

Elist Discussion on Lap Lane Sharing

10-16-12 from Liz:

There is an ongoing dispute at our YMCA pool about aqua fitness classes and how many lap lanes are required to safely teach a class of how many students. If there are any aqua fitness instructors on the elist, would you share your facility's policy on this issue? Is there a standard?

From Mary:

You can find a standard recommendation in the AEA [Aquatic Exercise Association] manual.

From Megan:

A normal lap swimming recommendation is six students per lane. This also depends on the type of class you are teaching. If you are teaching an arthritis type class you really do not want other things going on in other lanes that may create balance issues with participants.

If you are teaching a cardio class you want some room to move around. When I teach I take up four lanes for an average of twenty participants.

From Barb:

There are lots of variables which could impact the best decision on this including total number of lanes available, class length, class format, depth, participant height, variety of users and time of day.

My primary pool is at a MFA certified fitness center (it would be good to hear from others with this facility credential) and is used for physical therapy, personal training, independent therapeutic or recreational movement, group exercise classes and lap swimming. We are an adult facility except on Tuesday morning when the pool is shared with hospital out-patient pediatric physical therapy appointments. The appointments are scheduled to use four therapists each with one patient at a time until 11:30am.

We have five lanes total, with two lap lanes and three lanes used as open space. Our commitment to lap swimmers is to have two lanes available at all times. These are always in place with no exceptions. Occasionally water walkers or others use the lap lanes if there are no swimmers. Similarly if all lanes are in use, a swimmer may use the open area for swimming if there is no class in session. Classes are held in the far end of the pool allowing the near end with closer proximity to the steps to be used for Physical Therapy and personal training.

Common courtesy prevails and this works well with gentle prompting from a lifeguard or instructor as needed. For example, yesterday two ladies were just standing and talking very near where our Ai Chi class was in session. I quickly invited them to move to another part of the pool to continue their conversation with no problem from them. The lifeguard suggests circular swimming when there is swim lane overflow during class

time. It does not take long for folks to learn the best time to enjoy their chosen aqua activity and schedule accordingly.

I look forward to other responses.

From Kathy:

I agree with Barb that a lot depends on the depth variation of the pool, the type of class and the height of participants on a given day. I teach at a health club and at a college sports center and in both places usually take three lanes for a class of about a dozen people. Both facilities maintain at least one lane for lap swimming at all times and both have well-publicized schedules so that people can time their visit to fit their activity.

I try to cooperate with the swimmers and give up a lane if my class is small. I also try to incorporate traveling moves into the workout so that we're seen to fully "occupy" our area of the pool.

From Pauline:

My guideline is thirty-six square feet per person. Our "wingspan" [the length of our outstretched arms] is about five feet, so thirty-six square feet is really not a huge space. You need this amount for anything that is high energy and traveling a lot. The AEA manual does provide a similar guideline.

Lap swimmers are notoriously selfish about space so I'm not surprised you are in a dispute! Years ago I was at a facility where the lap swimmers started hitting the water exercise people as they swam by in the adjacent lanes! Seriously!! That is when that club decided to build a separate fitness pool!

From Cheryl:

We have a six lane pool and only two lanes are designated for lap swimming during class time and the lap swimmers have to share them by doing circle swimming. I designed and instilled rules for circle swimming and each lane has these rules posted. It was not easy implementing this rule but it has worked. I have twenty to twenty-five participants in my aqua classes and need the room. I follow AEA guidelines. If lap swimmers want their own lane or more room, they wait until my class is done. I do have lap swimmers who are selfish but my lifeguards enforce our rules. Is it that hard to share a lane?? LOL [Laugh Out Loud]

From Patricia:

I don't know if there is a standard, but at a pool I worked at in Sequim Washington, they had two lane lines up [available with lane markers in place] and then a line between the deep and shallow water. At that time a deep water aerobics class was conducted the same time as a shallow water aerobics class. The instructors shared the music and that seemed to work well. At the same time lap swimmers could swim in the two lanes. I would have twenty to twenty-five students in the shallow water and the deep water aerobics averaged eight to ten participants. A separate warm water pool was reserved for Water walkers. This system seemed to work well for all. These classes were held from 10-11am. But the

entire facility was open for Adults ONLY from 10-12 noon. It was a retirement community and as far as I know the rule is still upheld.

