



*Laurie Lawrence's*

# Top Ten Swimming Tips for Parents





# Welcome

If you are beginning your child's swimming journey, we know it can be overwhelming, but World Wide Swim School is designed to make the whole process as easy and enjoyable as possible for both you and your child.

To help you kickstart your journey, Laurie Lawrence has developed a Top Ten Swimming Tips for Parents to help you understand your role in your child's development and what to look for in a swim school.



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# Tip 1: First Lessons Are in the Bath

**The first swimming lessons occur in the bath where the child is introduced in a loving caring way to the stimulus of warm water.**

Learning to swim should be a happy and positive experience for both parent and child. Babies learn through stimulation, so, sight, sound, taste, touch and smell become very important in these early sensory experiences.

The website [www.babyswim.info](http://www.babyswim.info), developed by World Wide Swim School, will give you lots of further information on baby swimming. Be sure to view the Kids Alive water safety DVD that the Commonwealth supplies free in every new mother's Bounty bag. There are great tips in there for parents.

Throughout your internet exploration you will see lots of different baby swimming methods. I urge you to follow your parental instincts and avoid any program that forces children against their will. Crying, pulling away, resisting in any way, or showing other signs of distress means: "NO PLEASE STOP."



# Tip 2: Relax, Enjoy the Bath, Happy Comfortable Conditioning Is Vital

Parents must learn make the bath a daily fun bonding experience for the parents and child. Once the parent becomes comfortable holding the baby in the bath or shower it's time to start the conditioning process that eventually will allow the child to go underwater without fuss and trauma.

**In order to condition your baby follow these steps:**

1. Hold the baby upright
2. Support their back and neck
3. Take a full cup of water
4. Use the verbal trigger: "The child's name, Ready GO!"
5. Wait one second
6. Pour the water quickly and smoothly on top of the forehead and allow the water to run over the child's face
7. Look baby in the eye and smile
8. Repeat this five or six times every bath
9. If the baby cries or shows any signs of distress stop conditioning immediately
10. If one parent is uncomfortable use both parents; one to support the baby and the other to pour the water



# Tip 3: Give Them Lots of Practice With a Swimming Lesson Every Night

“There is an old saying that I have followed all my life: “Perfect practice makes perfect.” This is particularly true for swimming. ”

Because of today's busy lifestyle, most parents seem to bring their child to swimming lessons just once per week. Children can and will learn to swim on one lesson a week but it is a slow process. It is almost like watching grass grow.

Experienced teachers will tell you best results come from what we call “holiday intensive swimming lessons,” where the children have a swimming lesson every day for two weeks. If you want your child to swim well, you must water it. You must take your child to the pool often, or in a baby's case, you must do some simple exercises every night in the bath to assist their progress.

## **A WORD OF WARNING:**

Never leave a child unattended in the bath as many tragedies have occurred from parents thinking their child will be okay for a minute or two. I repeat: NEVER LEAVE YOUR CHILD UNATTENDED IN THE BATH

# Tip 4: At 4-6 Months... Pool Time... Finding the Right Swim School

**AustSwim and Swim Australia, the National accreditation bodies for swim teachers, recommend that babies can start swimming lessons at six months.**

- Best venues are heated indoor facilities with a controlled 32 degrees temperature
- Parents need to check to ensure the pool surrounds are clean and the water is clear, well filtered and with a fast turnover rate.
- I prefer a pool that has Ozone and UV as secondary disinfectants. This reduces the amount of chlorine used and it will not only improve the quality of the water, but will make the water cleaner and softer on the baby's skin





# Tip 5: Into the Pool... Learn to Relax... Hold the Baby Soft

**From my experience, having studied and taught infants for 43 years, I believe the best age to start teaching babies in the pool is four months. Why?**

## **At four months:**

- Babies have good neck control, they are not so floppy
- The parents, particularly new parents, are becoming more comfortable holding their babies
- The babies are up-to-date with injections and inoculation

## **So, early lessons should concentrate on teaching parents:**

- How to hold the baby correctly in the pool
- How to condition their baby for submersion
- How to grip fingers and grip a loose-fitting T-shirt, and, more importantly:
- Good teachers and swim schools teach the parents to relax

A relaxed parent will equal a relaxed baby. The softer a parent holds the baby, the easier baby will float naturally and feel that natural buoyancy.





