



Don't leave your swimming lessons too late.

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[Opinion](#)

## Why it sucks teaching adults to swim

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YELLING “blow bubbles” and “where are your floppy feet?” to a middle-aged Irishman felt downright patronising.

But compared to children, mastering basic swimming skills is far more difficult when you're a grownup.

I used to teach evening beginner swimming lessons to adults, and mantras typically reserved for primary aged kids were part of the package.

And quickly, it became clear just how important it is to imprint swimming skills onto the malleable brain of a child.

I coaxed adults into taking their first wobbly underwater steps while clinging onto the ledge and saw their vulnerability first hand.

As nervous laughter turned to panic, some students would apologetically grab my rash vest to pull themselves up when they lost their balance.

Humans evolved out of the water, and here I was trying to convince them to go back in.

When you learn to swim as a child, however, the skills stay with you for the rest of your life – much like riding a bike or learning an instrument.

But shockingly, three out of five kids in the state can't swim when they finish primary school, according to Life Saving Victoria research.

After a *Herald Sun* campaign, [Victorian kids are now required to have the ability to swim at least 50 metres by the end of primary school as part of a new curriculum overhaul.](#)

For those of us who can swim, we don't often remember the anxiety associated with dunking our faces in the water for the first time, or trusting the water's buoyancy to carry our weight.

But trusting the water takes longer when you've lived longer.

The feeling of being invincible dampened long ago, and submerging into a new environment where you can't breathe and can barely see isn't so appealing.

Better to take the plunge when you're young than to flounder in your 40s.