

Nantucket Swimming – Youth Learn to Swim Lessons – A Guideline for Parents

- Regardless of your child's swimming ability, you can play a critical role in guiding, caring for, supervising, motivating and working with your child during this experience. The following are some suggestions to help you provide the best experience for your child.
- Prepare your child for this experience. Give your child an opportunity to visit the pool before the beginning of class. Describe what will be happening and perhaps talk to an instructor. Even very young children can benefit from this orientation.
- Be prompt. Children can get anxious if hurried. Allow plenty of time before and after class for showering, going to the bathroom and dressing.
- Follow rules and regulations. You are responsible for your child's actions, not the instructor or lifeguard. Teach, talk about and review the pool rules with your child. Lead by example.
- Attend every lesson. Frequent practice is the key to adjustment and learning. Children can regress quickly if not allowed to practice. It is a good idea to encourage a crying or hesitant child to continue attending the class. Just being around the pool and observing the activities can help your child adjust.
- Complete all the levels. Keeping your child enrolled in all the levels gives your child the opportunity to truly have the skills to be safe in, on and around water and develop the foundation for further participation in aquatics.
- Encourage safe practices. Young children cannot be expected to exercise good judgment and caution. Children must be constantly reminded to enter the water only after asking and receiving permission from an adult who is supervising them and to walk slowly in the pool area.
- Have patience. It is important not to pressure your child to perform before he or she is ready. Readiness results from maturity, experiences and other individual factors.
- Avoid comparisons. No two children develop at the same rate. Each child learns at a different pace depending on such factors as physical growth, individual development, comfort, practice and previous experience. Respect your child's qualities and resist making comparisons to siblings or other children.
- Provide encouragement. A good rule is to encourage your child to do everything, but not to force him or her to do anything. Forcing a child will only bring negative results. Let your child know that learning involves lots of practice and they should keep trying.
- Be positive. Use a positive attitude when correcting behavior or enforcing rules. Discuss what behavior is expected in addition to pointing out what the child has done wrong.
- Give praise. Recognize your child's efforts, no matter how small the accomplishment. Children are not motivated by failure or ridicule. Success promotes success. Praise should be descriptive of an action. Rather than simply saying "Good job," say, "I like the way you blew those great big bubbles."
- Facilitate practice and review. Try out the skills and activities at home or during the recreational swimming hours at the pool. The bathtub, shower or wading pool is a perfect place for practice. The more practice, the better your child will learn and the more quickly he or she can progress.
- Do not expect that your children will learn to swim in one set of lessons, or even in one season. It is important to enroll children in lessons throughout multiple seasons to ensure that they can swim well and handle themselves in water.