

For Families & Clinic Participants

Progression List for Swim to Survive

Congratulations on taking the first steps to achieving the Swim to Survive standard! Remember, it’s important to focus on your own progress and not to worry about what everyone else is doing. Each swimmer is on their own journey- try not to compare yourself with others. Some swimmers will come with lots of experience in and around the water, some will come having never been in a pool or lake... so they may be starting at a different progression in the program.

Focus on practicing skills at your own pace as often as you can. Repetition and building comfort in the water is the key to success!



This progression list includes:

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Water Comfort & Orientation

Water comfort and some basic swim skills are a must in order to achieve the Swim to Survive standard.

- Getting wet - can be in shower
 - Take it slow if needed - work on getting different parts of the body wet in the shower
- Shallow water entries: wade in if available, slip in, ladder access, sit on edge and fall to instructor, jump in assisted, unassisted (see section on entries for further progressions)
- Walking, bouncing, moving around in shallow end- pretend to be different zoo animals to encourage a variety of movement (or another fun, age-appropriate game!); can start with PFD or Lifejacket to increase confidence then progress to unassisted
- Pouring water/sponging water on different body parts - can start this sitting on the pool edge with feet dangling in the water and then move into water - use sponge or watering can
- Blowing soap bubbles with a wand; blowing out birthday candles (pretend your finger is a candle and blow it out!); focus on blowing air out
- Blowing bubbles with lips/mouth in water
- Humming- above water; hum a song through your nose
- Nose bubbles/humming
- Gradual immersion into water:
 - Belly button in, chest in, shoulders in - bending knees to lower body into water
 - Chin in, mouth in, ears in, nose in, forehead in, hair in, face in - bending over at waist to submerge different parts of face
 - Build to bending knees to lower different parts of face into water.
- Holding pool wall or gutter, with ears in and head back
- Submersions:
 - Bending knees to submerge full face (keeping back straight)
 - Then work to full head to top of hair
 - Then fully submerged under water.
- Submersion with breath control/bubbles
- Submersion with holding breath
- Submersion with eyes open
- Bobs work up to 3-5 x, submerge fully and exhale

Floats & Recovery Skills

Front float and recovery:

- Face in or out -- working towards comfort at floating with their face in the water
 - If access to beach entry/0 depth entry - lie on bottom of pool/beach entry in a starfish float position; face out to start progressing to face in with bubbles
 - Assisted with instructor
 - Practice recovery from float - push arms down, knees to chest, stand up
 - With PFD/Lifejacket - can be assisted with instructor working towards unassisted in PFD/Lifejacket
 - With buoyant aid - can be assisted with instructor working towards unassisted with the buoyant object
 - Unassisted

Back float and recovery:

- Ears in or out - working towards comfort at floating with their ears in the water
 - If access to beach entry/0 depth entry - lie on bottom of pool/beach entry in a starfish float position; ears and back of head out to start progressing to head back and ears in
 - Assisted with instructor
 - Practice recovery from float - Instructor assists the swimmer to lift their knees into a seated position, push arms down to side and tip head forward to stand up.
 - Backward walking, arms outstretched, head back, ears in water, small steps to start, larger steps so legs are coming off the bottom
 - With PFD/Lifejacket - can be assisted with instructor working towards unassisted in PFD/Lifejacket
 - With buoyant aid - can be assisted with instructor working towards unassisted with the buoyant object
 - Unassisted

Rollover floats (front to back, and back to front):

- On mat or beach entry lie on back and roll to front, then roll front to back in a PFD
 - Also try this without a PFD
- Assisted with instructor
- In PFD/Lifejacket - can be assisted with instructor working towards unassisted in PFD/Lifejacket
- With buoyant aid - can be assisted with instructor working towards unassisted with the buoyant object
- Unassisted
- Can add challenge such as back float, roll to front; swim small distances and front float, roll to back swim small distances

Roll Entry into Deep Water

Ultimately the goal is to lead up to a disorienting entry.

