

Excel Starfish Swimmers Survival Swim Frequently Asked Questions

WHAT MAKES YOU QUALIFIED TO TEACH MY CHILD?

My name is Erin Loewe. I always loved the water and enjoyed many water activities as a child growing up in Orlando, FL, which would not have been possible had I not had early, consistent swim instruction. In fact, my mom actually taught survival swimming lessons in our backyard pool, and I always thought it would be rewarding to someday do the same. I taught survival swim lessons with Infant Swimming Resource (ISR) for six years in Tallahassee, FL, before moving with my family to Franklin in 2012. Recently I saw the tremendous need for quality swim instruction in the local community, so I decided to branch out on my own. Using the techniques I learned through my years of teaching, combined with my knowledge of behavioral science, anatomy/physiology, and child development, I feel I am uniquely qualified to teach children how to swim safely and confidently.



HOW ARE SURVIVAL SWIMMING LESSONS DIFFERENT FROM OTHER SWIMMING PROGRAMS?

My primary focus is to teach your child to become a productive swimmer and floater in any depth of water. The goal of these lessons is that your child becomes an "aquatic problem solver," so that she is able to use her new skills in many different aquatic settings and situations if ever needed. Although NO ONE is ever "drown proof," completing my program will greatly increase your child's chance of surviving an aquatic accident, even when fully clothed! Additionally, I hope to help your child build a strong foundation for a lifelong love of the water.

WHAT WILL MY CHILD BE ABLE TO LEARN? WILL HE/SHE ACTUALLY LEARN TO SWIM?

YES! Your child will learn to swim, not in the way that Michael Phelps does but in a way that will make most people say, "Wow, that kid is a fish!" Children older than one year old (who are walking well) are taught to swim with their face in the water, and when they sense the need for air, to rollback onto their back to float. After resting and breathing, they will roll over and continue to swim to the nearest point of safety. A child can perform this swim-float-swim

sequence to reach safety in a survival situation. Children can also perform this sequence in their clothes. If a child does not see a way out of her predicament, she will roll over onto her back and maintain a back float position. This buys the parent time in the event of an accident. This same sequence is most often used for fun at the pool. The confidence and self-esteem of these young swimmers is truly amazing! **Teaching your 1-6 year old the swim-float-swim sequence will take approximately 5-7 weeks of private lessons, 4 days per week.**

HOW DO LESSONS WORK, AND WHAT'S WITH THE CLOTHES?

At Starfish Swimmers, all lessons are one-on-one, with only the instructor and the child in the pool, because I believe your child deserves my undivided attention. The parent or caregivers cheer on the child poolside. Until the last week of lessons, all of the child's lessons will be in a swim diaper/swim suit. When both I and the parent feel confident in the child's skills, we will add a t-shirt one day, then "summer clothes" another, and then "winter clothes" to ensure the child can complete her "aquatic problem solving skills" fully clothed. The reason for this is that most aquatic accidents happen when a child is clothed, and while we hope this never happens, we want the child to encounter this in a controlled lesson environment first where we can help her make necessary adjustments as needed.

On the last day of lessons, everyone is back in a swim diaper/bathing suit. For swim-float-swimmers, I will get mom and dad in the pool to make sure the child will swim and rollback for them.

ARE SWIMMING LESSONS FOR INFANTS AND SMALL CHILDREN SAFE?

YES! I am dedicated to safety and maintain numerous safety protocols to promote safe lessons. Your child's health and well-being are closely monitored on a daily basis. In addition, your child's medical and developmental history is a mandatory part my registration process, all of which is held strictly confidential.

I can adjust lessons to accommodate for many conditions as long as I know about them. If at any time I do not feel that I can provide safe lessons, I reserve the right to stop lessons. I also may at any time request a physician's note approving your child to continue participation in lessons.

Consider these additional points:

- No child is ever thrown into the pool.
- A child is never submerged for more than 7 seconds.
- I will monitor your child for temperature and muscular fatigue, as well as physical and psychological well-being.
- Your child's daily routines outside of lessons hold valuable data for me. You will receive instruction on how to communicate this information to me.

