

Communication Styles with Kids Aged 5–13

Tips for clear, age-appropriate communication that helps Nippers feel safe, seen, and supported

Age Managers are more than instructors—you're role models, cheerleaders, and sometimes translators of confusing beach concepts! Here's how to adapt your communication style for younger age groups, build trust, and make your messages stick.

1. Ages 5–7: Keep It Simple, Fun, and Visual

- **Use short sentences and clear, direct instructions**
 - “Stand on the line.” “Run to the cone and back.”
- **Show, don't just tell**
 - Demonstrate every activity. Kids this age learn best by watching.
- **Repeat key messages often**
 - Use the same words each week to reinforce safety and beach basics.
- **Praise the effort, not just the result**
 - “Great listening!” “I love how you waited your turn.”
- **Use gestures and body language**
 - Big hand signals, thumbs-up, and eye contact help guide and reassure.

2. Ages 8–10: Involve Them in the Process

- **Ask questions to check understanding**
 - “Why do we swim between the red and yellow flags?”
- **Explain the “why” behind activities**
 - Kids this age love knowing how things work and why rules exist.
- **Let them help lead warm-ups or be team captains**
 - Builds confidence and encourages active participation.
- **Encourage fair play and teamwork**
 - Reinforce being inclusive and kind as much as winning or completing the activity.

3. Ages 11–13: Empower and Respect Their Growing Independence

- **Treat them as young leaders**
 - Ask for their input, let them take initiative, and acknowledge their maturity.
- **Be approachable but set boundaries**
 - They may test limits—respond calmly and consistently.
- **Use encouragement, not sarcasm**
 - Humour can be great, but it's easy to misread at this age.
- **Acknowledge their social dynamics**
 - Encourage mixing with new kids and stepping out of friendship cliques.
- **Offer feedback privately when needed**
 - Praise publicly, coach individually.

4. Tips That Work at Any Age

- **Use names**—often and with warmth.
- **Keep it positive**—avoid shouting, and use redirection rather than reprimands.
- **Stay calm**—your tone sets the tone.
- **Ask for help**—if you're unsure, there's always someone nearby who's been there.

Final Thought: Every Child Is Different

Some are loud, others shy. Some love running, others love helping. Communicating well isn't about being the perfect speaker—it's about being present, patient, and kind.

