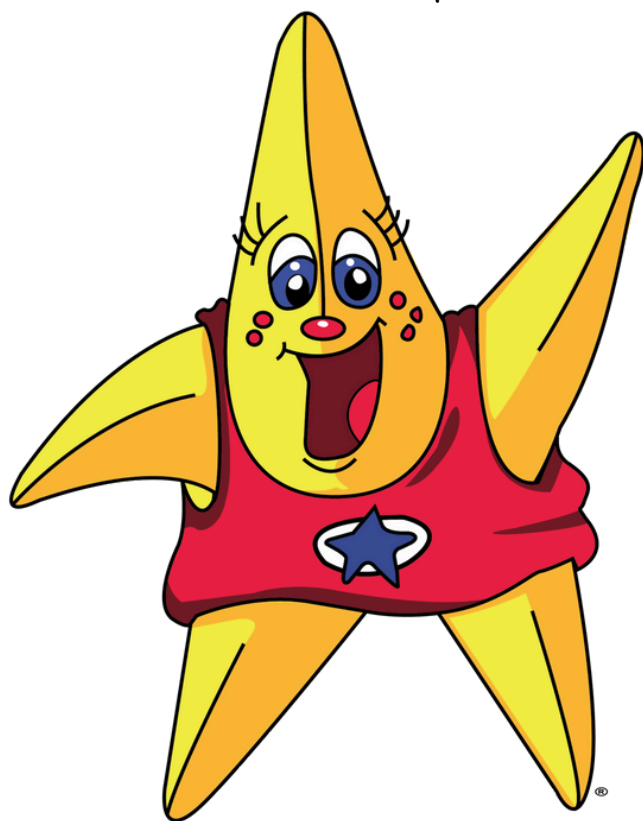


# A Guide to the Starfish Swimming® Curriculum



*Starfish Aquatics Institute*



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# WHAT IS STARFISH SWIMMING?

ARPD is an independent authorized provider of Starfish Swimming. Starfish Swimming is a nationally recognized swim instruction curriculum developed by the Starfish Aquatics Institute (SAI). Learn more about SAI at [www.starfishaquatics.org](http://www.starfishaquatics.org).

The Starfish Swimming curriculum is designed for students ages 6-months to adult. Benchmarks are established at each stage in the program that combines both swimming and safety skills. Students participate in experiential learning activities that allow them to explore the water in a creative and comfortable environment. Correct swimming techniques are taught from the very beginning, providing an easy transition to a swim team.

Inside this guide, you will find the curriculum used in the StarBabies™/StarTots™ (ages 6 months to 6 years), Starfish Swim School® (ages 6 and up), and Starfish Stroke School™ programs. Our swim instructors will communicate your child's progression through the curriculum on a regular basis.

# WHAT ROLE DO I PLAY IN MY CHILD'S SWIMMING DEVELOPMENT?



As a parent or caregiver, you play a vital role in your child's swimming development. You have already taken the first step by registering your child for swim lessons. Now, you must continue to communicate with your child's instructor and practice, practice, practice!

The bathtub is a great place to start practicing! Bubbles, breath holding, looking underwater, floating, and kicking can all take place in the bathtub! A few trips to the pool between swim lessons are nice, too! You shouldn't feel the need to push children to do everything they are doing in swim lessons. Just give them the opportunity to get wet, splash around, and explore the water on their own terms.

# TIPS ON HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Your support, encouragement, and practice outside of swim school class time will help your child progress and have a great swim school experience.
- Whenever you are in, on, or near the water, be sure to follow the Starfish Safety concepts provided in this booklet.
- Encourage supervised water play at home in the shower, bath, hose, etc. Guide activities that get your child wet from head to toe - including the hair, eyes, and face.
- Follow your child's progress via their report card or Starfish TokenTrackers™. The curriculum is divided into stages that each focus on a core competency. Your child may be working on skills from more than one stage.
- If you have the opportunity to practice at a pool, encourage your child to demonstrate the skills they have mastered.



**Age: 3 months - 3 years old**

The purpose of this course is to foster a child's comfort level in the water. It also serves to train parents and caregivers about in-water safety and drowning prevention. This course does not teach children to become accomplished swimmers or to survive in the water. It provides a confidence-building experience for children, in a fun and loving way. One adult must be in the water with each child.

## **Safety Skills:**

- Understand constant and dedicated surveillance.
- Fit and properly put a lifejacket on the child.
- Use flotation to help someone in the water and know how to call 911.
- Identify six methods of preventing recreational water illness.
- Know about infant and child CPR.

