

## Information for Parents

### Three Steps to Safe Swimming

#### Safety First:

- Prioritize safety: Never leave your child unattended, not even in shallow water, the bathtub, or a wading pool!
- Use aids such as pool noodles, kickboards, or water wings only for support, not as a substitute for supervision or swimming skills.
- Play together in the water often—fun is the best teacher.
- Build confidence: Praise small progress and don't push.
- Practice regularly, but keep it short—better to do five minutes more often than one hour rarely.



### Step 1: Getting used to the water

**Why?** Only children who are used to the water can learn to swim safely later on, but playing with and in the water is, above all, fun!

**When?** Starting in the second week of life

#### What can parents do?

##### 1. Build trust

Start with short moments in the water.

- Let your child touch the water with their hands or feet.
- Speak calmly and encouragingly.
- Praise small progress, e.g., when the child allows water droplets to splash on their face. This way, your child will realize that water isn't dangerous, but fun.
- The more naturally you interact with water, the easier it will be for your child. For example, don't use any aids to keep water off their face.

##### 2. Practice through play

Play little games with water—this promotes joy and trust:

- Blowing and bubbling: Blow into the water together, with or without a straw. Bubbling and humming—this makes funny sounds
- Splashing: “Play the piano” and “drum” with your hands. Who can splash the water higher with their hands or legs?
- Pouring games: Use cups to scoop water from one container to another and pour it over the body and face

### 3. Movement in the water

Once your child feels safe in the wading pool or bathtub, you can play the following games:

- “Waves”: The child sits in the water and feels the waves.
- Crawling, walking, and hopping: forward, backward, and sideways, or playing tag. This lets children feel water resistance and buoyancy.
- Playing ball in all variations

### 4. Patience and repetition

Every child learns at their own pace. It’s important not to rush them. It’s better to have regular, short, positive experiences than one experience that’s too much. Over time, your child will become more confident and ready for swimming lessons or the next step in the water.

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## Step 2: Water Familiarization

**Why?** Water holds a great fascination for many children. To ensure that time in the water is enjoyable and safe, children must learn step by step to orient themselves in it. These learning steps are called basic water familiarization skills. Only once the child has mastered these is it possible to learn to swim.

**When?** It’s best to start right after water familiarization. Age doesn’t matter at first.

### What can parents do?

Parents can help their children cope with the unique conditions of water—buoyancy, resistance, and temperature—and control their bodies in it. This can begin during visits to the pool together, but also in the bathtub or the wading pool.

### Game and exercise ideas for basic skills

#### 1. Breathing in the water

Children learn to exhale into the water and overcome water resistance. This is important so that water doesn’t run into their mouths and noses later on and so they can exhale into the water while swimming.

- Bubble King: Who can make the longest bubble chain? Hold your nose and mouth in the water and blow bubbles.
- Blow balls forward toward a target: The child blows hard enough to create waves.
- Bubble Song: Hum a song together while blowing—making sounds is fun and helps ease fear.

#### 2. Diving

When diving, the child learns to open their eyes, maintain their bearings, and consciously resurface.

- Hide-and-seek: Parents hold colorful rings or figures just below the water’s surface. The child dives down and retrieves them. Start in very shallow water and gradually go deeper.

- Touching a hand: Parents hold their hand underwater; the child dives down briefly and taps it—small successes build confidence.
- Color hunt: The child is given the task of finding objects of a specific color. To do this, they must open their eyes underwater.
- Face-making: Who can make the funniest face underwater? Children love it when parents join in.

### 3. Floating and Gliding

Floating means that the water supports the body. Gliding means moving effortlessly through the water.

- Pulling through the water: Pull your child through the water while they are lying on their stomach and back; they should stretch out as much as possible and put their head in the water to exhale.
- Crocodile or sea lion: The child walks on the steps with their arms outstretched and kicks their legs.
- Starfish: The child lies on their back with arms and legs extended. Parents provide light support; this also works on the stomach.
- Rocket: The child pushes off from the pool edge, keeping their body straight, and glides a short distance—with or without a board or pool noodle—while submerging their head in the water and exhaling.

