

# Red Cross Swim News: *Preschool (3-6 years)*



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Welcome to **Red Cross Swim Preschool**, our learn-to-swim program for children ages four months to six years old. Lessons are designed to be fun, using lots of songs, games, and themes. The last five levels for ages 3 to 6, **Sea Otter**, **Salamander**, **Sunfish**, **Crocodile**, and **Whale**, build swimming skills and teach age-specific water safety. This program is designed to appeal to preschool children through games and activities that engage their imagination while they learn skills and increase their knowledge.

## What to expect

Check with your facility **prior to the first lesson**. Options are also available for children with disabilities, please check with your facility. Inquire about swimming attire, what to bring, and any other practical details.

At each level of the program, your child will acquire skills and knowledge relating to **swimming**, **fitness**, and **water safety**. Using small, logical progressions to ensure success, we teach basic skills such as breath control, buoyancy, arm and body movements, and then progress to more advanced skills such as floating, gliding, kicking, and swimming up to 15 metres.

**Safety** around water is an important aspect of our lessons, so children also learn how to use PFDs/lifejackets, when and how to get help, and the best ways to enter and exit the water. All levels of the program also include fitness activities to gradually build endurance and help them improve their form. Your child may also have the opportunity to attempt swimming in clothing, which will teach children how to survive unintentional falls into water - one of the leading causes of drowning for this age group.

**Fun** is the key to this program, so as children learn they also enjoy games, songs, and relay activities.

Throughout the program, your child will be encouraged to achieve **his or her best**. Each new skill is built using small steps and we ensure each child is comfortable with each item before proceeding to the next step.



## How preschoolers learn

Different age groups have different characteristics. The Red Cross Swim Preschool program was designed around the **physical** and **social characteristics** and the **motor skills** of each age group. Children progress at different rates so our program focuses on the individual child and aims to maximize each learner's potential.

We use **cooperative play activities** that include group interaction and sharing. Play activities help your child develop his or her own methods of moving in water. We encourage children to discover things by themselves and find their own solutions. The program emphasizes the importance of play as a teaching technique in preschool aquatics and recognizes each of your child's achievements along the way.



## Are swimming lessons safe for my preschooler?

Many caregivers wonder whether teaching babies, toddlers, or preschoolers to swim can cause medical problems. According to the American Paediatric Association (June 2010), **well-supervised swimming lessons are medically safe for children**. There is no evidence that infants participating in swim lessons are at greater risk of any medical conditions.

The primary purpose of these lessons is to develop physical abilities in fundamental movement skills such as agility, balance, coordination, speed, and rhythmic movement. Children participating in supervised lessons are observed closely to ensure a safe experience for all.

The main concerns to be aware of when exposing your child to the aquatic environment include:

<b>Temperature control</b>	If your child is cold, remove him or her from the water and keep the child dry and warm. Have your child wear a lightweight T-shirt or neoprene swimsuit to class if he or she has difficulty staying warm during the lesson.
<b>Ear infections</b>	No special precautions are necessary, but children with active ear infections (as determined by a doctor) should not participate in class.
<b>Eye irritation</b>	No special precautions are necessary, but children who develop discharges or have excessively watery eyes should be taken to their doctor.
<b>Infectious diseases</b>	In most cases, children with colds should not participate in group activities in which they are in danger of infecting others.
<b>Respiratory limitations</b>	The lungs of small children are still developing and are unable to cope with long periods of physical exercise. After a short rest period, they can easily resume physical exercise.
<b>Water intoxication</b>	Rapidly swallowing large quantities of water can cause problems in very young children. Babies can swallow large amounts of water easily, especially if they are involuntarily submerged. Watch your child to ensure he or she is not "drinking" or swallowing excess water.

## Moving to the next program level

The Red Cross Swim Preschool program is designed to orient children to the water and help them feel secure in an aquatic environment. Each child learns at his or her own pace and should be encouraged at a rate he or she is comfortable with. We encourage you to continuously play with your child in water, and provide opportunities for him or her to become familiar with the water, in between classes and levels of the program.

As each level of our program has age guidelines based on the developmental characteristics of children, your child should be enrolled in levels at the appropriate age and when you feel he or she is ready. Between lesson sets, keep your child active in the water, whether at bath time, in a pool, or at the beach.



## Practise making waves at home!

How you can build on your child's swimming experience:

- Ask your child to repeat games and songs from class in the bath to reinforce the positive experiences.
- Review water safety tips.
- Repeat the **Stop! Look! Ask! game** at home to reinforce important safety lessons.
- Practise the **Stop! Call for Help! game** around your home to encourage your child to see how he or she can help save a life.
- Take your child to public or family swims to increase his or her comfort level and confidence in the water, as well as practise skills and increase endurance.
- Supervise your child around water at all times.



## When to enrol in Red Cross Swim Kids

When your child is five years old, he or she can move to the **Red Cross Swim Kids** program or remain in Red Cross Swim Preschool until all levels are completed if you prefer to stay with smaller class sizes. By age seven, your child should be registered in Red Cross Swim Kids.