## **Swim Skills:**

- Parent and child are relaxed and confident, and enjoy being in the water together.
- Perform a relaxed front, back, vertical, and side position for at least 5 seconds each.
- Enter from the wall, submerge, turn around, grab on to the wall, and pull up (assisted).
- Enter from the wall, submerge, come to surface unassisted and get a breath in vertical or horizontal (on back) position.
- Move through the water independently 10 feet, with or without flotation.

Ages: 3-6

# StarTots™

Designed to meet the needs of children ages 3 to 6, Swim School will develop a high comfort level in the water and a readiness to swim. Developmentally ready children will learn functional swim skills geared toward the ability to self-rescue. This class approaches teaching swimming through creative and fun activities in the water. Students work toward achieving the skill steps and benchmarks at their own pace in a small-group setting.

See Swim School for Colors and Benchmarks

## StarTots Parents

The first day of swim lessons can be tough, even for confident swimmers. We know it's hard to watch your child cry when they hit the water. Some kids adjust quickly, while others may take a few weeks or even months to get comfortable. Our instructors are skilled at helping children through this, but there are also things you can do at the pool and at home to make the experience smoother and more enjoyable for your little one.

### Before the first day of lessons

Swim lessons are often the first time your toddler will be in a class without you, which can feel uncertain for them. To ease this transition, talk about swim lessons a few weeks in advance so your child knows what to expect. Let them know they'll be with a teacher and that you'll be watching and cheering from the poolside. Set small goals for the first day, like getting into the water cheerfully and following the instructor's directions. These goals will help build confidence and provide plenty of chances for positive praise!





## On the first day of lessons

On the first day of swim lessons, it's crucial for parents to stay calm and excited. Rushing or stressing can make your child anxious before they even reach the pool. Arrive early so you and your child can watch a class and see how fun lessons can be. If you're in the first class, ask if you can observe another day. If your child is scared or upset, stay calm and don't make a big deal out of it. Our experienced instructors know how to help, and your positive support will make the transition easier for your child.

## If your child doesn't calm down

It's normal for toddlers to be upset during their first swim class, and some may cry throughout. Don't worry—tears are common and staying in the water for the whole class is a big achievement. Celebrate this success and let your child know how proud you are. Share personal stories of overcoming challenges and practice skills like blowing bubbles and pouring water over their head during bath time. Always consult with your child's instructor for the right techniques, and never leave your child alone in the tub.

Our goal is to ensure every child is safe in the water and knows basic self-rescue skills. With your support, we can achieve this for all our students.

# Starfish Swim School®

Ages: 6-Adult

Students work toward the development of the five core swimming competencies and receive color stage awards for each achievement. The color stages are used to divide students into broad ability groups. Students progress at individual rates with the opportunity to learn the core swimming skills and progress to advanced strokes. Learning is self-paced but challenging.

- For Youth. Students work toward the development of functional swimming focused on the ability to self-rescue using appropriate learning activities. Learning is self-paced but challenging.
- For Teens and Adults. This course is designed to improve comfort and skill in the water, regardless of past swimming experience. Students work toward the development of functional swimming focused on the ability to self-rescue using principles of adult learning.

## Swim School® Curriculum Chart

Achievement Levels



	WHITE	RED	YELLOW	BLUE	GREEN
	<i>Focus: Readiness^</i>	<i>Focus: Body position and air exchange</i>	<i>Focus: Forward movement and direction change</i>	<i>Focus: Streamlines and side breathing position^</i>	<i>Focus: Water Competency^</i>
Skill Steps^	Safely enter and exit the water	Float on the front and back (assisted and unassisted)	Beginner stroke on the front (face in)	Front and back streamline with kick	3 strokes STOP drill
	Pour water over the head and face	Bobbing 5 times	Beginner stroke on the back	Swim underwater 1 m/3 ft	3 strokes ROLL & REST drill
	Tuck and stand from the front	Tuck and stand from the back	Beginner stroke with direction change	Side breathing position with kick	3 x 3 SWIM drill
	Breath hold and look underwater (with and without goggles)	Kicking on the front and back	Roll to the back from front beginner stroke	Side-roll-side with kick 5 m/15 ft	Tread water 40 seconds
					Headfirst entries if water depth over 6 ft/1.8 m available (sit/squat/stand)
Safety Skill Benchmark	Always ask permission before getting in the water	Put on a lifejacket, jump in, float on back, kick 3 m/10 ft	Tread water 10 seconds^	Reach or throw assist with flotation^	Disorienting entries and recover*^
Swim Skill Benchmark	Assisted submersion, relaxed, for 5 seconds	Jump or roll in, get onto the back and float for 5 seconds*	Swim-roll-swim 10 m/30 ft^	Side-roll-side with kick 10 m/30 ft^	Starfish SaferSwimmer Award Ask permission and complete without stopping: jump or roll into water over the head, resurface and tread water 1 minute, swim 50 m/yd with any arm/leg actions on the front or back^

