

Many Japanese Schools Stop Swimming Lessons

VOCABULARY WORDS

1. **Swimming** (noun) /'swɪmɪŋ/: The act or skill of moving through water.
Example: I learned swimming when I was six.
2. **Budget** (noun) /'bʌdʒɪt/: An estimate of income and expenditure.
Example: The school had a limited budget for activities.
3. **Skill** (noun) /skɪl/: The ability to do something well, often developed over time.
Example: Reading and swimming are both important life skills.
4. **Facility** (noun) /fə'sɪləti/: A building or place used for a specific activity.
Example: The swimming facility was closed for renovation.
5. **Replace** (verb) /rɪ'pleɪs/: To put something new in place of something old.
Example: The old swimming pool was replaced with a gym.



Many schools across Japan are discontinuing their swimming lessons due to financial constraints and deteriorating facilities. The upkeep of aging pools is expensive, and budgets are already stretched thin. School administrators must prioritize essential services over pool repairs. This difficult decision affects the overall physical education curriculum. While some communities support the choice, others express deep concern.

Traditionally, swimming has been an essential part of Japanese school life. It not only promotes health but also teaches water safety—especially important in a country surrounded by water. Many parents are disappointed by the cuts. They fear students will miss out on learning an important life-saving skill. However, others argue that private facilities can fill the gap.

To adapt, some schools now rent access to municipal pools. This allows them to continue offering swimming lessons, albeit less frequently. Transporting students to off-campus locations is logistically challenging and time-consuming. While cost-effective, it also places strain on schedules. Not all schools have access to such alternatives.

In response to the shift, some educators suggest digital learning as a supplement. Videos and virtual lessons can introduce techniques and safety rules. However, experts argue that physical practice is irreplaceable in skill-based learning. Swimming requires muscle coordination and real-time feedback. Technology can support learning, but not replace direct experience.

The Japanese government is exploring ways to support schools during this transition. Some cities are proposing centralized aquatic centers for shared use. Others are seeking additional funding for repairs and maintenance. For now, local school boards make the final decisions. The long-term future of swimming education in Japan remains uncertain.

DISCUSSION

1. Should swimming be a standard part of education worldwide?
2. How would you design a cost-effective swimming program for schools?
3. Can technology truly enhance physical education? In what ways?
4. What is lost when traditional programs like swimming are removed from schools?
5. What physical skill do you believe all students should learn, and why?