

Picking Up on Group Mood

How to recognise when to adjust your session to match the energy, focus, or needs of your Nippers

Even the best-planned Nippers session needs some flexibility. Sometimes the surf is up, sometimes the wind is wild—and sometimes, the kids are just not feeling it. Learning to “read the room” helps Age Managers deliver more enjoyable and effective sessions by responding to how the group is actually feeling, not just what’s on the run sheet.

1. Why It Matters

- Prevents frustration, meltdowns, and behaviour issues
- Helps kids stay engaged, focused, and safe
- Builds your confidence in leading with empathy and intuition
- Reinforces that Nippers is a fun, supportive place for all

2. Signs to Look For: Tired or Low-Energy Group

- Kids are quiet, slow to respond, sitting down often
- Lots of yawns, dragging feet, or wanting to sit out
- Reduced interest in physical activities
- **What to try:**
 - Shorten the session or add a game-based warm-up
 - Introduce a calm but fun activity (e.g. beach scavenger hunt)
 - Offer extra water breaks or a shaded chat

3. Overexcited or Restless Group

- Kids are talking over you, not listening to instructions
- Fidgeting, running ahead, or interrupting often
- More noise or difficulty staying in line
- **What to try:**
 - Switch to a physical or competitive game to burn energy
 - Use quick transitions with clear boundaries
 - Assign small roles to redirect focus (e.g. “flag holder”, “line starter”)

4. Disengaged or Bored Group

- Lack of eye contact, wandering off, low participation
- Kids asking, “When is this over?” or “Can we do something else?”
- Repeating behaviours like sitting out or avoiding tasks
- **What to try:**
 - Change the activity—even mid-way is fine
 - Involve kids in choosing the next task
 - Add variety (e.g. mix water with sand-based skills, or team vs team)

5. Anxious or Overwhelmed Group (or individual)

- Withdrawn or clingy behaviour
- Hesitant participation, especially in the water
- Overreactions to small things (crying, frustration)
- **What to try:**
 - Offer one-on-one reassurance
 - Create a small group option or buddy system
 - Gently adjust expectations without making a big deal

6. Tips to Help You Stay Flexible

- Check in with kids regularly: “How are we going so far?”
- Always have one or two backup games or activities ready
- Talk to your helpers—what do they notice?
- If unsure, pause the session, regroup, and reset

Final Thought: Flexibility Is a Superpower

Sessions don’t need to run perfectly to be successful. Sometimes the best moments come from pivoting—whether it’s slowing things down, speeding things up, or switching the plan entirely. Trust your instincts and remember: if the kids leave smiling, you’ve done a great job.