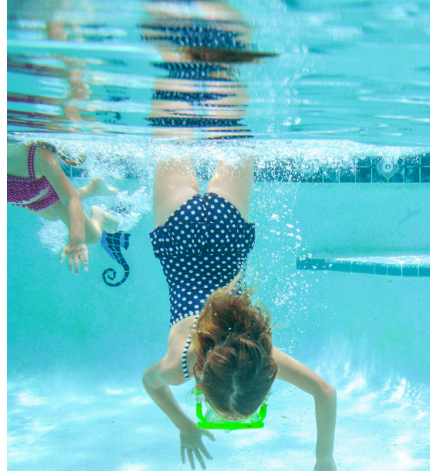
^3.0 update

\* in swimwear and in regular clothes

# Starfish Swim School®

## Benchmarks

A benchmark is a specific skill that, when performed, demonstrates that the student has achieved goal for that level. The competency and benchmark approach is similar to achieving belts in martial arts. The Swim School program levels each have a safety and swim benchmark. Levels are represented by a color.



### White: Readiness, Trust, and Submersion

**Safety Skill:** Always ask permission before getting in the water.

**Why is it important to ask permission to get in the water?** Our goal is to save lives. During swim lessons, we teach students to always ask permission before getting in the water regardless if it is a swimming pool, lake, pond, river, ocean, or even the bathtub. Too many drownings occur because an adult had no idea a child was in the water, despite being nearby. By teaching your students (of all ages) to always ask permission before getting in the water to start the lesson, you are reinforcing the concept that asking permission is important - for everyone, everywhere!

**Swim Skill:** Assisted submersion, relaxed, for 5 seconds, and then come up to breathe.

### Red: Body Position and Air Recovery

**Safety Skill:** Put on a lifejacket, jump in, float on back, kick 10 feet on the back.

**Swim Skill:** Jump in, submerge, recover for air, roll on back for 5 seconds in swimwear and in regular clothes.





## Yellow: Forward Movement and Direction Change

**Safety Skill:** Tread water for 10 seconds.

**Swim Skill:** From the front stroke and face in, roll to the back and breath, roll to the front and swim. Swim for 30 feet.



## Blue: Streamlines and Rotary Movement

**Safety Skill:** Reach or Throw (Don't Go) and know how to call 911.

**Swim Skill:** From side-breathing position, roll to the front for 3 seconds and exhale, roll to the side for 3 seconds and inhale. Continue to kick and roll for 15 feet.



## Green: Water Competency

**Safety Skill:** Know how to enter the water in different ways, recover, and return to a starting point.

**Swim Skill:** Tread for 60 seconds. Swim freestyle 50 yards with 1-2-3 breathe pattern.



# Starfish Stroke School™

Ages: 6-18

## Stroke School

This program is for students of all ages who have achieved the green Swim School benchmarks. Students learn stroke techniques for freestyle, elementary backstroke, sidestroke, backstroke, butterfly, and breaststroke and develop endurance and water fitness.

Because there is a wide gap between students who may be just starting to learn strokes and students who may be ready for competitive swimming, there are two benchmark criteria levels- beginner and advanced. The benchmark distances are different and the success goals are modified based on beginner or advanced skill level. This distinction will help keep students motivated and appropriately recognized within the Stroke School program

**If the child does not possess the necessary prerequisite skills for Stroke School, they may be dropped from the class.**