Shallow Water Entry

- Wade in/walk in (shallow water)
- Use ladder or stairs - assisted and unassisted
- Slip in (shallow water):
 - With instructor assisted and PFD
 - With PFD only
 - Without PFD but with instructor (2 hands, 1 hand)
 - Unassisted slip in
- Jumps (shallow water):
 - With instructor and PFD (2 hands, 1 hand)
 - With PFD only
 - Without PFD but with instructor (2 hands, 1 hand)
 - With noodle under swimmer's arms and instructor (2 hands, 1 hand)
 - With noodle only (under arms)
 - Jump to noodle (on surface of water)
 - Jump into shallow water – assisted, return to wall, climb out with assistance
 - Jump into shallow water – assisted, return to wall, climb out independently
 - Unassisted jump in
 - Include steps such as:
 - jump in and swim to instructor/buoyant object
 - jump in and return to point of entry
 - jump in, turn to face another wall and swim to safety



Deep Water Entry & Comfort

- Moving around in deeper water:
 - Assisted (with instructor, with PFD, then with a buoyant object)
 - Unassisted
- Floats and glides in deeper water:
 - Assisted (with instructor, with PFD, then with a buoyant object)
 - Unassisted
- Slip in (can follow shallow water progressions)
- Seated fall in (can follow shallow water progressions for slip in)
- Jumps - deep water progressions:
 - Jump in (can follow shallow water progressions)
 - Jump in and swim to closest buoyant object (can follow shallow water jump in progressions and add a swim to the instructor holding a buoyant object)
 - Jump in, turn back to wall, swim to safety (can follow shallow water progressions); ensure swimmer jumps forward into the water and turns around in the water to return to safety
 - Jump in, turn to face another wall; swim to safety (can follow shallow water progressions)
 - Jump in, turn in a circle one way; turn the other way; swim to safety (can follow shallow water progressions)
 - Jump into deep water – assisted, return to wall, climb out with assistance
 - Jump into deep water – assisted, return to wall, climb out independently
 - Jump into deep water, return to wall, climb out
- Cannonball (with PFD and without PFD)
- Sitting dive
- Kneeling dive

Forward & Side Roll Entries

- Forward roll, on land on a mat; side roll on land, on a mat
- Practice front somersaults in the water (shallow)
- Practice handstands in the water (shallow)
- Unassisted front somersaults in deep water
- Unassisted front somersault in deep water from a push off the wall
- Forward roll from a mat in the deep water; with PFD and without
- Side fall into water - with and without PFD
- Side roll into water - with and without PFD
- Forward roll into water - with and without PFD

Treading Water

Ultimately the goal is to achieve 1 minute or more.

- Arm motion in shallow water; standing (experiment with different movements):
 - Dog paddling
 - Spread peanut butter and jam arms
 - Scooping or pulling motion
 - Head up breaststroke arms
- Float on back - with finning or sculling:
 - Can introduce all hand motions standing in shallow water
 - Then progress to assisted with instructor and feet off the bottom
 - Assisted with PFD or Lifejacket and feet off the bottom
 - Assisted with buoyant object and feet off the bottom
 - Unassisted explore hand motions - can start in a back float position and move to a more vertical position. Stay shallow while building comfort with hand movement, this way participants can simply stand up when they tire.
- Riding a bicycle (legs action):
 - Sitting on wall
 - Holding wall
 - Assisted with instructor
 - In PFD, shallow water
 - With noodle under arms, shallow water
 - Sit on noodle using bicycle legs, shallow water
 - Unassisted - start with float on back and gradually move to a more vertical position
 - Then moving these progressions to deep water
- Experiment with different leg motions. Can introduce the following in small progression steps (start in shallow water and move to deep):
 - Vertical scissor or whip kick or frog kick - move progressions assisted to unassisted and shallow end to deep end
 - Can introduce eggbeater progressions as swimmers advance - move progressions assisted to unassisted and shallow end to deep end

Treading Water cont'd

Ultimately the goal is to achieve 1 minute or more.

- How to move arms and legs at the same time:
 - Sitting on wall, try arms and legs together
 - Holding wall
 - Assisted with instructor, shallow water
 - In PFD, shallow water
 - With noodle under arms and/or seated on noodle, shallow water
 - Unassisted in shallow end
 - Front float roll over to back float then tread water in a vertical position, shallow water
 - Then moving progressions to deep end, once deep-water comfort has been established
 - See Deep Water Entry & Comfort.
- Work in intervals: 15 sec (or less to start with if needed), 30 sec, 45 sec, 1 min, encourage more time once 1 minute has been mastered.
- Work with each swimmers' strengths and the combination of movement they are comfortable with. The key is to find the combo of movement that works for each swimmer to enable them to support themselves with their head above the water for 1 min (or more) while they calm their breathing, regroup and plan their swim to the nearest point of safety.



Swim

Ultimately the goal is to achieve 50 metres or more. Any combination of strokes and/or kicks is acceptable.

