

Swimming for the Ages



Swimming looks different for different age groups. Choose swim lessons with safety and quality instruction in mind.

Infants/young toddlers

- The American Academy of Pediatrics does not recommend infant water survival classes. Babies may exhibit swimming reflexes but cannot move their head far enough out of the water to breathe.
- Classes for children ages 1–2 should focus on splashing, singing, and games while held by a caregiver. Infants should not be submerged in water because they are likely to swallow too much.

Older toddlers/young preschoolers

- Parent-child lessons for children ages 2–3 should introduce swimming readiness skills, basic safety, and fun in the water. Lessons may include kicking, throwing a ball, and floating with support.
- Children this age may have unearned confidence, thinking they can swim on their own. An adult should always be within arms' reach of a child in water.



Older preschoolers

- Most 4–5-year-olds are ready for formal swim lessons. Children's attitudes toward water may fluctuate; they may be ready and confident one day and worried the next.
- Lessons focus on floating independently, submerging their head in water for 5–10 seconds, gliding through water, treading water, and using coordinated kicking and arm movements.

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