## Stroke School Curriculum Chart



Achievement Levels					
	WHITE	RED	YELLOW	BLUE	GREEN
Skill Steps:	Freestyle and backstroke	Resting strokes: elementary backstroke and sidestroke	Butterfly	Breaststroke	Endurance/fitness
Arm action	Above water recovery Underwater catch and pull	Underwater catch, pull, recovery	Above water recovery Underwater catch and pull	Underwater catch, pull, recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Swim in trains</li> <li>Swim on intervals</li> <li>Open turn</li> <li>Flip turn</li> <li>Backstroke turn</li> <li>Survival float</li> <li>Racing dive (when water depth is greater than 2 m/6 ft)</li> <li>Vertical fitness workouts</li> </ul>
Leg action	Flutter kick	Inverted whip kick Scissor kick	Dolphin kick	Whip kick	
Body position and breathing	Head position Streamline Rotary movement Side breathing position (freestyle)	Head position Inhale - recovery Exhale - pull	Head position Pulsing	Head position	
Coordination and timing	1-2-3 breathe method (freestyle) Alternate arms (backstroke)	Pull Glide (recovery)	Undulation	Pull, breathe, reach, kick, glide	
Safety Skill Benchmark	Always ask permission before getting in the water	Put on a lifejacket from in the water, kick on back 10 m/30 ft	Emergency scenarios	Survival float 2 minutes	Tread water or survival float 5 minutes
Swim Skill Benchmark Beginner	Freestyle and backstroke 10 m/30 ft	Elementary backstroke and sidestroke 10 m/30 ft	Butterfly 10 m/30 ft	Breaststroke 10 m/30 ft	Swim 300 m/yd using at least 2 strokes
Swim Skill Benchmark Advanced	Freestyle and backstroke 25 m/yd	Elementary backstroke and sidestroke 25 m/yd	Butterfly 25 m/yd	Breaststroke 25 m/yd	Swim 300 m/yd using at least 4 strokes

# Starfish Stroke School™

## Benchmarks

### White: Freestyle and Backstroke



**Safety Skill:** Always ask permission before getting in the water.

**Swim Skill:** Swim freestyle 25 yards and backstroke 25 yards with body stretched out and consistent form.

### Red: Sidestroke and Elementary Backstroke



**Safety Skill:** Put on a lifejacket from in the water, kick 30 feet on the back.

**Swim Skill:** Swim 25 yards sidestroke and 25 yards elementary backstroke with consistent form and proper body position and technique.

### Yellow: Butterfly



**Safety Skill:** Scenario assist and know when and how to call 911.

**Swim Skill:** Swim 25 yards butterfly with consistent form and proper body position and technique.

### Blue: Breaststroke



**Safety Skill:** Survival float for 2 minutes.

**Swim Skill:** Swim 25 yards breaststroke with consistent form and proper body position and technique.

### Green: Endurance



**Safety Skill:** Tread water or survival float for 5 minutes.

**Swim Skill:** Swim freestyle 50 yards; swim backstroke 50 yards; swim 25 yards butterfly; swim 50 yards breaststroke; perform freestyle and backstroke flip turns and butterfly and breaststroke open turns.

# First Day of Class

1. Arrive 10 minutes before your scheduled lesson.
2. You will need to check in at the front ARPD Counter for each lesson.
3. Please have your child rinse off in the shower area first.
4. Head to the grass until your class is called
5. A brief orientation will be held for parents on the first day of class to explain how lessons will run and introduce the swim lesson instructors. plus the first safety skill “ asking to get in the water:
6. Your child will enter the water when the swim instructor permits them to do so. All students will then enter the pool deck and be placed into their testing groups. Once testing is complete each child will be placed into a specific group and receive their color.

## Class Structure

Lessons are taught in a structured group setting. The motivation and inspiration that students get from watching peers excel and learn new skills has proven to be a powerful tool in teaching children how to swim. All children will be given individual attention but since it is in a group setting that cannot be constant.

If your child is taking a Private lesson Staff will still work through the color charts.

## Class Information

Your instructor may miss class due to illness or an emergency, but we will make every effort to keep the number of substitutes to a minimum.

Children must be the appropriate age on the first day of class. No exceptions.

# Starfish TokenTrackers™

TokenTrackers™ are plastic discs awarded when students achieve specific skills or benchmarks during their swim lessons. These tokens serve as a tangible and motivating recognition award for the participants, aiding parents or caregivers, and swim instructors in tracking progress and identifying areas for continued development. TokenTrackers™ are cherished by participants of all ages and proudly displayed on swim bags using carabiners, creating a mobile showcase of their achievements.

Each child receives one TokenTrackers™ per skill completed in swim school. They will also receive one carabiner to hold their tokens. Replacement tokens will NOT be given out. If you lose the carabiner, there will be a \$5 fee for a replacement.

For every level passed in Stroke School a key chain with the stroke will be given.

