



YMCA of Greater Providence
[Input your Branch name here if desired]

Swim Lessons Guide



A Great Place To Learn To Swim

The YMCA Swim Lessons program was created by aquatic experts and field-tested at YMCAs across the country. It stresses a development approach to teaching swimming and is based upon the latest research in child development and teaching.

YMCA Swim Lessons will be especially attractive to parents because of the way children are taught. It means more personal attention. Lessons are developmentally appropriate and designed to quickly and effectively teach swimming skills. Sports like skin diving, synchronized swimming, wetball and competitive swimming encourage students to have a lifelong interest in aquatics.

Trained swim instructors will guide your child through a process of individual exploration conducted in a student-centered, caring atmosphere. Swim instructors have been given a variety of new creative teaching methods to use at all different swim levels.

YMCA Philosophy

The YMCA's mission is to provide programs that develop the whole person. Our swimming program is designed to develop a person spiritually, mentally and physically. We will be providing opportunities to learn, not only swimming skills, but also social skills, physical fitness, self-confidence, personal safety and rescue skills. We will be building character through activities that encourage caring, honesty, respect and responsibility. We will also be introducing students to other aspects of swimming, such as synchronized swimming, diving, skin diving, and water polo. Safety is our top priority. A lifeguard is present in the pool area during swimming lessons to assist with emergencies. Everyone succeeds. There are no failures in YMCA swim lessons. Each participant will progress at his/her own rate. Having fun is one of the most important objectives of the YMCA Swimming Program. Games and fun activities are an essential part of each class meeting. Class sizes are limited to ensure safety and maximum participation opportunities for the participant.

Administrative Policies

- 1) If the YMCA cancels or reschedules a course at the beginning of a session, full credit/refund will be given if transfer to another class is not possible.
- 2) If verified illness prohibits class attendance, and is reported to the YMCA during the class session in question, a prorated credit will be given. A doctor's note must be submitted.
- 3) If more than one class is cancelled due to weather or other unforeseen circumstances and a make-up class is not scheduled, a credit will be issued for each class beginning with the second cancellation.
- 4) Only the Aquatic Director will approve refunds for reasons not mentioned above.
- 5) The YMCA does not offer make-ups for individual absences.

Facility and Health Department Regulations

- 1) R.I. State Law requires that everyone shower thoroughly before entering the pool.
- 2) Street shoes are not allowed to be worn on the pool deck including sandals worn outside.
- 3) Strollers must be left in the hallway or locker room.
- 4) Gum chewing, eating and beverages other than water, are prohibited in the pool area.
- 5) Persons with an infection or a contagious disease are prohibited from using the pool.
- 6) Use of instructional aides, such as kickboards, noodles, resistance aides, are restricted to classes and cannot be used during Family Swim.

Our Experienced And Caring Staff

The YMCA carefully selects its swim instructors based upon their experience and their ability to work with children. Our staff are well-trained and experienced. All YMCA instructors are certified in CPR and First Aid and go through extensive training in both teaching and water safety. New instructors must work as an assistant teacher for seven weeks under the supervision of an experienced teacher. Staff can be trained by the YMCA of the USA as a Parent/Child, Preschool, Youth and Adult Instructor.

YMCA Swim Lessons

Each class includes components that parents across the country said they were looking for in swimming lessons for their children: personal safety, personal growth, stroke development, water games and sports, and rescue. They are incorporated into all levels of YMCA Swim Lessons, including the Parent/Child and Preschool programs. The levels of YMCA Swim Lessons include:

Parent-Child - (6 to 36 months) include four levels based upon age. Shrimp, Kipper, Inia and Perch. Because they are parent-child classes, often they may be combined with parents working on age appropriate activities. Babies must be at least 6 months old and able to hold their head up.

Preschool - (3 to 5 years) includes four levels based on ability: Pike, Eel, Ray and Starfish. The YMCA also offers a special Pike with Parents for young beginners who still need their parents with them during lessons.

Youth and Teen - (6 to 17 years) includes seven levels based upon ability: Polliwog, Guppy, Minnow, Fish, Flying Fish, Shark and Porpoise.

Adult - (16 years and up) includes beginner, intermediate and advanced levels.

**Please understand that our YMCA progressive swim classes are based on a child's current swimming ability. At the start of each session, our instructors will evaluate your child's skills to ensure that his/her ability matches that of the class description. Based on that evaluation, we may work with you to move your child to a more appropriate class or give you a credit for an appropriate class in a later session.

Why Do You Teach Boating Safety?

Boating is an increasingly popular activity, and the vast majority of boating accidents are preventable. By expanding the knowledge of boating safety, we can save lives and needless accidents. An emphasis of boating safety is included in all of the programs: Parent-Child, Preschool and Youth and Adult.

