

What is Starfish Swimming®?

City of Charleston Aquatics 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.

The Starfish Swimming curriculum is designed for students ages 6-months to adult. Benchmarks are established at each stage in the program that combine 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 swim team.

Inside this guide, you will find the curriculum used in the StarBabies™/StarTots™ (ages 6 months to 36 months), Starfish Swim School® (ages 3 and up), and Starfish Stroke School™ programs. Our swim instructors will communicate your child's progression through the curriculum on a regular basis.

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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.

But remember: supervision is a must! While swimming lessons are one layer of protection, nothing beats supervision. Keep your eyes on your child whenever you are in, on, or near the water!

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask. We're here for you.

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A Parent's Guide to the Starfish Swimming® Curriculum



StarBabies™ and StarTots™

The purpose of this course is to foster in very young children a high comfort level in the water while at the same time training parents and caregivers in water safety and drowning prevention. This course does not teach children to become accomplished swimmers or to survive in the water; it does provide a confidence-building, fun, and loving experience.

Stage White: Trust and Comfort

Safety Skill: Understand constant and dedicated surveillance.

Swim Skill: Parent and child are relaxed and confident, and enjoy being in the water together.

Stage Red: Body Positions

Safety Skill: Fit and properly put a lifejacket on the child.

Swim Skill: Perform a relaxed front, back, vertical, and side position for at least 5 seconds each.

Stage Yellow: Submersion

Safety Skill: Use flotation to help someone in the water and know how to call 911.

Swim Skill: Enter from the wall, submerge, turn around, grab on to the wall, and pull up (assisted).

Stage Blue: Air Recovery and Rollover

Safety Skill: Identify six methods of preventing recreational water illness.

Swim Skill: Enter from the wall, submerge, come to surface unassisted and get a breath in vertical or horizontal (on back) position.

Stage Green: Forward Movement

Safety Skill: Know about infant and child CPR.

Swim Skill: Move through the water independently 10 feet, with or without flotation.

Starfish Swim School®

Students work toward 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. Children progress at individual rates with the opportunity to learn the core swimming skills and progress to advanced strokes. Learning is self-paced but challenging.

Stage White: Trust and Submersion

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

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

Stage Red: Body Position and Air Recovery

Safety Skill: Put on a lifejacket, float on back, kick 20 feet.

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

Stage Yellow: Forward Movement

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

Swim Skill: Jump in, submerge, recover for air, forward movement 10 feet, change direction, and return to wall in swimwear and in regular clothes.

Stage Blue: Body Rotation

Safety Skill: Tread water 15 seconds.

Swim Skill: Jump in, submerge, recover to side glide position and kick 10 feet.

Stage Green: Integrated Movement

Safety Skill: Survival float and tread water for 30 seconds.

Swim Skill: Start in side glide, swim freestyle 30 feet with 1-2-3 breathe pattern.

Starfish Stroke School™

Students refine freestyle and learn stroke technique for backstroke, butterfly, breaststroke, and more!

Stage White: Freestyle, Introduction to Backstroke

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

Swim Skill: Swim freestyle 30 feet with body stretched out and consistent form; swim 30 feet of triple-switch backstroke.

Stage Red: Backstroke, Introduction to Butterfly

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

Swim Skill: Swim 30 feet backstroke with straight arm recovery, body roll, good arm and body extension; perform arm down pulsing for 15 feet.

Stage Yellow: Butterfly

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

Swim Skill: Swim 4 strokes butterfly with only one breath, then remainder of pool freestyle.

Stage Blue: Breaststroke

Safety Skill: Discuss the Starfish safety concepts.

Swim Skill: Swim 30 feet breaststroke with good timing and extension.

Stage Green: Endurance

Safety Skill: Tread water or survival float for 2 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.

The Starfish Swimming® skills included in this guide are proprietary information of SAI and cannot be copied or reproduced.