear expectations. You can reference the applicable award rate or use phrases like 'Award rates plus penalties' or 'Competitive per-lesson or hourly rate.' Check the current Fitness Award rates for guidance.

Qualifications

Q: What qualifications does a swim instructor need?

The standard requirement is a recognised swim teaching accreditation (such as AUSTSWIM or Swim Australia Teacher), along with current first aid and CPR, a Working with Children Check and working rights in Australia. A pool lifeguard qualification and infant/toddler accreditation are desirable depending on your programs.

Q: Do swim instructors need a Working with Children Check?

Yes, a valid Working with Children Check (or state equivalent) is required for anyone teaching children, which covers most swim instructor roles. Verify it before the instructor starts and track its expiry — HR software makes it easy to manage checks and certifications across a team.

Q: Do swim instructors need a lifeguard qualification?

Not always, but a pool lifeguard or rescue qualification is desirable and sometimes required depending on the facility and whether instructors also supervise open swim periods. Specify clearly in the job description whether it is essential or preferred for your site.

Q: What qualifications should I require vs prefer?

Mandatory requirements usually include a swim teaching accreditation, current first aid and CPR, a Working with Children Check, and working rights in Australia. Preferred qualifications include a lifeguard qualification and infant/toddler accreditation. Match the requirements to the programs and ages you teach.

Employment

Q: Should I hire casual or permanent swim instructors?

This depends on your lesson demand, which is often seasonal. Casual instructors offer flexibility for variable timetables but attract a 25% casual loading under the Fitness Award. Permanent part-time staff provide consistency for ongoing programs. Many swim schools use a mix — permanent staff for core lessons and casuals for peaks and cover.

Q: What penalty rates apply to swim instructors?

Under the Fitness Award (MA000094), full-time and part-time staff receive Saturday at 125%, Sunday at 150% and public holidays at 250%. Casual staff instead get a 25% loading on weekday hours and a flat rate of about 130% of the base for ordinary hours on weekends and public holidays. Rates differ under the Local Government Award — use award interpretation software to calculate accurately.

Q: What is the broken shift allowance for swim instructors?

Broken shifts are common in learn-to-swim — for example, an after-school and an evening block. Under the Fitness Award, a broken shift allowance of about \$18.07 per day (plus about \$2.15 for excess fares) applies on top of the rates for the hours worked. Confirm the current amount in the Fitness Award pay guide.

Q: What should I include in a swim instructor employment contract?

Key elements include: position title and classification level, employment type (casual, part-time or full-time), pay rate, applicable award, reporting structure, main duties and required certifications such as swim teaching accreditation, first aid and a Working with Children Check. For casuals, include the 25% loading. Use our digital employment contracts to simplify this process.

Rostering

Q: How far in advance should I provide rosters to swim instructors?

Award and agreement rosters rules vary, so confirm the notice period that applies to your business. As a general practice, providing timetables at least 7 days in advance gives instructors visibility of their lessons. Using rosters software helps ensure compliance and reduces last-minute changes.

Q: How do I roster swim instructors to lesson timetables?

Build reusable roster templates for your weekly lesson timetable and match qualified instructors to each class level and timeslot, allowing for split shifts across after-school and evening blocks. Use rosters tools to track hours and adjust when instructors are unavailable. See our guide on how to roster fitness staff.

Q: How do I maintain safe instructor-to-swimmer ratios?

Roster enough qualified instructors to meet the safe ratios for each class level and age group, and never leave the water under-supervised. Use rosters software to plan coverage in advance and fill gaps quickly when someone is unavailable, keeping every lesson safely staffed.

Q: How do I manage instructor availability for rosters?

Collect availability preferences during onboarding and update them regularly, allowing for the seasonal nature of swim programs. Use HR software and rosters tools to track when each instructor can work and which class levels they teach. Clear availability policies simplify timetable planning and reduce gaps in coverage.