

## STAGES 3 & 5 – The ‘Stuck’ Stages

Learning a new skill is always a challenge. Levels 3 and 5 have so many things children need to think about when swimming – sometimes it is really hard!

The most commonly asked question is “Why do children seem to spend so long in level 3 or level 5?” These are described as the “two stuck stages” during the levels of achievement. The competencies levels at Seadragonz align with ASCTA, WA Education Department and others to ensure continuity of skills being taught throughout the swimming journey. The reasons this can happen is:

### **Level 3**

- In Level 2, students complete 5m freestyle with big arms and blowing bubbles at the same time. Once they achieve level 2 the progression in Level 3 is being taught to breathe while swimming. An effective kick, both arms clearing the water, a regular breathe and blow pattern plus the correct body and head position. **THAT’S A LOT TO COORDINATE.**
- This can sound simple, but it requires exceptional coordination to achieve. From an adult perspective try this – swing one leg out sideways and back and the other leg forward and back alternatively. Then keep swinging one arm in a circle while the other arm swings out and back sideways and then

after you have done all of this 5 times for each appendage jump up in the air and start again. Lots of coordination; you can do all of them individually very easily but together and smoothly is very difficult but will come with a lot of practise.

- The other major skill learnt in level 3 is survival backstroke kick. This involves gliding for 3 seconds with legs together straight and keeping toes turned out and knees in line with the shoulders when they do the circular leg action which gives them propulsion.

Seadragonz Swim Schools priority and focus is on teaching correct technique. When children attend their own schools swimming programme, they aren't always picked up on the incorrect technique, so obviously, the child thinks they are doing the stroke correctly. On return to their classes at Seadragonz, they have trouble understanding why their swimming techniques was acceptable at school, but not at Seadragonz. It is frustrating for the children, the parents and the teachers.

*"It is not uncommon for children to spend 18 months- 2 years in Level 3."*

*So, chillax, Mums and Dads*

## **Level 5**

- Usually, the most difficult issue in Level 5 is putting together the skills of breaststroke kick, arms timing and breathing all together in one stroke. In level 4, students are taught breaststroke kick on their front with just a board and for only 5m. In level 5, arms are introduced, and they must cover a 10m distance. **THAT'S A BIG DIFFERENCE!** The arm action plus the kick requires time to coordinate.

For example with freestyle: one week the child may focus on their head position when breathing. When they swim, they are concentrating so hard on where they need to be looking they may forget to have a strong kick, or forget to stretch their arms out of the water. So then they are reminded about these things, and then their head position is incorrect again. This is normal. It is frustrating as a parent to watch on, but please remember this is a new skill – and a **challenging one at that!** It all comes together with practice and time.

In breaststroke: children need to glide for 3 seconds with arms extended in front, pull their arms back towards their shoulders-without pulling back too far, lift their head to breathe, and keep their toes turned out when they do breaststroke kick. Coordinating these skills require lots of practice and patience. Skills needs to be broken down so that the child can learn each step in the process, and then put all the steps together. While concentrating on one skill, skills previously learned maybe disremembered as part of the overall stroke requirements.

**Lots of practice and patience is required!**