

BRAND CONCEPT • © 1995

Bloop

A swimming school for adults who never learned.
Three genuinely different directions, one worked up,
and the risk stated for all three — including the one
being recommended.

3

directions, not one idea in
three colourways

1

worked up and applied

3

risks, stated plainly

Portfolio sample. Bloop is an invented swimming school. No real business is described or named, and every figure is illustrative.

THE PROBLEM ON THE TABLE

Every swimming brand is built for people who can already swim.

Adult beginners are roughly one in six Irish adults, and they are served almost entirely by leisure centres whose branding is aimed at lane swimmers, triathletes and children. Blue, waves, a stylised swimmer mid-stroke, and words like *technique* and *progression*.

The customer is a thirty-eight-year-old who has been quietly avoiding beaches for two decades. What they feel walking into a leisure centre is not *I would like to improve my catch phase*. It is dread, and mild shame, and a suspicion that everybody else there already knows what they are doing.

So the brief is not *make a swimming brand*. It is: make the least intimidating room in Ireland.

What we looked at

Eleven swim schools and four leisure centres across Dublin — their websites, signage, tone and photography. Every one of the fifteen used blue as the dominant colour. Twelve of the fifteen showed a photograph of somebody swimming well.

The gap, in one line

Nobody in this market has ever made a brand that admits the customer is frightened. That is the entire opportunity, and it is available because it is uncomfortable.

Fifteen swimming brands, fifteen shades of blue, none of them for the person who is scared.

WHAT FIFTEEN COMPETITORS LOOK LIKE

WHAT THEY ALL DO	HOW MANY OF FIFTEEN	WHAT IT SIGNALS TO A BEGINNER
Blue as the dominant colour	15	The same rooms they have avoided for twenty years
A photograph of good swimming	12	The standard they are failing to meet before they arrive
The word <i>technique</i> or <i>stroke</i>	11	That the lesson assumes a starting point they do not have
Children in the imagery	9	That they will be the only adult, and watched
Levels or grades named	7	Ranking, which is the specific fear
Anything acknowledging fear	0	—

Surveyed across Dublin in August. Illustrative here; in a real pack every one is screenshotted and dated.

THREE DIRECTIONS

Three arguments, not three colourways.

DIRECTION ONE

The Quiet Lane

Calm, spa-adjacent, muted greens and stone. Positions learning to swim as self-care rather than sport. Soft photography, lowercase type, a lot of white space.

The risk. Calm reads as expensive and slightly precious. It also looks like every wellness brand of the last five years, so it dates on a schedule you do not control — and it quietly signals that this is a treat rather than a thing you actually need.

DIRECTION TWO · RECOMMENDED

Bloop

Loud, funny, and completely unserious about everything except safety. Deep grape and acid green. The name is the noise you make going under, which is the joke and the whole position: we are not pretending this is dignified.

The risk. Humour about a fear can land as mockery if a single word is wrong. The voice has almost no margin for error — one caption that laughs *at* rather than *with* and the trust is gone, publicly, from the exact people who are hardest to get.

DIRECTION THREE

Second Chance

Earnest and testimonial-led. Real adults, real stories, documentary photography. Positions the school around transformation and dignity.

The risk. It depends entirely on a supply of people willing to be filmed talking about a private shame — and the ones who most need to see it are the least likely to agree to be in it. It also gets heavy fast, and heavy is hard to book on a Tuesday.

WHY DIRECTION TWO

Because the fear is not of water — it is of being watched. Calm does not address that and earnestness makes it worse by treating it as significant. A brand that is visibly not taking itself seriously gives the customer permission to be bad at something in public, which is the actual product being sold. It is also the only one of the three that a leisure centre could not adopt without looking ridiculous.

HOW THE THREE WERE TESTED

Each was written as a poolside sign, a booking page first line, and a caption for a Tuesday in February. A direction that cannot survive being a boring Tuesday caption is a mood board, not a brand — and direction one produced three captions that could have been for a candle company.

WHAT ALL THREE SHARE

None of them is blue and none of them shows good swimming. Those two constraints came out of the competitor work rather than out of taste, and they would apply whichever direction is chosen.

