

Diving is a sport that almost everyone can enjoy, either as a participant or as a spectator. But, as with every other sport, injuries can spoil the fun for everyone. So to get the most pleasure from diving and to avoid serious injuries, don't take needless risks. Learn some basic rules for safe diving.

Think Ahead.

Once you've started your dive, you don't have time to think. Know the depth of the water, the configuration of the pool bottom, and the upslope. Plan your dive path. Never dive where you don't know the water depth or where there may be hidden obstructions.

Steer Up.

When you dive, you must be 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.

Plan a shallow dive, immediately steering up. Don't try the straight vertical-entry dives you see in competition. These dives take a long time to slow down and must be done only after careful training and in pools designed for competitive diving.

Head and Hands Up.

Your extended arms and hands not only help you to steer up to the surface, they can also protect your head. If a diver's head hits bottom, major spinal cord injury to neck and spine can result in paralysis. So always remember, head and hands up!

Control Your Dive.

Sometimes divers lose control through improper use of hands and arms. Practice holding your arms extended, hands flat and tipped up. Like learning to swim or ride a bicycle, you have to know how to make the right moves automatically. Carefully rehearse the proper diving techniques before you dive.

It is recommended that each and every one of you follow these safety rules and urge your friends to follow them as well. Because no one wants to end up in a wheelchair for the rest of their life or end up without a life at all.

Headfirst Entry—Diving and Sliding.

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 International Aquatic Foundation (IAF) standards. Consult your pool builder or APSP 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 accidents.

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.

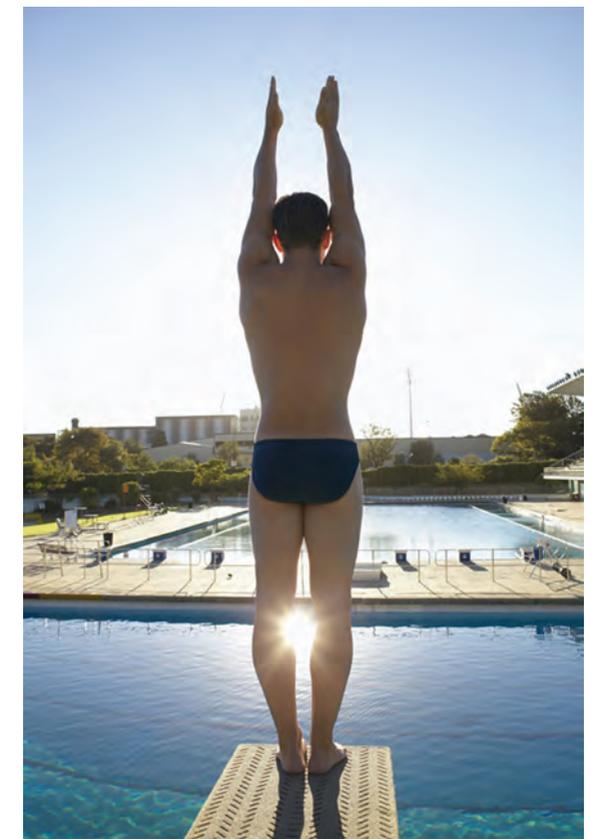


Research studies have shown that you cannot rely on the water alone to slow you down sufficiently to avoid injury. Protective action must be taken by the diver or headfirst slider. **Serious spinal injuries can occur even at very slow speeds, if the head strikes firmly against the pool bottom or side.**

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.



Plan Your Dive, Steer Up.



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Some DOs and DON'Ts of Diving

Plan your dive

Back arched

Arms extended

Head and hands up

Hold diving form

Steer up for a safe dive.

DOs

- Do know the shape of the pool bottom and the water depth before you dive. Follow the equipment manufacturer's recommendations.
- Do plan your dive path to avoid submerged obstacles, surface objects, or other swimmers.
- Do hold your head up, arms up, and steer up with your hands.
- Do keep arms extended and head and hands up during the dive.
- Do practice carefully before you dive in.
- Do swim and dive with a "buddy."
- Do test the diving board for its spring before using.
- Do remember that when you dive down, you must steer up.
- Do keep your dives simple.

DON'Ts

- Don't dive into an aboveground pool or into the shallow end of a pool. Nine out of ten diving injuries occur in six feet of water or less.
- Don't dive into a pool not meeting a "diving pool" standard.
- Don't dive off the side of a diving board—dive straight ahead.
- Don't dive from the edge across the narrow part of a pool.
- Don't run and dive. That can give you the same impact as a dive from a board.
- Don't do a back dive; backyard pools are not built for this dangerous dive.
- Don't try fancy dives or dives with a straight vertical entry.
- Don't dive at or through objects such as inner tubes.
- Don't put diving equipment on a pool that wasn't designed for it.
- Don't dive from retaining walls, ladders, slides or other pool equipment.
- Don't dive from rooftops, balconies, ledges, fences or any place that is not specifically designed for diving.
- Don't dive from racing starting blocks without direct supervision and the training of a qualified coach.
- Don't dive into unfamiliar bodies of water. Remember, 3 out of 4 diving accidents happen in natural bodies of water like lakes and rivers.
- Don't swim or dive alone.
- Don't drink and dive. The slowing effects of alcohol or drugs on reaction times can be extremely dangerous in diving.