

Basic Swimming Skills: a Guide for Parents



Swimming is not only great fun but also an important skill for your child's development from an early age. If you're a parent of a young child and are interested in how to prepare them for swimming, I have a guide to basic swimming skills for you.

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First, let's explain a few terms.

- **Skill** is the ability to perform a certain activity or task efficiently and successfully based on acquired knowledge, experience, and practice. A skill can be physical, such as swimming or riding a bike, or mental, such as solving mathematical problems or writing essays. It is an ability that is often developed through practice and repetition and enables individuals to achieve certain goals or deal with specific situations effectively and efficiently.
- **Swimming ability** is an internal predisposition to move and manifest oneself in a water environment.
- **Swimming skill** is a quality acquired through movement learning and is not innate.

Swimming literacy, or swimming, is divided into primary and subsequent levels.

Primary swimming literacy = safe mastery of the aquatic environment with the acquisition of self-rescue skills appropriate to the child's age.

What does this mean? For example, if your child falls into a pool, they should be able to hold their breath, orient themselves underwater, use any swimming strokes to reach the edge (kicking with their legs, arm movements), and be able to adopt a floating position on their back, known as the rescue position.



Acquiring primary swimming literacy is important for the safety and confidence of the child (or adult) in the water and enables them to enjoy recreational and sports activities associated with water.



Subsequent swimming literacy = advanced level of swimming skills and knowledge.

It includes advanced swimming techniques such as freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, and butterfly, the ability to swim longer distances, improved breathing techniques, and the possibility of using advanced swimming aids. Gaining subsequent swimming literacy enables individuals to swim more efficiently and effectively, which can be beneficial for recreational and sports purposes, including competitive swimming.

Swimming courses for children aged 6 months to 6 years mainly focus on primary swimming literacy. **Through play in the water, children develop 5 basic swimming skills.**

THE 5 BASIC SWIMMING SKILLS

➤ 1. POSITIONING



Maintaining the correct position in the water is a fundamental skill that children should master. Within positioning, we teach children:

- Floating on water
- Dynamic positions – gliding
- Self-rescue positions





> 2. SUBMERSION AND ORIENTATION

Teaching a child how to submerge into the water and remain calm is a crucial step towards swimming confidence. Children gradually learn to submerge their face and head and orient themselves underwater to know where the surface is and how to reach the edge.

During submersion and orientation training, we gradually practice:

- Face and ear submersion
- Full head submersion (without swimming goggles)
- Opening eyes underwater
- Reaching for and retrieving objects underwater



> 3. JUMPS & FALLS

Jumps and falls are not only fun for children but also help them gain confidence in the water. It's important to teach your child how to safely jump into the water and how to react if they unexpectedly fall in. This skill can be crucial in an emergency.

We train jumps and falls progressively:

- From a sitting position - catching the child above the water, submersion, swimming to the surface
- From a crouch position - arrow position
- From a standing position - arrow, diver, suitcase, somersault • From a diving board

> 4. SWIMMING BREATHING

Swimming breathing is an essential skill for successful swimming. Teach your child how to breathe properly while swimming on their front and back. Encourage them to synchronize their breath with their movement and make breathing in water a natural part of swimming.





Steps for swimming breathing:

- Holding breath
- Submersion alphabet
- Exhaling into the surface with mouth/nose
- Exhaling underwater

➤ 5. STROKE TECHNIQUES

The final skill is stroke techniques. Children learn how to use their arms and legs correctly to move through the water using their palms and feet. We focus on:

- Developing a sense of water** - water gliding, splashing, moving arms and legs underwater
- Developing stroke movements** - children find out what arm and leg strokes allow them to move in the water. For example, keeping fingers on hands together to create a larger stroke surface, learning different strokes to move forward or backward.

Swimming can be great fun for a child and an important skill for lifelong activity. With the help of these basic swimming skills, you can prepare your child for safe and enjoyable swimming from an early age. Be patient, support your child, and enjoy spending time together in the water!

Soon you will find more information about basic swimming skills and tips and tricks for children in my **new eBook "Look what I can already do – on land and in water"** on my website zuzananemcova.cz.

