

8 Top Tips for Children Learning to Swim

1. Time in the water Just like learning to walk or crawl learning to swim is a loco motor skill that requires lots of time and practice to become competent. A child having just one half hour lesson each week for 52 weeks of the year will only accrue 26 hours of swim lesson time over a year. The more time your child spends in the water the quicker he or she will learn to swim.

2. Not negotiable Learning to swim is like wearing a seat belt or a bike helmet. Until you can swim it's simply **not negotiable**. Children don't have the maturity to understand they are at risk around water. Provided you feel comfortable with the teaching methods used at your swim school and the children are treated with respect, then you should have the courage of your convictions that learning to swim is an important priority.

3. Reinforce the skills Not just with swimming, but any loco motor skill needs to be practiced over and over to be remembered. This can seem monotonous and sometimes your child might say they don't want to learn to swim anymore. Feel confident that you're only asking your child to persevere for such a small amount of time, learning to stick with something rather than giving up too easily is a very healthy life lesson.

4. How much skill is enough? Having the ability to swim around a backyard pool doesn't necessarily mean a child is strong enough to cope in an unfamiliar or stressful situation. Swimming ability can deteriorate rapidly under stress, the more skilled the child in the first place the greater the chances of survival

5. Comfort and security matters It's really hard for kids to concentrate and learn if they feel anxious, frightened or uncomfortable. Do all you can to ensure your child feels secure and comfortable enough for easy learning to take place.

6. Be supportive Learning to swim is not so easy for most people. Your child will be more likely to persevere and become more confident if you encourage and support their efforts.

7. Play Don't underestimate the value of play for developing water confidence and a feel for the water. Playing in water will help your child understand buoyancy and how to move effortlessly through water.

8. Be patient! If there is a last word on swimming then it has to be to exercise patience! If your child only hits the water once each week it's going to feel like ages before they can swim. In the long run the total time you spend at swim lessons is probably less than just one week of your child's life. Relax, enjoy the experience and know that you are doing something very, very good (and healthy) for your child.