Why Can't Parents Watch Their Child's Swim Lessons?

Studies have shown that when parents attend classes, children are more interested in the parents than in the class. Even if your child does well with you there, other children in the pool may be bothered by your presence. Also, the children will look to parents for discipline instead of the instructor. Parents are welcome during the first and last five minutes of each class as well as the last class of the session.

How Do You Decide How Many Participants Are In Each Class?

The YMCA of the USA and our Association set guidelines for the size of the classes. Maximum class sizes are as follows:

Parent/Child Classes	1:12
Preschool Classes	1:6
<u>Youth Classes</u>	
Polliwogs and Guppies	1:8
Minnows and Up	1:10
Adult Instructional Classes	1:12

- 7) Glass containers are not allowed in pool area or locker rooms.
- 8) Please remove all band-aids before swimming.
- 9) Bathing suits must be worn (no cutoffs or T-shirts).
- 10) Running, splashing and horseplay are not permitted.
- 11) Diving is allowed in the deep end only. The starting blocks are only used during swim team practice.
- 12) All swimmers with hair shoulder length or longer must wear a bathing cap or tie hair back securely.
- 13) Swimmers are to jump in the pool feet first and forward. No back jumps, twisting jumps or flips are allowed.
- 14) Inflatable floatation devices are not allowed. We have flotation devices available for children who need them.
- 15) All children who are not toilet trained must wear swim diapers. Regular disposable diapers are not allowed.

Guidelines To Help You Decide Your Child's Level

Look at each level and determine whether your child can consistently perform ALL the skills within that level. If so, check the next level, and keep moving through the levels until you reach one which your child cannot consistently perform ALL the skills. That is probably the level for your child. It is much easier to move a child to a higher level than to move him or her down.

PIKE

- Walk or swim away from the pool wall w/assistance, turn and grab wall
- Front and back float with flotation device (IFD).
- Paddle 10 yards with float, 5 feet without on front, back and side (must perform all three)
- Scull 30 seconds with IFD

EEL

- Front and back float with or without IFD for 20 seconds.
- Paddle 25 yards with float, 15 feet without on front, back and side (must perform all three)
- Scull 1 minute with or without IFD

RAY

- Front and back float without IFD for 30 seconds.
- 10 bobs in shallow water
- Tread water for 20-30 seconds with IFD
- Swim the following:
 - Front alternating paddle, using rhythmic breathing, 15 yards with IFD, 20 feet without
 - Front symmetrical paddle 25 yards with IFD, 20 feet without
 - Side alternate paddle 15 yards with IFD, 20 feet without
 - Back alternate paddle 15 with IFD, 20 feet without
 - Back symmetrical paddle 15 with IFD, 20 feet without

STARFISH

- Front and back float without IFD for 1 minute
- 10 bobs in deep water
- Tread water for 20-30 seconds without IFD
- Swim the following 25 yards with IFD, 40 feet without
 - Front alternating paddle, using rhythmic breathing
 - Front symmetrical paddle
 - Side alternate paddle
 - Back alternate paddle
 - Back symmetrical paddle

Please understand that children may not progress to the youth lessons until they are 6 years of age. If they have met all the requirements of Starfish and are not yet 6, please be assured that they will be challenged to continue to perfect strokes and learn new strokes at the Starfish level.

Can I Place My 2 Year Old In The Preschool Program Or My 5 Year Old In The Youth Swim Lessons?

No. National YMCA guidelines require that the Preschool Swim Lessons begin at the age of three and Youth Swim Lessons begin at the age of six years. Developmentally, preschoolers need to be at least three to learn how to swim without their parents. Six-year olds are physically and socially more mature than preschoolers.

There Are Times When It Seems That My Child's Class Is Just Playing Games Or "Goofing Off." Why?

Learning takes place in many ways. The YMCA uses playful techniques that encourage the students to learn new skills in creative ways. The instructors also may develop a game or water sport which utilizes a skill being learned. Please remember that games can serve a useful purpose as a way of learning.

Why Do Some Instructors Spend More Time In The Water Than Others?

Instructors have different styles of teaching; each level of instruction demands different styles. Beginner classes such as Pike, Eel and Polliwog, require the instructor to be in the water all of the time. Beginning with the Starfish and Guppy levels, this becomes less necessary because children are familiar with more water skills, their confidence has developed, and they are working on perfecting specific skills. An instructor may have a better view of these skills watching children from the deck.

Can I Change Classes If I Am Not Satisfied With My Child's Instructor?

Occasionally it happens that a child does not work well with a particular instructor. It is possible to change to another class, but it must be done based on availability and with the approval of the Aquatics Director.

Why Do We Have To Remove Our Shoes?

