

Vol 2, 2007 CEC ARTICLE:
Maximize Your Earning Potential: Part One
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Some of us teach fitness classes because we love feeling physically fit and helping others feel physically fit. We treat it as a hobby and never expect to earn a reliable income. Others of us while doing it for the above reason are also trying to support ourselves in the fitness industry. After spending almost 18 years in the fitness field I can tell you how difficult that can be. You have one of two options, diversify or drive all over the place. With the way gas prices are rising driving all over the place is becoming a questionable option. Not to mention the hassle of traffic, parking and hauling all your pool paraphernalia around!

Do you work at a facility that has land fitness classes as well as water fitness classes? Do you work at a facility that has lap swimming and children's swim classes? Do they have anybody who does personal training in the water? Do they have anyone qualified to train new fitness instructors until they can get certified? Do they have a variety of fitness classes or could you suggest a new type of class that could fill an available opening following your current class?

Let's discuss each of these options.

Most fitness facilities offer both land and water fitness classes. Is it time for you to expand your knowledge and explore land? Three years ago I saw the potential of Mat Pilates. My facility did not currently offer that class so I talked to the land coordinator. We arranged a trial session in the morning following my pool class and in the evening. I got certified and the classes three years later are still going strong.

When I decided to expand to land I analyzed several things. My physical limitations, I'm closing in on 50 and no longer have the option of jumping up and down punishing my joints. I'm also not particularly coordinated, so step aerobics was definitely out. I liked the fact that for the most part I would be laying down on a mat. What I liked even more was the earning potential. Because Mat Pilate's was billed as a specialty class, my land coordinator agreed to pay me 65% of the total class registration fee!

Don't want to get out of the pool? Is your water warm enough for a water pilates or yoga class? Of course, there are always options on staying warm if it's not. We offer workshops on water pilates and Tai chi. Why not expand your knowledge and start a new specialty class in the water that's focused on strength training, stretching and stress reduction.

Do you enjoy working with children or watching others workout? Are you a decent swimmer? Consider getting lifeguard certified and training to teach others to swim. Even if you don't particularly enjoy working with children there are many terrified of water adults who want to overcome this fear and learn to swim you could work with. Most pools are always looking for morning and early afternoon (lunch time lap swimmers) lifeguards. Due to shortage of available guards at that time suggest top pay!

You can share your fitness knowledge with others by personal training. Again, get certified, decide your personal expertise, and market yourself. Mine is aquatics and mat pilates. I have specialized even more by working with knee and hip replacements, back issues and stroke recovery. Of course, this means more education. Our Pre/Post rehab & Senior Fitness workshops are very helpful as well as getting certified with the Arthritis Foundation and MS Society. Traveling can be very expensive so try on-line and distance courses.

Do you have a talent for teaching others? Many times water certifications only come to the area once a year. Share your knowledge of how to teach a safe, effective water fitness class by training new instructors either after your class or during your class. Show your pool coordinator your qualifications and then suggest an increased hourly pay rate when you work with new instructors. Now your pool coordinator doesn't have to worry about complaints about inexperienced new instructors or injuries caused by the inexperienced new instructors. If you find out that this is your favorite part of your job consider becoming a presenter for us!

Starting new classes, personal training and staff training can all be done in those off hours between morning fitness classes, lap swimming and after school classes. You can fill those empty pool hours: a win/win situation for both you and the pool coordinator. Another benefit, no running from facility to facility! You maximize your earning potential!

Deck demoing & Cueing: Part Two

You are probably asking right now what deck demoing and cueing have to do with maximizing your earning potential. It comes down to how many classes can you physically teach if you workout in each one. There comes a time when your body will say that's it, this is my limit.

There are many disadvantages to over exercising including fatigue, overuse injuries and lowered immunity. Two of the ways for fitness instructors to avoid this is by varying their classes (one aerobic, one strength, one mind/body) and by directing rather than participating. That's where deck demoing and cueing come into the picture.

Being proficient at deck demoing has many benefits. First, it allows your class to see all of you so that they can better follow your instruction. Second, you can see your class participants. Correct moves they may be doing wrong, improve their body alignment, etc. Lastly, you can extend the number of classes you can safely do in a day and/or week.

You may question that you can safely teach from the deck. After all it is a wet, slippery, hard surface. The air is hot, humid and smells like chlorine. The deck is definitely a challenging place to teach. Actions need to be taken to make the deck a safe place to teach.

First, to deal with the heat, humidity, and air quality a small fan directed at you may be necessary to improve airflow and keep you cool. A water bottle is essential. Also a towel to wipe sweaty hands and face on and a wet cloth to drape across your shoulders and neck may be useful.

Shoes are a must! Not only do they give you better traction, they also provide support for the foot and cushion impact.

A prop that is essential for deck teaching is a **bench** or **chair**. Utilize the chair to demonstrate rebound, level 2 or level 3 moves safely. Jumping should be done sparingly on deck due to the wet, slippery conditions and jarring impact to the body.

Some instructors also like to use a large mat. Again, this provides better traction and cushion. Make sure your mat does not slide and is big enough for you to do full range of motion for each move. Many an instructor has fallen when one foot was on the mat and the other on slippery tile.

When demonstrating moves remember to do only 2 or 3 yourself, cueing your participants to continue. You go into coaching; cueing for motivation, correcting wrong body position and alignment. At this time your arms can become your legs. For instance, a jumping jack, start by demoing 2 or 3 jacks, then take your arms out wide and back into your sides without using your legs.

