

Your First Nippers Session

A step-by-step guide for a confident start

Why This Matters

Your first session sets the tone for the whole season. Nippers do not need a perfect session - they need a safe, welcoming and well-run one.

Age Managers play a key role in creating an environment where children can learn, feel included and enjoy being part of the program. The Junior Activities Program is designed to build surf awareness, skills and confidence over time, so your job is to guide the group through that journey rather than try to do everything at once.

What a Good First Session Looks Like

A successful first session usually means the group:

- **Feels welcomed and settled.**
- **Knew where to be and what was happening.**
- **Stayed safe.**
- **Had a go.**
- **Finished wanting to come back next week.**

The JAC will be able to guide you in what these should look like.

Before The Session

Keep your planning simple and practical. The best first session is one you can run calmly and clearly.

1. Know Your Plan

Use the relevant age guide and choose one or two achievable activities. A simple first session might include a welcome, a safety message, one skill-based activity, a game and a short group wrap-up.

Think through the order of your session before you arrive. This helps you explain it clearly and keeps the group moving.

2. Know Your Support People

You are not expected to run everything alone. Before the session, know who can support with water safety, first aid, behaviour concerns or general help on the beach. Make sure you know your key contacts and how your club wants issues escalated if something unexpected happens.

3. Check The Environment

Scan the beach and your activity area before the group begins. Consider the surf, the wind, the weather, space, distractions and the safest place to gather the group.

Set your learning space up so Nippers can see and hear you clearly. A well-positioned group is easier to manage and usually more engaged.

Starting The Session

Children respond well when the start is calm, organised and friendly

.Step 1: Gather The Group

Welcome the children, introduce yourself and any helpers, ensure everyone has been signed in and let the group know what they will be doing.

Use names where you can. Learning names quickly helps build trust and gives children a stronger sense of belonging.

Step 2: Explain The Plan Simply

Keep instructions short. Explain what is happening now, not everything that will happen for the rest of the season.

A simple explanation like 'Today we will learn one safety idea, play one game and practise one skill' is enough to get started.

During the Session

The Age Manager approach is simple: prepare, demonstrate, practise and give feedback.

Prepare

Have equipment ready, know your activity area and think about any safety adjustments you might need to make before the activity starts.

Demonstrate

Show the skill clearly. Break it into a few simple parts and focus on what the group should do.

Practise

Give children enough time to try. Some will learn quickly and others will need repeated attempts and encouragement.

Give Feedback

Keep feedback positive, specific and immediate. Praise effort first, then offer one simple tip to help them improve.

Keeping Everyone Engaged

Not every child will arrive full of confidence or ready to jump straight in. If attention drops, adjust quickly by shortening your explanation, changing the pace or using a more active task.

If a child is reluctant or disruptive, stay calm and try to understand what is behind the behaviour. Often a change of role, a buddy, a smaller task or a chance to help can make a big difference.

Safety First

Every decision should come back to safety and suitability. Match activities to the conditions, the age group and the capability of the children in front of you.

If conditions are not suitable, adapt. If an activity is not working, simplify. If you are unsure, ask for help.

How To Finish Well

Bring the group back together before the end. Reinforce one thing they learned, acknowledge effort and let them know what is next.

Finishing clearly helps children leave feeling successful and gives the session a sense of purpose.

Don't forget to make sure everyone signs out before they leave!



Quick First-Session Formula

Use this structure if you want a simple guide for your first day:

- **Welcome and group intro.**
- **One safety or surf awareness message.**
- **One skill or game.**
- **A short reset or drink break.**
- **A second activity or fun finish.**
- **A clear wrap-up with thanks and encouragement.**

Final Thought

You do not need to be the loudest or most experienced person on the beach to run a good first session. If your group feels safe, included and engaged, you are already doing the job well.

