

Learn-to-Swim Guidelines

The American Red Cross offers six comprehensive courses levels that teach you, your child or other family members how to swim skillfully and safely. The prerequisite for each level is the successful demonstration of the skills from the preceding level, except for Level 1, which has no prerequisite. Each level of Learn-to-Swim includes training in basic water safety and helping a swimmer in distress, in addition to the skills outlined below:

Level 1—Introduction to Water Skills

Purpose: Helps students feel comfortable in the water and to enjoy the water safely. Learn-to-Swim Level 1 participants learn to:

- Enter and exit water safely
- Float on front and back
- Open eyes underwater, submerge to pick up an object
- Submerge mouth, nose, and eyes
- Explore arm & hand movements
- Exhale underwater
- Explore swimming on front and back
- Use a life jacket
- Follow basic water safety rules

Level 2—Fundamental Aquatic Skills

Purpose: Gives students success with fundamental skills. Level 2 participants learn to:

- Exit the water using the ladder or slide
- Tread water
- Glide on the front and back
- Float on front and back
- Explore swimming on side
- Roll over from front to back, back to front
- Enter water by stepping or jumping from the side
- Open eyes underwater, submerge head to retrieve object
- Swim on front and back using combined strokes
- Move in water while wearing life jacket
- Perform rhythmic breathing

Level 3—Stroke Development

Purpose: Builds on the skills in Level 2 through additional guided practice. Level 3 participants learn to:

- Jump into deep water from the side
- Perform rotary breathing
- Perform butterfly kick and body motion
- Change from vertical to horizontal position on front and back
- Dive from sitting or kneeling position
- Survival float
- Perform HELP and huddle positions
- Submerge fully and retrieve object
- Swim front crawl
- Perform reaching assists
- Bob with head fully submerged
- Use Check-Call-Care in an emergency

Level 4—Stroke Improvement

Purpose: Builds on the skills in Level 3 through additional guided practice. Level 4 participants learn to:

Dive from compact of stride position
Swim breaststroke
Tread water using sculling arm motions and kick
Swim underwater
Swim elementary backstroke
Use safe diving rules
Perform throwing assists
Perform feet-first surface dive
Swim on side using scissors kick
Care for conscious choking victim
Coordinate butterfly
Perform open turns on front and back
Perform compact jump into water from a height while wearing a life jacket

Level 5: Stroke Refinement

Purpose: Provides further coordination and refinement of the following strokes:

Front crawl
Elementary backstroke
Back crawl
Sidestroke
Breaststroke
Butterfly

Level 5 participants also learn to perform:

Shallow dive and begin swimming
Front flip turn
Treading water with two different kicks
Backstroke flip turn
Survival swimming
Rescue breathing
Tuck and pike surface dives

Level 6: Swimming and Skill Proficiency

Purpose: Refines all six strokes so students swim them with ease, efficiency, power and smoothness over greater distances. Level 6 is designed with “menu” options that focus on preparing students to participate in more advanced courses or other aquatics activities, such as competitive swimming or diving. The options include:

Personal Water Safety
Lifeguard Readiness
Fundamentals of Diving
Fitness Swimmer

Level 6

Swimming and Skill Proficiency: refines the strokes so students swim them with ease, efficiency, power and smoothness over greater distances. Level 6 is designed with "menu" options. Each of these options focus on preparing students to participate in more advance courses, such as Water Safety Instructor and Lifeguard Training. These options include:

- Personal Water Safety

- Lifeguard Readiness
- Fundamentals of Diving
- Fitness Swimming

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- Personal Water Safety
- Lifeguard Readiness
- Fundamentals of Diving
- Fitness Swimming