You can also use anchored down movements. In the example of the jumping jack, again demo 2 or 3 jacks, then do to one side only, keeping the other leg under you. Make sure your class understands what you are doing, so that they do not change the movement to match yours.

It is also a good idea to rehearse the moves you are going to do later in the workout. Demonstrate 3 to 4 repetitions of each move showing any modifications that can be used for participants with physical limitations. An example, rebound ski can be changed to a level 3 tuck ski for those who shouldn't jump. Also mention any safety cues for the move. An example of this would be keep leg low, toe on the floor when doing straight leg kicks to the back.

A good deck demo instructor does very few full body movements. Once the move is introduced the instructor becomes, as mentioned above, a coach. He/she says, "I'm seeing some leaning, remember to stand tall! Look at that water moving over there! That's what I want! I think you can jump a little higher. Show me those belly buttons! Remember to land with soft knees!"

The other skill that makes a good instructor great is cueing. Cueing is communicating what you want your class to do. There are two types of cueing: visual and verbal. Verbal should be used minimally for cues that cannot be visually cued. The reason for this is to save the instructor's voice. Over time with overuse or incorrect projection (screaming) the vocal cords can become strained. Nodules or thickening can occur, permanently

damaging the vocal cords. Visual cues can be used for instruction, safety and motivation. Below are some examples of visual cues for each category. Remember to explain what each cue stands for.

Instructional:

- # of reps left – 4 fingers, 3 fingers, 2 fingers, 1 finger
- traveling direction --- point direction you want them to go
- turn --- circle 2 fingers
- increase speed --- hands, loose fist, thumbs up
- half speed --- make a plus sign with sides of hands together
- level 2 position --- hold up 2 fingers or tap shoulders & imitate sitting
- level 3 position --- hold up 3 fingers
- repeating a set of moves --- tap top of head with hand, means from the top or beginning.

Safety:

- breathing --- touch nose, inhale, touch mouth, exhale or hands on ribs, inhale expanding ribcage, exhale, making ribcage smaller.
- posture --- tap ear & shoulder or tilt arm from elbow to hand, then straighten back to vertical to indicate leaning
- heels down – go from pointing hand to flexing hand
- talk test --- touch mouth or ear

Motivation:

- how are you feeling? --- do okay sign, thumb & first finger form a circle, other 3 fingers up.
- you're doing great! --- High 5 sign

Verbal cues should be saved for introducing each move, motivation and safety. For example, just before changing to a rocking horse, say “two more, now rocking horse, right leg in front”. When giving verbal cues remember to keep them short and concise. Long sentences cannot be heard due to poor acoustics and competition with music. In the above example, I would have separated the phrase into “two more (pause) now rocking horse (pause) right leg in front”. Get rid of useless words. For example if I said “Now lets do a rocking horse with the right leg in front”. The useless words which give no information or direction are; lets, do, a, with, & the. They are a waste of your breath and vocal cords.

Instructors need to learn to project from the diaphragm. Deeper (bass) voices carry better than high (soprano) voices. Do NOT scream! This is very damaging to the vocal cords. Keep water handy to keep the throat moist.

Examples of verbal safety cues are:

- Posture: Stand or sit tall
- Chest up, tummy in
- Ears over shoulders, chin in
- Shoulders down
- No leaning, hips under shoulders
- Toe on the floor when kicking to the back

Joint: Roll through foot, heel down
 Soft knees
 Firm wrists

Breathing: Long, deep breaths
 Expand that ribcage
 In the nose, out the mouth
 How you doing? Should answer in 1 or 2 words to know
 they are working at right intensity

The best way to use verbal cueing is for motivation. It is difficult to motivate using visual cues. Save your voice to motivate. Examples of motivational cues are:

Instructional: introduce move
 rebound moves --- higher, let's see that belly button
 increase speed --- faster, keep range of movement
 increase force --- push that water, white-water time!
 Push up, pull down
 traveling --- get across that pool! Don't lean!
 Level 3 ---- scull a little faster! Hips under shoulders!
 Reps ---- just 2 more, you can do it!

Inspire: You're doing GREAT!
 That's it! That's what I want!
 Look at you go!
 Looking GOOD!

When an instructor uses verbal cues sparingly, their **class tends to listen**. He/she must be saying something important! They want to hear that praise you are giving them! If you rely mostly on visual cues, your class has to watch you so they know what's happening. Which way are they moving, how many repetitions are left, etc. You have a class that **tends to pay attention!**

Becoming proficient at cueing and deck demoing means your class can follow your instruction with ease. Word will get around how great your classes are. Before you know it there won't be room for you in the pool! Best of all you can teach an energetic, effective class without wearing yourself out. Meaning you can teach more classes, maximizing your earning potential!

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1. What are the two options you have if you are trying to support yourself in the fitness industry?

2. T/F Teaching a specialty class can earn you more per class than regular aqua aerobics.

3. If you can swim what are at least 3 other options you have at diversifying at a pool only facility.

4. If you don't mind land workouts, list 3 other options you have for diversifying at a multi-use facility.

5. If you have a talent for teaching others list 3 other options you have for diversifying.

6. What are 2 ways an instructor can avoid overuse injuries and over exercising in order to maximize the number of classes you can teach?

7. List 6 things that make deck demoing much safer for the instructor.

8. List 3 kinds of visual cues and why you need visual cueing.

9. List 3 things that are important in delivering verbal cues.

10. List the 3 kinds of safety cues.

11. List 2 kinds of motivational cues.

12. What are 2 advantages to using verbal cues sparingly?