THE WORKED-UP DIRECTION

Bloop, in full.

PALETTE

**Deep Grape** #2A1B4A

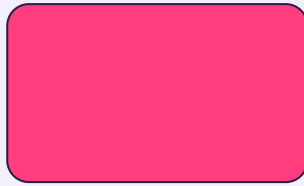
All type. The ink. Deliberately not navy.

**Acid** #C6FF4F

One thing per surface. Usually the joke.

**Violet** #5B3FD6

Backgrounds and the app. The only near-blue allowed.

**Hot** #FF3D7F

Safety information only. Never decoration.

No blue. That is the single most important decision in the palette — fifteen competitors are blue, and the customer has spent twenty years associating that blue with rooms they felt bad in.

TYPE

Bloop

Lexend for anything said once. It was designed to reduce reading friction, which is a nice accident given the audience, and at 800 with tight tracking it looks like a toy rather than a leisure centre.

Nobody is looking at you.

They are all thinking about themselves.

Schibsted Grotesk for everything practical — times, prices, what to bring, and every word of the safety information. Plain, calm, and it stops the brand tipping into pure novelty.

THE RULE THAT KEEPS IT FROM BECOMING A JOKE SHOP

Safety information is never funny and never acid green. Depth, ratios, what happens if you panic, the instructor's qualifications — all of it in plain Schibsted, in grape or hot pink, with no jokes anywhere near it. The humour buys attention; the seriousness about safety is what converts it into a booking.

The joke layer

Name, poolside sign, tote, captions, the tone of a reply. Acid green lives here and nowhere else.

The plain layer

Depths, ratios, prices, times, qualifications, cancellation terms. Grape on cloud, no ornament, no wit.

Why the split is the design

A frightened person needs to laugh and then to be reassured that somebody competent is in charge. One typeface each is the cheapest possible way to do both without either undermining the other.

APPLIED

How it looks on the things that exist.

The poolside sign

Violet ground, acid type: **YOU ARE ALLOWED TO BE RUBBISH AT THIS.** It is the first thing anybody sees and it does about half the marketing on its own.

The booking page

One question above everything:
Can you put your face in the water? Yes / No / Not sure.
That single question sorts the entire class list and tells the customer they have been understood.

The tote

Grape canvas, acid text: *Non-swimmer. Working on it.* Given to everybody on lesson one, worn in the street by people who a month earlier would not admit this out loud.

THE VOICE, IN FOUR LINES

Say this

"Nobody is looking at you. They are all thinking about themselves."

"Week one is standing in the water. That is the whole lesson."

"You will not be the worst one. There is no worst one, and we do not rank you."

"Depth is 1.2m. Two instructors, six people. You can stand up at any point."

Never this

"Conquer your fear!" — makes the fear the enemy and the customer the loser.

"Anyone can swim!" — they already know that, and it is why they feel worse.

"Dive in!" — three words, one of which is the single most frightening verb available.

Any photograph of somebody swimming beautifully.

THE BOOKING PAGE, WRITTEN

Can you put your face in the water?

Yes · No · Not sure, it has been a while

Whichever you pick, week one is the same: standing in 1.2m, in a group of six, talking. Two instructors. You can stand up at any point and nobody will comment on it. €95 for six weeks.

Three answers, no forms, no *tell us about your goals*. The question does the sorting and simultaneously tells the customer that whoever wrote it has met somebody like them before.

FOUR RULES STAFF CAN FOLLOW

Without ringing anybody.

One. Never say the word *just*.

Just put your face in. Just relax. The word makes a hard thing sound easy and the person doing it feel stupid. Say what to do, not how easy it is.

Two. Acid green is one thing per surface.

The joke, the headline, or the button. Two acid things and the brand reads as a childrens party rather than a school with insurance.

Three. Safety copy is never funny.

Plain type, plain words, no acid. If a sentence contains a depth, a ratio or a qualification, it is written straight.

Four. Never photograph good swimming.