## Online Report Cards

Online report cards will be emailed to parents within 24-48 hours after the last class. Please allow staff time to upload the information. This ensures parents can track their child's progress and reach out to pool managers with any questions

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# Swim Lesson Parent's FAQ

We want you to be in the know when it comes to your kids' swim lessons. If you have questions that are not answered here, please don't hesitate to contact [arpdaquatics@alamedaca.gov](mailto:arpdaquatics@alamedaca.gov)

## **Q: What happens when it rains?**

A: Lessons go on unless there's thunder or lightning. We'll notify you via email or phone if there's a cancellation.

## **Q: Does my child need a swim diaper?**

A: Yes, children under 3 must wear a disposable swim diaper and a vinyl cover.

## **Q: What if my child is crying?**

A: It's normal for kids to cry. Our teachers are prepared to work with unhappy children. Please let the instructors handle it and stay out of sight to avoid disrupting the lesson.

## **Q: Should my child wear swim goggles?**

A: We recommend not using goggles at the beginning. Once comfortable with opening their eyes underwater, instructors will advise when to start using them.

## **Q: Why hasn't my child leveled up yet?**

A: Students must master key skills at each level before advancing. Younger students may need more time on basic skills, while older students may spend more time on advanced skills. Ask your instructor for tips on practicing at home to help with leveling up.

## **Q: Is it OK to eat before a swim lesson?**

A: Yes, a small snack or light meal is fine. Just wait about 20 minutes to digest before swimming.

**Q: How many students are in each class?**

A: 3-6-year-old lessons 2-3 students  
7-11 year old lesson up to 6

**Q: Can you guarantee my favorite instructor?**

A: We aim for students to experience different instructors. As students progress, they may work with instructors who specialize in advanced techniques. We ensure every child has a positive experience.

**Q: Can I get a refund if I don't like my instructor?**

a. Unfortunately, we do not give refunds after the first lesson is given but you can contact a pool manager to switch instructors to find a better fit.

**Q: What if I guessed the wrong level for my child or if my child progresses differently than expected?**

A: We evaluate students on the first or second day and adjust levels as needed. If no space is available, we'll work with you to find a different time or day or credit your account for future lessons as needed.

**Q: Should I sign my child up for private swim lessons?**

A: Private lessons are ideal for children overcoming fear, advanced swimmers needing technique work, or those who thrive in one-on-one settings. They fill up quickly, so sign up early when registration opens.

**Q: Do you offer make-up lessons?**

A: No, we do not offer make-up lessons.

**Q: Are the pools heated?**

A: Yes, all ARPD outdoor pools are heated. To stay warm, have a towel ready for after lessons and consider a rash guard for additional warmth.

**Q: Are private lessons good for training for a triathlon?**

A. Absolutely! Your instructor can work on proper stroke technique along with helping you build endurance and increase your swimming pace

# Pool Policies



## *Shower before Swimming*

**\*\*For Your Safety and Pool Cleanliness\*\***

Showering before you swim helps protect against recreational water illnesses (RWIs) that can result from swallowing or inhaling contaminated water. These illnesses may cause symptoms like vomiting, diarrhea, fever, and abdominal cramps.

A quick shower removes sweat, body oils, and germs that can disrupt the pool's pH balance. Maintaining proper pH levels ensures chlorine works effectively, keeping the water clean and reducing the need for additional chemicals.

Showering helps remove sweat, oils, lotions, and pollutants that can affect water clarity and strain the pool's filtration system. This keeps the pool looking and feeling its best.

Personal care products often contain chemicals that can interfere with pool water chemistry. Showering before swimming minimizes these effects, helping to maintain the pool's balance.

Thank you for helping us keep our pool safe and clean for everyone!

## *Class Cancel/Time Change*

Classes may be combined or canceled if fewer than two (2) children are registered. If a class does not meet the minimum enrollment, it will be canceled. Participants will be notified and given the choice to register for another available class or receive a full refund.

# Parents Watching

Currently, Parents can watch swim lessons but must stay behind the gate and away from the pool. This rule helps prevent parent coaching and keeps swimmers focused on their instructors.

Shouting: Do not shout instructions to your child from the side of the pool while they are in class. It is essential to allow the teacher to lead activities without interruption.

## Timeliness

Please make sure your student is on time for lessons. Lessons begin and end at very specific times. Please arrive early enough so your student has time to stop by the bathroom, get changed, and get rinsed off before the lesson begins. If your student is more than 10 minutes late for a lesson, he or she will not be allowed to join that lesson. Nor will a refund or make-up be given



A: Where are you located?

Q: All Classes are at the Encinal  
Swim Center  
Located 230 Central Avenue,  
Alameda 94501

## CONTACT US

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