

Parent Handbook

PARENT HANDBOOK AND LESSON GUIDELINES

NEVER CONSIDER A CHILD WATER SAFE OR DROWN PROOFED! ALL CHILDREN SHOULD BE CAREFULLY SUPERVISED WHEN IN OR AROUND WATER NO MATTER HOW MUCH TRAINING THEY HAVE RECEIVED.

1. STATEMENT OF LIABILITY AND PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Parents, you and your children's safety are your responsibility totally until I take your child out of your hands and into the water in a scheduled training exercise. If there is no lifeguard on duty, I do not assume responsibility for you, your children, or visitors that may be with you at the lesson. Children waiting for their lessons or dressing after lessons, as well as any other children brought to the pool, must be kept beside you or on your lap. Do not leave children unattended for any reason.

Diet

DO NOT FEED YOUR CHILD FOR 2 HOURS PRECEDING HIS LESSON. DO NOT ALLOW whole fruit, especially with a skin (such as certain berries, grapes, etc.) because it cannot be digested. Avoid other foods that take time to digest and all milk products for several hours. Your child may eat anything immediately after his lesson.

All children swallow a lot of air and some water during the lessons. When the stomach is distended the muscles tighten up across the abdomen, and a child will burp. If there is food in the stomach when this happens, the food will come out with the air and the child will vomit or spit up in the pool.

2. HOW SOON CAN I EXPECT MY CHILD TO LEARN TO SWIM?

We will not rush a child, nor allow the parents to do so. Usually a child is doing very well after four weeks of lessons (16 lessons). This depends on the individual child and your orientation to water

3. HOW SHOULD I PREPARE FOR LESSONS?

For your child's safety and as a courtesy to everyone else, all children who are not potty trained must wear a snugly fitting, reusable, cloth swim diaper during lessons. **Disposable swim diapers are not allowed in the pool** because they are ineffective in preventing pool contamination. Remove diapers and then dress your child in his/her swim diaper. Swimsuits are optional.

Be sure to bring two large, dry towels. After the lesson, your child should be dried and dressed in warm clothes. Use a warm blow dryer, if necessary, to dry hair. Please arrange your schedule so that you do not have to rush with a cold, wet baby or child.

4. **WHAT IF WE ARE LATE OR MISS A LESSON?**

Swimming lessons are approximately **12-15** minutes in length, four days per week, **Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday**. Sometimes I do a 3 day a week lesson. It depends on my students and my schedule. I schedule every **15** minutes which allows me some time to talk to parents between lessons. Since your lessons are short, it is helpful if you arrive 10 minutes before your scheduled time. This allows sufficient time to have your child ready to go into the water (without rushing) at the scheduled time. **Consistency is a very important ingredient** of the program. Steady attendance will increase your child's rate of progress. Because of heavy scheduling, I am unable to offer make-up lessons.

5. **LET'S PRETEND**

It is normal and healthy for children to "teach" their teddy bears, dolls, siblings etc. to swim and float. They master their emotions by becoming the teacher. You will love seeing this, and may want to tape it.

6. **ARE THERE MAKE-UP LESSONS FOR ILLNESS AND VACATIONS?**

NO! If your child begins lessons on Monday, you are expected to pay for the week. Heavy scheduling makes it impossible to offer make-up lessons. If you choose a different plan than 4 days per week because of other commitments, and I am unable to fill the other slots that you vacate, you will be required to

pay for the week. If your child has an illness, I will attempt to work with you, however, if you miss because of a scheduling conflict or just choose not to attend on any given day, I cannot make-up that day. Please feel free to discuss it with me. I pay for pool time at off sites so I pay for the pool whether the child attends or not so it is important that I have all students attend.

7. WHY UPDATES?

Your baby needs updates not because he will forget his skills, but because he will outgrow them. Especially during the first two years, babies' rapid growth causes their center of gravity to shift, which affects their ability to float. Updates, or brush-up lessons, are similar to seeing the pediatrician for a well-baby check-up.

There is another reason why your child needs updates. Experience indicates that your child will retain most of what he learns. However, a child will lose his self-confidence. That is one of the main reasons for refresher time. If I have enough students I will do some fun days where the parents can participate also.

8. WHAT IS THE COST OF THE LESSONS AND WHEN DO I PAY
Tuition is \$16/lesson in San Antonio locations and \$15/lesson in Devine. An annual registration fee of \$25 is due, payable to Margie Williamson, before lessons begin. If you plan on lessons the following week please pay on Thursday to keep place reserved the following week. (Not applicable to brush-up lessons.) If you need to make other arrangements for payment, please feel free to discuss this with me. Rates may vary depending of the pool site I am at. Please check my facebook for Margie Williamson. I post updates there.

9. REFUNDS?

Please do not start your child in this program unless you fully intend to complete the entire learning process. Once your

child begins lessons, the balance of your tuition is non-refundable if you withdraw your child.

The first few weeks are a period of low self-esteem for the child and lack of confidence for the parent. It can be a time of very low self-confidence in the water because the child has not had time to acquire and perfect his/her skills. The child is just learning to trust me. If the child's lessons are terminated during this time, your child will only remember being fearful or insecure. It takes time to work through our fears about the water.

Please call for information concerning the weather and cancellation of outdoor lessons due to weather. No outdoor lessons will be held when there are thunderstorms.

About Safety and Learning

You may have heard something about hyponatremia or water intoxication. This condition is caused by too much water being taken in or not being excreted. The first thing that I will teach your child to do is hold his/her breath. This will decrease the likelihood of much water being taken in. Also, lessons are short, about 15 minutes or so, which also will help. In addition, there is only one child in the lesson; I have only your child on whom to fully focus my attention. Please ask if you have any concerns about your child's ability to hold his breath.