### 4. Jumping in and onto the water

Jumping builds courage and body control. This helps the child learn to orient themselves while submerging and return to the surface in a controlled manner.

- Hopping and jumping in the water.
- Playing ball and jumping up to catch it or head it.
- Courage test: The parents stand in the water; the child jumps into their arms. Over time, increase the distance. Make sure the children gradually submerge their heads deeper. Caution! The water should be deeper than the child is tall.
- Target jump: Hit a floating toy—playful motivation helps overcome fears.

### 5. Rolling and turning for orientation in the water

Children need to learn which way is up and down, and how to turn and change direction.

- Dolphin roll: Turn in the water, moving arms like fins.
- Screw: After pushing off, turn lengthwise from a prone position to a supine position and back.
- Roll forward and backward around a pool noodle or freely

### 6. Moving

This is not yet about swimming technique, but about experimenting: How can I move my arms and legs to move forward? Children “kick” and “paddle” playfully.

- Crocodile or sea lion: The child walks forward on the steps using their arms while kicking their legs.
  - Rocket launch: The child pushes off the wall while lying on their stomach or back, glides a short distance, and then propels themselves forward with their legs.
  - Doggy paddle: The child kicks and paddles toward their parents or the wall. Their face remains underwater and is raised only to take a breath.
  - Rowboat: The child lies on their back and tries to reach their parents.
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### Step 3: Water Safety/Learning to Swim

**Why?** Being able to swim is vital for survival. Your child is only considered a safe swimmer once they have earned the Bronze Badge or reached the Blue Level of the School Swimming Certificate. This means they can jump into deep water, swim at least 200 meters, and get out of the water on their own.

**When?** Only once water acclimation is complete! Children achieve the fastest results between the ages of five and six, as the window for motor skill development is wide open at that time. It makes sense for your child to be able to swim before starting school swimming lessons. What they've learned can then be reinforced and expanded upon there.

#### What can parents do?

You can teach your child the swimming strokes yourself or enroll them in a swimming class. Which swimming technique is taught first is initially irrelevant; all swimming styles have their pros and cons. It is crucial that swimming on the back is also practiced as a safety technique in case of fatigue. Discuss and practice the swimming rules with your child repeatedly. [Baderegeln | SchwimmWelten GmbH](#)

If you would like to teach your child to swim yourself, you can find information here on the individual swimming techniques. [Rückenschwimmen - Schritt für Schritt-Anleitung zum Rücken schwimmen lernen](#) [Brustschwimmen - Schritt für Schritt-Anleitung zum Brust schwimmen lernen](#) [Kraul - Schritt für Schritt-Anleitung, wie du leicht Kraul schwimmen lernst](#)

#### How do I find a (good) swimming class for my child?

You can recognize a good course by the fact that it follows the proper sequence of learning to swim: first comes getting used to the water, then mastering the water, and finally learning the swimming technique. If your child has already mastered the water before the course, they will learn to swim very quickly. It is also important that an instructor supervises no more than six children—preferably fewer, depending on their age.

In Dortmund, there are numerous providers of swimming lessons at all indoor pools. These include swimming clubs and local chapters of the DLRG. You can find all contact information in the club database of the StadtSportBund Dortmund [StadtSportBund Dortmund e. V. – Vereinssuche \(Bereich: Startseite, Vereine\)](#). The costs for swimming lessons at clubs and the DLRG can be reimbursed through the Education and Participation Package (BuT). In addition, there are also some private swimming schools and private instructors who offer courses of

varying quality. In addition to regular classes, which take place once or twice a week, intensive courses are also offered during school breaks. As a rule, children are accepted into the courses starting at age four, sometimes at age five. There is often a waiting list where you can register your child. Separate courses are offered for children aged eight and older who cannot yet swim, including through the StadtSportBund during school vacations. These spots are allocated by the schools.