

The American Red Cross Swimming and Water Safety Program Learn-to-Swim Skills

The American Red Cross offers six comprehensive course levels that teach how to swim skillfully and safely. The prerequisite for each level is the successful completion and/or demonstration of the skills from the preceding level, except for Level 1, which has no prerequisite. The revised program (2005) will include some new skills at each level. 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 ages 4 & up

Purpose: Helps students feel comfortable in the water. Level 1 participants learn to:

- Enter and exit water safely
- Submerge mouth (head) independently
- Exhale underwater through mouth and nose
- Open eyes underwater, pick up submerged object, at least 2 times
- Float on front and back with support
- Swim on front and back using arm/leg actions
- Rollover front to back, back to front w/support
- Treading – explore arm and hand movements in chest-deep water
- Follow basic water safety rules, helping others
- Use a life jacket

Level 1 Exit Skills Assessment:

1) enter unassisted, move 5 yds, bob 5 times to chin level, safety exit water;
2) Float on front w/support for 3 seconds, assisted roll to back, assisted float on back for at least 3 seconds.



Level 2: Fundamental Aquatic Skills

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

- Enter water independently, jumping from the side, in chest deep water
- Exit water safely using ladder or side
- Swim on side
- Submerge entire head, at least 5 seconds
- Rhythmic pattern of exhaling while head is submerged (bobs)
- Open eyes underwater, pick up a submerged object, at least 3 times in shallow water
- Float on front and back unsupported
- Perform front and back glide, unsupported
- Roll over from front to back, back to front
- Swim on front and back using combined strokes, at least 15 feet unsupported
- Treading using arms and legs unsupported in chest-deep water
- Water safety rules, helping others, swim while wearing a life jacket

Level 2 Exit Skills Assessment: 1) Without assistance, step from side into chest-deep water, move into front float for 5 seconds, roll over to a back float, return standing position, then move to back float for 5 seconds and return to a standing position; 2) Push off & swim using a combination of arm and leg actions for 15 feet on the front; push off and swim using a combination of arm and leg actions for 15 feet on the back.

Level 3: Stroke Development

Purpose: Builds on skills from Level 2 & develops strokes through additional guided practice. Level 3 participants learn:

- Jump into deep water from the side
- Dive from kneeling or standing position, in water at least 9 feet deep
- Perform front & back float at least 30 seconds
- Submerge and retrieve an object
- Bob with the head fully submerged, chest deep
- Perform front & back glide w/2 different kicks
- Use rotary breathing in horizontal position
- Perform front and back crawl, 15 yards
- Butterfly - kick and body motion, 15 feet
- Perform the HELP and Huddle position
- Change from horizontal to vertical position on front and back
- Water safety rules, perform a reaching assist

Level 3 Exit Skills Assessment: 1) Jump into chest-deep water from the side, swim front crawl for 15 yards w/ face in the water breathing (to front or side), maintain position by treading or floating for 30 seconds, back crawl for 15 yards.

Level 4: Stroke Improvement

Purpose: Develops confidence and strength to improve skills learned and introduces new aquatic skills. Level 4 participants learn to:

- Shallow dive or dive from stride position, in at least 9 feet of water
- Swim underwater, 3 body lengths
- Front and back float, survival float, 1 minute
- Perform feet-first surface dive
- Perform open turn on front/back using any stroke
- Tread water using sculling arm motions and various kick, 1 minute
- Use safe diving rules, water safety rules, perform a throwing assist
- Care for conscious choking victim
- Perform compact jump a height while wearing a life jacket
- Perform the following:
 - Front and back crawl, 25 yards
 - Breaststroke & Elementary backstroke, 15 yards
 - Butterfly, 15 yards
 - Swim on side w/scissors kick, 15 yards

Level 4 Exit Skills Assessment: 1) Perform a feet-first entry into chest-deep water, swim front crawl for 25 yards, maintain position on back 1 minute in deep water (float or sculling) and swim elementary backstroke for 15 yards. 2) Swim breaststroke for 15 yards, tread water for 1 minute and swim back crawl for 25 yards.

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Level 5: Stroke Refinement

Purpose: Provides further coordination and refinement of strokes, swimming further distances. Level 5 participants learn to:

- Tread water w/ two different kicks, 2 minutes
- Learn survival swimming, 2 minutes
- Survival floating, 2 minutes
- Water safety, helping others, rescue breathing
- Perform the following:
 - Standing dive, Shallow dive, glide two body lengths and begin any front stroke
 - Sidestroke, elementary backstroke 25 yds
 - Tuck & pike surface dive
 - Front and back flip turns
 - Front and back crawl, 50 yards
 - Butterfly, breaststroke 25 yards

Level 5 Exit Skills Assessment: 1) Perform a shallow dive into deep water, swim front crawl for 50 yards, maintain position on back for 2 minutes in deep water (float or scull), and swim elementary backstroke for 25 yards; 2) Swim breaststroke for 25 yards, tread water for 2 minutes and swim back crawl for 50 yards.

Which Level is right for me or my child?

Level 1 is for beginners with little or no experience in the water. To enroll into Levels 2-6, students must have completed or at least be able to confidently demonstrate the skills listed in the previous level, including the exit skill requirements.

How many lessons will it take for my child to “swim”?

Learning skills varies among children. Readiness is influenced by physical development, previous experiences, home environment, parental attitudes and individual preferences. For most skills, there are simple prerequisites, activities and lead-ups that can prepare the child to perform those skills. It may take many lessons before a child can swim independently. Year-round practice, regular (supervised) exposure to water and positive encouragement are ways parents can help their child to progress. To make sure your child does learn to swim well, be sure they complete all of the learn-to-swim levels.

Level 6: Swimming and Skill Proficiency

Purpose: Refines the strokes so students swim them with ease, efficiency, power and smoothness over greater distances. Level 6 is designed with “menu” options that each focus on preparing students to participate in more advanced courses, including the Water Safety Instructor and Lifeguard Training courses. Instructor will determine option offered. These options include:

- **Personal Water Safety**
- **Lifeguard Readiness**
- **Fundamentals of Diving**
- **Fitness Swimmer**

All options include the these endurance skills and turns:

- Front and back crawl, 100 yards
- Breaststroke, 50 yards
- Sidestroke and butterfly, 50 yards
- Elementary backstroke, 50 yards
- All open turns and flip turns while using swimming strokes

Level 6 Exit Skills Assessment: For each option, a specific set of exit skill assessments a given, but all of the options will require a continuous, 500 yard swim.