Your child may have had some health issues. Please discuss these with me before lessons begin. If your child has ear tubes, please follow the advice of your ENT, but please make note that this advice varies from Dr. to Dr. Water DOES NOT cause otitis media, the type of ear infection most commonly associated with young children. Use eardrops only if your Dr. advises you to do so.

Emotional Issues

Some children take to lessons very easily and adapt to strangers well. Other children have a harder time. They may cry or ask for mommy. Swimming to mommy or daddy the first few days usually helps with this "stranger anxiety." Swimming is a new skill for a small child, and learning to hold your breath and go under can be scary at first. The more positive you can be the better your child will do. We can go more slowly but each child needs to develop a relationship with me. The trust that follows will usually take care of most of the anxiety that kids have about going under and learning to float.

I will automatically check your child out to see if he/she can self-rescue in clothes. Ask about any special problems you may have on your property or where you vacation. (lakes, docks, murky water, trips to the ocean, etc.)

Undoing Old Habits

Old habits die hard. If your child has used floaties, a swim trainer bathing suit, a life jacket, or other such flotation device your lessons may take longer because I have to teach your child to attain the correct posture in the water (horizontal). He may have learned to be vertical and do nothing, or kick vigorously while going nowhere. This will take extra time and your child may be very upset. He has come to expect to be magically held up, and when that extra amount of buoyancy is taken away, he may be a bit panicked. Not to worry, we can work through this, although some students may never be as "automatic" to go to their backs after using flotation for extended periods of time.

If you need to get in touch with me during the day, please call my cell phone at 210-422-1892 to leave a message. I can be emailed at infantaquatics@gmail.com,

Cell: 210-422-1892

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Is there a guarantee that my child will be safe or Drown-Proofed?

A. NO! NO one is DROWN Proof, not even adults who are good swimmers. Given the right set of circumstances, anyone can Drown.

Q. What can my child learn in one lesson.

A. Young children learn differently than older children and adults. They learn by doing something, and repeating it over and over. Most clubs and rec centers have lessons once weekly, however, when the child comes back, what was learned the previous week has to be re-learned. In our methodology, the child comes back immediately the next day, and builds on what he has done the day before, four times weekly. In this way, he learns to trust his instructor, and to practice by repetition the skills necessary for swimming and survival in the water. Instead of 60 minutes per week, he gets 60 minutes broken into 4 usable sessions. Children get cold and have short attention spans, so the rest of the longer lesson is often useless anyway.

Q. Are kids likely to have ear infections due to swim lessons?

A. NO. Most young children have otitis media, a middle ear infection which is not caused by swimming. It is treated with antibiotics, and the only contraindication for swimming is that sometimes an ear infection, in a child predisposed to them, causes them to swim off balance. Water causes swimmer's ear, which most infants and young children don't get.

Q. Will my child get water in his or her lungs as a result of swimming lessons?

A. No. We have a flap of cartilage at the back of the throat to keep water out of the trachea, or windpipe. While they are learning to hold their breath, sometimes they cough, but this is totally normal. Sometimes kids swallow air and need to burp during lessons. This is also not harmful. It is a result of swallowing air during the lesson. It sometimes occurs if a child cries during beginning lessons.

Q. Will my child become afraid of the water as a result of lessons?

A. No. The single most usual reason for kids to be upset in lessons is separation anxiety. Mom is really important and although mom may have prepared herself for lessons, she cannot prepare a baby or toddler who is non-verbal. It takes some time for the child to get used to new teachers and a new learning environment. The only experience most have with water is the bath. After a few weeks, almost all children are swimming calmly. They may be opposed to floating on their backs, because as soon as possible, all children want to sit up. Just try changing a diaper. Some children get comfortable in a few days, others take more time. Learning to swim is not easy, but once learned, it is a lot of fun.

Q. What is the average amount of time for a child to learn to swim and float?

A. About 16-24 lessons, or 4-6 weeks is average for kids to learn to swim/float/swim. This is a complicated skill, and it has to be broken down into parts so that the kids can learn the component parts. They can then put it together. Be patient. This is one of the most valuable things young children can learn.

Q. Will my child take longer if he/she has been in a life jacket or other flotation devices?

A. What is learned first is what is retained in a situation of panic or high anxiety. If the child has learned to become vertical, while thrashing and kicking, that is most likely what he will do if he falls into the water. Swim lessons will help, but learning to swim in the correct horizontal position may be much harder at first. The child has learned to essentially tread

water vertically. It must be unlearned, then the new skill learned.

Q. When can my child learn “real” swimming?

A. We teach swimming developmentally. When a child is ready for a new skill set, we will introduce it. Infants can learn to roll to the back and float, older toddlers to swim, then float, then swim; children around 4 can begin to use their arms in a coordinated way. From 4-6 children can begin to learn the 4 basic strokes, but it takes a long time to perfect them. Breast stroke and butterfly are particularly difficult. Because our kids have a lot of instruction on the back, many take to back stroke easily. Freestyle comes fairly easily, too, as they are used to rolling, they just need to refine it. Swim team is particularly helpful in learning the rules: when to touch with one hand or two, when to flip and how, how to increase speed, and how to calculate the rate at which you are progressing.

Q. What should I do with my child in the water?

A. Your instructor will show you some easy ways to send your child to the steps or side, or to another person. You need to show your child that swimming is fun and that it is something that the family likes and values. Your child gets his opinions from you; if you never go swimming, he might ask himself why are we taking these lessons. Get in and participate. Come to group classes. Make it fun.