Here is the bottom line: the pools were all in use and everyone seemed happy. I hope this helps.

10-17 from Demention:

For us the top consideration is which program actually produces higher positive feedback and what brings in the revenue. This means we allow space for most group classes of any kind before we allow space for lap swimmers. We do program and give long enough advance notice for the "lappers" [lap swimmers] to complain and finally accept the changes.

In terms of space, all depends on the activity of the class. If the activity is walking less space is needed, if equipment is required, more space is needed and of the class is more active more space is used. Enough space is allotted so the students are comfortable but not so much that an instructor feels like he or she is shouting across an auditorium.

10-19 From Lyn:

I had lap swimmers not only kick my exercisers, they also keyed their cars [scratched the paint with a key] and sliced their tires! I called the cops [police] one day after one of them attacked my lifeguards for pulling out the lap lanes one minute before the next pool activity! I had my lifeguards document everything they saw while on duty but even with that information my boss didn't allow me to remove these jerks [the lap-swimmers acting violently]! My exercisers dropped their memberships at the facility and went elsewhere.

From Cheri:

I thank you all for your feedback, I will be sure to tell my gym's "owners" "Thank You for letting us close the pool for the one hour (seven total per week) during each class we hold."

Each time we added a class, we had at least one person (always a lap swimmer) leave our gym. Since we're located in a fairly small population or town, this made a dent in our income. BUT we also then added five to twenty people to each of these classes.

Your comments have made me realize how lucky we are here. I am a manager now at another facility (while still working the above job) and this responsibility and your comments have made me realize how important we managers can be to a facility. While we may anger some clients, we also benefit others. That is the line we all need to find and draw. The following consideration is not always easy, but important: **'who needs and receives the most from our decisions.'**

From Kristi:

Wow! I'm sorry if there are any lap swimmers on this elist - but I have had some unruly swimmers with a bad attitude in my club as well. Our policy is to always have two lanes open for swimmers during aquatic class or swimming lessons. Sometimes I have great

people come in who are willing to share lanes. Other times I have people that won't move or get out of the needed class area. Our aquatic fitness participants are just as much members and are just as important as anyone else in our facility. Maybe signs need to be made reminding others of class schedules. We've even put up laminated signs at land ends reserving them for fitness class participants. So to say "This is when the class is, come swim another time" is the best policy.

What would lap swimmers do if these group exercise class participants were other swimmers? Would they kick and act like spoiled babies because they are in their [the lap swimmer's] lane? They need to "get over themselves" [be unselfish]. I say it is better to lose one lap swimmer so five can be group class participants.

From Bruce:

As a lap lane swimmer, I find the above behavior to be abhorable! We always make lanes available to anyone wanting to use the pool, even if it means six or seven per lane for us.

Could a moderated pool user meeting discussion help resolve this problem of not sharing?

10-20 From Rosemary:

Unfortunately there are not enough pools therefore everyone becomes possessive of "their" pool space. However this does not warrant rudeness and disrespect to others. I am a lap swimmer, aquatic therapist and swim instructor. In my various roles I try to "Do unto others, as you would have them do unto you". I agree with Bruce: someone needs to moderate a pool user discussion and management needs to 'step up to the bat' [take control of the situation] and not tolerate this kind of behavior.

From Patricia:

Oh Wow! That [the above behavior] is so horrible! Call me naive but this makes me love living in Alaska where we are a little bit more laid back and seem to be kinder to each other.

10-22 From Liz:

I have to say that I really appreciate everyone's feedback on this issue. I have passed it along to the folks at the YMCA and the result has been that they designated two lanes absolutely for the night time classes in question. The classes average five to six participants and seldom warrant a whole lot more space than two lanes provide. We will revisit the issue if these classes grow in number. Our daytime classes are much larger, and our night time pool is much busier with swimmers, swim teams and lessons, so sharing has been a bigger issue at night. Now with a set policy in place I think everything will run more smoothly.

From Lynise:

Those [the above cited] events were part of the catalyst that propelled me to resign from my job and return to school! I now have my dream job and do not have to deal with lap swimmers!

11-11 from Eileen:

“Better late than never.” [This comment refers to the late date of her comment: almost a month since the initial dispute was posted.] At our YMCA when we rarely need to use the other lap pool for a class, they give us two lanes to use.