Glides & Kicking

Front Glide progressing to Front Glide with Kick:

- With instructor
- With PFD/Lifejacket- can be assisted with instructor working towards unassisted in PFD/Lifejacket
- With buoyant object- can be assisted with instructor working towards unassisted with the buoyant object
- Unassisted
- Intro kick: Sit on edge practice kicking
- Lie on front on a kickboard on edge practice kicking
- Lying on stairs/mat/beach entry practice kicking (feet in shallow end of beach)
- Repeat above glide sequence adding in kick

Back Glide progressing to Back Glide with Kick:

- With instructor
- With PFD/Lifejacket - can be assisted with instructor working towards unassisted in PFD/Lifejacket
- With buoyant object - can be assisted with instructor working towards unassisted with the buoyant object
- Unassisted
- Intro kick: Sit on edge practice kicking
- Lie back on edge practice kicking
- Lying on stairs/mat/beach entry practice kicking (feet in shallow end of beach)
- Repeat above glide sequence adding in kick

Rollover Glide progressing to Rollover Glide with Kick (back to front, and front to back)

- With instructor
- With PFD/Lifejacket - can be assisted with instructor working towards unassisted in PFD/Lifejacket
- With buoyant object - can be assisted with instructor working towards unassisted with the buoyant object
- Unassisted
- Repeat above sequence adding in kick

Side Glide progressing to Side Glide with Kick

- With instructor
- With PFD/Lifejacket - can be assisted with instructor working towards unassisted in PFD/Lifejacket
- With buoyant object - can be assisted with instructor working towards unassisted with the buoyant object
- Unassisted
- Repeat above sequence adding in kick

Swim cont'd

Ultimately the goal is to achieve 50 metres or more. Any combination of strokes and/or kicks is acceptable.

Swim/Strokes/Increasing Distance

- Increase the distance of glides and kicks - assisted and unassisted
- Introduce front swim:
 - Standing in shallow end, practice big arm circles
 - Try front swim in a PFD or Lifejacket, face in or out - aiming for comfort at swimming with face in
 - Practice swimming as far as possible with face in and blow slow controlled bubbles underwater - in PFD or Lifejacket
 - Once comfortable swimming with face in, introduce roll for a breath.
 - Start with roll to back for a breath; kick on back to get breath; roll to front and face in to continue swim with arms and kick
 - Once comfortable with roll to back to breathe, introduce side glides to breathe and move away from complete roll to back
 - Repeat above sequence (when ready) unassisted without PFD/Lifejacket
 - Start with small achievable distances and gradually increase (1m, 2m, 5m, 10m, 15m etc.). Encourage swimmers to just rest on their backs and breathe as needed. Can float on their back or roll over and kick on their back.
 - *Remember the goal here is to eventually achieve 50 m with any combo of strokes and kicks - we just want them to get there safely. Encouraging technique to maximize efficiency and reduce exhaustion is key, as they become comfortable swimming unassisted.
- Introduce other methods of swim
 - Back kick- arms by side; increase distance- assisted with instructor, with PFD/Lifejacket, with buoyant object, unassisted
 - Introduce sculling and finning hands standing in shallow water
 - Experiment with sculling and finning hands on back with kicking; gradually increasing distance - assisted with instructor, with PFD/Lifejacket, unassisted
 - Can introduce whip kick on back and on front; play with scooping and pulling hand movements
 - Can introduce scissor kick and hand movements that would compliment this kick (sidestroke arms - pick an apple, put it in the basket)
 - *Work with the swimmer to build on their strengths and what method works for them! Gradually build their endurance and technique to achieve the 50-meter swim.
 - **Again- remember the goal here is to eventually achieve 50 m with any combo of strokes and kicks- we just want them to get there safely.
- If you have a strong group of swimmers, proficient in the above progressions and are able to complete the Swim To Survive standard, focus on increasing stroke technique and endurance as well as building stamina for treading water and challenge the swimmers to swim further and tread longer!

Mini Challenge Attempt

- Roll (sideways or forward roll) or jump into water
- Treading water - Work in intervals: 15 sec (or less to start with if needed), 30 sec, 45 sec, 1 min
- Begin to swim 15m-25m etc. (small progressions)
- With and without PFD or Lifejacket

Practice parts of the challenge in combination:

- Entry and Tread
- Tread water and swim
- Gradually build time for tread, distance for swim and comfort to perform roll entry into the water!

Working up to full challenge:

- Roll into deep water
- Tread water for 1 minute
- Swim 50 metres