HOW DO YOU TEACH VERY YOUNG KIDS TO SWIM?

I have been trained to teach young children to swim by honoring each child's individual strengths and experiences. I understand the fundamentals of the behavioral sciences, child development and of sensori-motor learning as it relates to the acquisition of aquatic survival skills, and I use this education to guide each child through the sequence of learning to swim and float.

WHY SHOULD PARENTS ENROLL THEIR CHILD IN YOUR LESSONS?

Parents enroll their children in Starfish Swimmers Survival Swim Lessons because they understand their children's abilities and want to give them every opportunity to learn. They also feel it is important to teach their children how to survive by resting and breathing should they ever find themselves alone in the water. Research shows that there are better times to learn certain skills, and swimming is best learned early in life.

WHY ARE PARENTS NOT ALLOWED IN THE WATER DURING THE LESSONS?

I do not want the child to initially associate the water with the love, attention and affection of the parent while in the water. Also, it takes incredible concentration and objectivity to teach a very young child how to respond to an aquatic emergency, and research shows that parents often find it too difficult to be objective to be effective teachers with their own children in the water. This is even true with survival swim instructors and their own children. I took my own children to another survival swim instructor for just this reason! However, I do get parents in 1-2 times over the session to teach them how to swim safely with their own children.

WILL MY CHILD LEARN TO FEAR THE WATER?

There is an important difference between being fearful and being apprehensive because you are not yet skilled in a dangerous environment. These are not like traditional swim lessons; it is a drowning prevention program that teaches survival swimming. Your child may not happily skip to his or her lesson each day at first, but that's okay. Sometimes as a parent, you make sure your child does things for his or her safety, like receiving vaccinations and sitting in a car seat, because you know they are important. The same can be said for survival swim lessons.

FUN can be defined as when SKILL meets CHALLENGE. Once competent in their skills, many children cannot be dragged away from the pool. They are having entirely too much FUN.

When you learn about survival swim lessons, you know this is the most important level of protection you can give your child to prevent drowning. If fences, supervision, and alarms fail, your child's skill level in the water is an additional measure of protection.

WHAT OTHER BENEFITS DOES THE STARFISH SWIMMERS EXPERIENCE PROVIDE THE CHILD WHO HAS BEEN THROUGH LESSONS?

Every child is different; however, many parents report that once their young children have mastered learning to swim, the resulting confidence in the abilities engenders a positive self-concept that is often demonstrated in other aspects of their personalities.

HOW DO CHILDREN KNOW TO HOLD THEIR BREATH?

Breath holding skills are taught in the first lesson. We shape breath control using highly effective positive reinforcement techniques.

WHAT ABOUT THE USE OF FLOTATION DEVICES AND LIFE JACKETS?

Flotation devices give children a false sense of security and hold them in postures that are not compatible with swimming skills. If a child learns that he can jump in the water and go into a vertical posture and he will be able to breathe, he is getting the wrong idea about that environment. Children who cannot swim should not be allowed to learn that it is safe to play in the water while relying on a crutch. Life jackets must be worn in a boat or around the water when there is the potential for accidental submersion, but they are not a substitute for the ability to swim or for adult supervision.

HOW CAN TODDLERS LEARN TO RESPOND TO THE DANGER THAT WATER PRESENTS WHEN THEY FALL IN?

A toddler does not need to perceive danger or be afraid to respond appropriately to being underwater. If a toddler has learned to roll over and float when he needs air, he doesn't need to perceive danger in order to respond in this manner. He needs skill, practice and confidence to calmly deal with the situation.

WHAT FURTHER LESSONS WILL MY CHILD NEED?

I recommend that you bring your child back for *refresher lessons* at Starfish Swimmers. Frequency depends on the child's age, growth rate, skill level and confidence level. The goal of refreshers is to help your child adjust his/her new body size and weight to his existing skill level. I will work with your child to help fine-tune his aquatic experience to assist with building efficiency, which will result in self-confidence. This is especially important if your child has not been able to practice any appropriate aquatic skill between seasons. Refresher lessons are important because children change so much both cognitively and physically during the first 4-5 years of life. It is important that their aquatic skill and abilities grow with their bodies.