Photograph faces at the shallow end, people standing in water, people laughing. A perfect front crawl is a photograph of the thing your customer is afraid they will never do.

WHAT WOULD BREAK IT

One bad joke

Humour aimed at the fear rather than the situation. The line is thin and it is worth writing every caption twice.

Growing into children's lessons

Commercially obvious, brand-fatal. The moment there are children in the pool, an adult beginner is being watched by parents.

Success stories

The instinct in year two will be to show people who can now swim a kilometre. That turns the school back into every other school.

TWO MORE RULES, FOR WHEN IT GROWS

Five. Never publish a class photograph. Not even with permission, not even smiling. The promise is that nobody is watching, and a photograph of a class is proof that somebody was.

Six. Instructors are named, never rated. Names build trust. Star ratings turn a nervous booking into a comparison exercise and reintroduce ranking through the back door.

THE ONE IDEA

Week one, nobody swims. That is the point, and it is on the price list.

The first lesson is standing in 1.2 metres of water, in a group of six, talking. No floating, no faces in, no instruction. It is printed on the timetable as **Week 1 — Standing.**

Why it cannot be copied quickly

A leisure centre cannot sell a lesson where nothing is taught — it contradicts everything their pricing and their timetable are built on. Copying it would mean admitting their existing beginner class starts too fast, in public, to their own customers.

Why it sells

Because the objection is never *I cannot swim*. It is *I cannot face the first lesson*. Removing the first lesson from the first lesson is the whole product, and it is the sentence that will be repeated to friends.

The name is the noise you make going under. We are not pretending this is dignified.

WHAT EACH DIRECTION WOULD HAVE COST

So the recommendation can be argued with.

DIRECTION	BUILD COST	HARDEST PART	WHAT IT WINS	WHAT IT LOSES
The Quiet Lane	Low — muted palettes are cheap to produce	Photography. It needs a lot and it needs to be good	Higher price point, calmer clientele	Urgency, and anybody on a budget
Bloop	Low — type and colour, almost no photography	The writing. Every line is a risk and needs a second pair of eyes	Word of mouth, and a customer nobody else serves	Anyone who wants this treated seriously
Second Chance	High — documentary photography and film	Finding participants willing to be identified	Depth, credibility, press interest	Speed. It cannot launch until people agree to appear

IF THE HUMOUR IS GENUINELY NOT YOU

Take direction three, not direction one. The earnest version and the funny version are both built on admitting the fear, which is the actual insight — the calm version is the only one of the three that quietly pretends the fear is not there, and it is the one I would advise against even though it is the easiest to live with.

What I would say on a call

If you cannot see yourself writing these captions for two years, do not take direction two. A voice this specific fails the moment somebody who does not believe in it is running the account, and that is a staffing question rather than a design one.

WHAT NONE OF THE THREE FIXES

Pool availability

You have four hours a week in a hired pool at awkward times. No brand solves that, and it is the most likely thing to cap the business.

Instructor supply

Teaching frightened adults is a specific skill and there are not many people who do it well. Growth is limited by that, not by demand.

Price sensitivity

€95 for six weeks is already below what the work is worth. If the real problem is that the maths does not close, that is a pricing conversation and it is free.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

Four things, in this order.

One. Decide on the direction this week, before anything is drawn. The three arguments above are the decision; everything after it is execution.

Two. Put *Week 1 — Standing* on the timetable and the price list. It costs nothing and it is the whole proposition.

Three. Write the poolside sign and get it made. One sentence, violet and acid, and it does half the work.

Four. Write ten captions and read them to somebody who cannot swim. If any of them makes them wince, that is the direction failing its only real test.

WHAT THIS IS JUDGED ON

The share of enquiries that turn into a first lesson attended. Not enquiries — attendance. This entire brand is built around one specific drop-off: the person who books and then does not come. If that gap does not narrow within two terms, the humour is not doing its job and I would say so rather than adjust the palette.

Bloop is invented. It exists to show what a €995 brand concept contains — three genuinely different directions with the risk stated for each including the recommended one, one worked up with palette, type, voice and applications, four rules, and one idea a competitor structurally cannot copy.