The health department regulations prohibit street shoes because that bring in particles of dirt, rocks, and possibly glass or other sharp objects as well as germs.

Why Did My Child Not Get A Progress Report?

A progress report should be filled out on every student the fifth week of class prior to the next registration. If the student misses that class, please as your instructor for the report at your next lesson.

What If I Have Additional Questions?

Please feel free to contact the instructor outside of class time. Our instructors are more than happy to talk to you about your child's progress.

Has My Instructor Been Trained?

All instructors have been trained and are under the supervision of a qualified YMCA instructor trainer. Each instructor brings a unique combination of skill and experience that will help you and your child to have a positive swim experience.

How Do I Know What Level To Put My Child In?

The Program Brochure has a brief description and age requirement for each level. For a more in depth description, please see the Welcome Center or the Aquatics Director. Swimmer must be able to complete all requirements before progressing to the next level.

What determines the length of classes?

Classes are set at 30- or 45- minutes in order to accommodate as many members as possible in the short time we have for swimming lessons. It is also based on the attention span of most children.

POLLIWOG

- Walk or swim away from the pool wall with assistance, turn and grab wall
- Front and back float with flotation device (IFD).
- Paddle 25 yards with float, 10 feet without on front, back and side (must perform all three)
- Scull 1 min with or without IFD

GUPPY

- Front and back float without IFD for 1 minute
- 10 bobs in deep water
- Tread water for 20-30 seconds with IFD
- Swim the following 25 yards with or without IFD :
 - Front alternating paddle, using rhythmic breathing,
 - Front symmetrical paddle
 - Side alternate paddle
 - Back alternating paddle
 - Back symmetrical paddle
- Perform kneeling dive with assistance, glide, paddle back to pool wall with or without IFD

MINNOW

- Tread water for 1 minute without IFD
- Swim the following 25 yards without IFD
 - Front alternating paddle, using rhythmic breathing, (Crawl stroke)
 - Front symmetrical paddle (breaststroke)
 - Side alternate paddle and scissor kick (sidestroke)
 - Back alternating paddle (backstroke)
 - Back symmetrical paddle (elementary backstroke)
- Perform a stride dive and a standing dive

FISH

- Tread in deep water for 3 minutes without IFD using a combination of kicks
- Float on front and back for 6 minutes with a minimum of movement
- Swim the following 50 yards without IFD :
 - Front Crawl stroke with rotary breathing and open turns
 - Breaststroke with open turns
 - Sidestroke
 - Backstroke
 - Elementary backstroke
- Swim Butterfly stroke for 25 feet
- Perform head-first and feet-first surface dives and swim down 6 -8 feet

FLYING FISH

- Tread in deep water for 6 minutes using all 4 kicks
- Swim the following 100 yards without IFD
 - Front Crawl stroke with bilateral breathing and flip turns
 - Breaststroke with flip turns
 - Sidestroke using regular and inverted scissor kick
 - Backstroke with open turns
 - Elementary backstroke with glide
- Swim Butterfly stroke for 15 yards

SHARK

- Swim the following 100 yards
 - Front Crawl stroke with bilateral breathing and flip turns
 - Breaststroke with pull out
 - Sidestroke using regular and inverted scissor kick
 - Backstroke with open turns
 - Elementary backstroke with glide
 - Butterfly stroke for 25 yards
 - Swim the following 50 yards
 - Inverted Breaststroke
 - Over-arm Sidestroke
- Swim 200 yards individual medley of front, back, breast, and butterfly

Questions Often Asked

Why Do You Use Flotation Devices?

Instructional flotation devices, or IFD's, play an important role early in beginner swim lessons. Swim belts (bubbles), noodles, kickboards and other such devices are used in all levels of swim lessons. IFD's help beginners move through the water with little or no assistance, building their self-confidence and successes. All children enrolled in Pike, Eel or Polliwog are required to wear a bubble. When the child is ready for a smaller bubble, the instructor will advise the parent. Flotation devices are also used by experienced swimmers to teach new skills, and improve and refine existing skills. Only YMCA approved IFD's may be used.

What Is The YMCA's Character Development Program?

Character development is an element that is woven into all YMCA programming. The YMCA focuses on four key values: caring, honesty, respect and responsibility. Periodically, instructors will offer short exercises and discussions in their classes that involve these four values.

What Are Family Huddles?

Family Huddles are handouts sent home with swim class participants that describe activities for the whole family. The Family Huddles reinforce what the child has learned in class and improves his or her learning retention. There is information about the YMCA and water safety. There is a section that deals with character development beyond what the child learns in swim lessons.

Why Doesn't My Child Start Swimming When The Class Begins?

It is important for the instructor to set the tone of the class and provide a comfort level for all participants. With our instructional program, you should see less time spent sitting on the wall and on deck and more practice time in the water.