

HYDRO BLITZ

...stepping back so you can leap forward!

Aquatic fitness is an exciting and growing area in the fitness industry. Baby Boomers are aging, and they are seeking “joint friendly” exercise options. As a result, more people are headed for the liquid gym for their workouts. As an aquatics group fitness director, I’ve learned a very valuable secret to choreographing a superior class: *bring it back to the basics!* Simpler is better. The properties of the water are crucial and should never be overlooked when programming an aquatic class. I have integrated these properties into the BLITZ technique of instruction. BLITZ classes challenge appropriately every fitness level; they are simple to create and, most importantly, are fun to participate in!

BLITZ classes can be integrated into *any* existing aquatic program. Teaching styles vary, and all methods of instruction can smoothly incorporate BLITZ. Close observation of each participant is imperative. Body alignment is continually challenged in the aquatic environment, and attentive monitoring of alignment will ensure exercise safety and effectiveness. Intensity options should always be given throughout every class and force versus speed should be emphasized. Speed often causes a shortened range of motion, and many instructors make the mistake of cuing speed. Velocity emphasizes an increase in speed with a full range of motion which is preferable.



Understanding BLITZ

B = Body Alignment/Buoyancy & Stability. The center of gravity and the center of buoyancy must be vertically aligned to provide stability, ensure proper spinal alignment and to decrease the risk of musculoskeletal injury. The effectiveness of the exercises increases when a participant is vertically aligned. When they come out of vertical alignment, the body will roll or turn until balance is achieved, thus decreasing the move’s effectiveness. Body alignment is really challenged once moves become submerged (level 2) or suspended (level 3). Stability can be further challenged by the use of turbulence and inertia. The core can be strengthened, stability and spinal alignment improved, and the intensity greatly increased all by implementing just this one technique!

L = Lever Length and Lever Direction. Levers can be lengthened and shortened to vary intensity level. The direction of the lever can also be changed. Kicks to the front can become kicks to the side and kicks to the rear. This technique challenges the instructor’s inventiveness. How many different ways can a rocking horse be performed? How about a cross country ski? This component of BLITZ should excite the creativeness in us all!

I = Intensity and Inertia. Use force to increase intensity. By accelerating a move, force can be applied to a move in two ways. One option is to accelerate a move off of the pool floor by adding more force to the rebound. Another option is to apply more force to the water when the body/limbs are moving through the water. Inertia is another great way to vary intensity levels. An object remains at rest or in continuous motion unless acted upon by a force. Inertia is used when we cue the participant to jog and it’s used a second time when the participant is cued to jog forward. It’s used a third and fourth time when the participant jogs backwards and when they stop jogging. How many times can inertia be applied to a particular move? The use of inertia has no limit if instructors remember this simple rule: KEEP THEM MOVING and use the entire pool to do so!

T = Travel. Traveling allows us to use several properties. By having the class travel in one direction, inertia is applied to the water (in addition to the move). Once a streamline flow is established it can be broken by traveling in the opposite direction. By cuing the class to travel in different directions (versus in a nice neat row), turbulent flow will be established. Lever length has a direct impact on intensity when traveling. The frontal surface of the move and hand positioning will also directly affect how intense a traveling move becomes. Action/Reaction is also important to consider. Do you want your arm movements to assist in the travel, or to impede it? Why not mix it up and do a little of both? Offering these choices will not only add interest and variety to the class, but it will educate the participants on how to self-regulate their intensity level.

Z = Zeal and Zest of Teaching Style. In much the same way that lemon zest packs more concentrated flavor into a dish, we as fitness professionals must strive to create that flavorful class that “packs a punch” and separates our classes from the rest. In a one hour time frame, we are trying to sell fitness in the most concentrated, effective and palatable way possible. Each ingredient in a BLITZ class must be present, equally measured and delivered with flavor. Music choice is a way to add flavor professional attire and voice amplification will also add to a flavorful experience. When something “tastes good”, you go back for seconds! Whether instruction takes place from the deck or in the pool, cuing techniques must be mastered! While on my own personal journey, I’ve learned that when I demonstrate an intensity level less (such as cuing a move to be “bigger”, “stronger”, “faster”, etc.), that my motivational skills sharpen. The results are that the pool turns into a sea of hard working fitness enthusiasts who are all successfully working out to their self-regulated maximum. Demonstrate less and motivate more! Exceptional instructors who perfect their teaching techniques will enhance their class experience and the participants will keep coming back for more!

Evaluate the aquatic group fitness programs at your fitness facility this week. How full are the classes? Are the members smiling and enjoying the class? Are they *working the water* versus just merely working *in* the water? Instructors who are willing to step back to review the basics will leap forward into more effective and productive teaching. BLITZ classes are simple to create, fun to implement and are an uplifting and positive experience for all who participate!

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