# Tip 6: Submersions First, Then Establish Great Floating Patterns

**Once a baby has been conditioned and you observe him or her closing their eyes on command it's time for baby's first submersion.**

Baby's first submersion is an exciting time for the parent and of course the child. The teacher should perform the first submersion to the parent. Here are the steps on how to perform the first submersion:

1. The teacher holds the child high under the arms and faces the parent
2. Use the verbal trigger: "The child's name, Ready Go!"
3. Lift the child up (a kinaesthetic trigger)
4. Gently lower the child under water and,
5. Move the child slowly towards the parent for the count of two
6. The parent should now take the baby firmly under the arms
7. Lift the baby out of the water
8. Look baby in the eye
9. Smile and relax
10. After much practice baby will be ready to float

If baby is happy repeat this process

# Tip 7: Be Consistent



The most important thing parents can do for their child is to be consistent. Make sure you condition your baby in the bath every night.

You can and will improve their breath control by gradually increasing the length of time water runs over the baby's face. Start with a quick pour, then slow down and count to two, then three etc. until the baby can happily accept water for five, six or even up to a ten second count.

**This will assist your baby, but it cannot replace water time in the pool.**

Parents must understand the only way their child can improve is to practice in the pool as often as possible. If parents are prepared to do this, they will reap rewards.

A University study on infant swimming prepared and conducted by Professor Robyn Jorgensen of Griffith University found that swimming lessons for young children built their social, emotional, physical and intellectual capital.

In fact, those children who had early swimming lessons were up to ten months ahead of their peers by the time they attended "Prep," which is usually four years of age. Is there a better reason to, not only have your child taught to swim, but be consistent and attend every possible swimming lesson as well?



# Tip 8: Build Independence

“My personal philosophy for infant aquatics is to make the child independent in the water as early as possible.”

In fact every child is capable of jumping into deep water and returning to the side by 18 months of age. This can be started very early by encouraging and maintaining the grasp reflex that is present at birth. As early as the very first lesson in the pool, we encourage the child to learn to grip your fingers. This simple exercise can be repeated at home on the bed, or in fact any time or place the baby is lying down.

I am a strong believer in having parents wear a T-shirt when they are teaching their child to swim. The simple gripping of fingers can then be encouraged on the T-shirt. The parent lays back on a ledge, places the baby on their chest and encourages them to grip the shirt. Over time the child will start to understand and master

this exercise. We are well on the way to building independence.

Young children learn through exploration. Once baby's breath control is mastered and they have started crawling, they should be encouraged to explore shallow water. The water depth should be such that the child can comfortably lift their head when crawling. These early exploratory experiences help to teach children respect for the water, and they are less likely to wander into life threatening situations.

## **Independence saves lives!**

During these exploratory periods, it is important that parents always supervise their children at arm's length as accidents can and do happen.



# Tip 9: Parental Involvement

“ It is my belief that in swimming lessons parents should remain in the water with their child until the child turns four. ”

## Why should this happen?

1. The water is the ideal place to bond with your baby; no phone, skin to skin bonding, a complete half an hour just you and your baby, without distractions.
2. One on one with your baby also allows for maximum practice time in the swimming lesson. Since young children don't get their fine motor skills until around four years, they need to be manipulated and shown. This will bring best results in infant swimming. With the parent in the water, the child can be shown exactly what is required. The parent is able to show the child correct kicking, paddling or other life saving skills.
3. One child to one teacher parent creates a safe and secure learning environment. I have been distressed, on my travels around the country, at the number of parents who have jumped in to rescue their child in a swimming lesson because the child has slipped or been pushed off a shallow teaching ledge by another child. It only takes a short time for an accident to happen, and it is silent. The best person to look after the child is the parent, that's why: keeping a parent in the water until the child turn four is best practice.



# Tip 10: Swimming Lessons Should Be Enjoyable for Your Child

Respected International Hall of Famer, Julie Zancanaro, recently wrote: "Be a teacher who respects children. Make swimming comfortable, safe, and a skill to love for life." If you love something, you are more likely to practice or want to improve. Learn-to-swim must follow these basic steps:

1. Water acclimatisation
2. Breath control
3. Submersion
4. Floating
5. Propulsion
6. Breathing
7. Safety skills



Great teachers can engage students in each of these basic steps in a fun positive way. They can excite the student and encourage them to learn. There is no place in the learn-to-swim industry for any method that encourages force fear or intimidation. Some back floating teaching philosophies force children to float on their back against their will in the pretence that "It's best for the child. It can save their life."

# Where to From Here?

We encourage you to educate yourself as much as possible to ensure your child's swimming experience is fun and beneficial. The All Access Pass to The Parent Swimming Library provides unlimited yearly access to a step by step guide and hands-on demonstration on everything you need to know by the time your child is 4.

This information will not only save you money and time. It will ensure you give your child the best start. For more information about The Parents Swimming Library:

[Click Here](#)





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