Little Otters  Swim Academy

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www.littleotterswimacademy.com

**Lesson Guidelines and Parent Information**

**WELCOME** and thank you for enrolling your child in swimming lessons. Your decision to dedicate the time, energy and finances necessary are a testimony of your dedication as a parent. Your consistent involvement is appreciated and very necessary. Enjoy the journey you and your child are about to embark on. It is my hope that not only will your child learn vitally important skills, but also, that you will gain some invaluable insights into the little person you are so dedicated to.

Never consider a child “Water Safe” or “Drown Proofed”! All children should be carefully supervised when in or around water, no matter how much training they have received.

My primary focus is to teach your child to become a skilled problem solver in the water. Your child will experience safe and effective lessons. Your child’s lessons will greatly increase their foundation for a lifelong enjoyment of the water. Please read everything carefully. If you have any questions please call or email and I will be happy to supply you with additional information or clarification.

**WHAT to EXPECT**

Survival skills are integrated in a well-rounded aquatic education. I include water acclimation, breath control, propulsion and safety. The key element of safety and survival for your child is the roll back to float. In this position the child can float and breathe for an indefinite period of time. Infants and toddlers cannot effectively raise their heads to take a breath or tread water. If your child falls facedown into the water knowing how to roll into a face up back float can save his or her life.

If your baby is walking, then he or she can also learn to swim to the step or the pool edge, rolling over to breathe as necessary. Roll over breathing is a technique, that many swim schools and learn to swim teachers don’t attempt to teach, because it takes time, skill and patience. Once children learn to roll over to float, relax and breathe, whenever they need air, they can truly swim, stay afloat and conquer fear and experience the joy of swimming.

Since we live in a state where lakes, ponds, swimming pools are an integral part of our lifestyle it’s important to teach your child early and empower him/her with the skills needed to safely enjoy the water.

Before and after lessons, your child is your responsibility. It is critical to bring a positive attitude to each lesson. I will teach your child skills, but it is your support that will most affect his/her attitude and progress. I have observed that children do much better when parents are involved and cheer as they acquire and develop new skills. I cannot over emphasize the importance of your support.

If your child is nonverbal (less than 20 spoken words) you can expect some crying as he/she learns these new skills. Nonverbal children deal with noxious stimuli or discomfort by crying. I will provide you with additional information on behaviors and nonverbal children should your child continue to cry through lessons. Your biggest job with the crying child is to present positive facial and verbal expressions. Your positive support is critical before, during and after swim lessons.

Please do not start your child in this program unless you fully intend to complete the entire learning process. The initial training period is a very critical time of adaptation to a new environment, instructor, and technique for you and your child. It can be a time of very low self-confidence in the water because the child has not had time to acquire and perfect his/her skills in the aquatic environment. If the child’s lessons are terminated during this time, the foremost thing the child will remember about the water is that lack of self-confidence in and around water. I specialize in working with children with water fear problems, and do not want to be involved in putting a child in that situation. Therefore: **make sure that** **this program is for you, before you register**; then stay with it and support your child in every way until he/she is skilled and ready to participate in group classes.

In the basic training program I will either teach your child to roll back to float, swim to float or to swim–float-swim.

**Roll to Float**

**Your child aged 6 months to walking (typically 12 months) will learn**:

* to hold his/her breath underwater
* turn over from face down to face up in a back float

Requires; 4 days per week, (Monday through Thursday), 10-15 minutes per day for a commitment of 4 to 5 week

**Swim to Float**

Some children on the verge of walking will begin to kick to the wall, step or a hand target. These children will learn more of a swim to float sequence. This is a benefit at this age because if there is a fall in, they will go to a float, rather than trying to exit the pool. In the float, they can rest, and wait for help to arrive.

**Your child (12 months to 16 months), who (has begun to walk, but still falls occasionally) is described as a “toddler” will learn:**

to hold his/her breath underwater

use propulsion to move through the water a few feet and grab a hand or get the step

turn over from face down to face up in a back float, rest and breathe

Stay in a float position until prompted to swim again or be picked up

The entire swim float swim sequence is not generally learned until the child has been walking for several months.

**Swim-Float-Swim**

Once your child has grown into a confident walker you will need to enroll him/her in swim-float-swim lessons. If your child has been in either the roll to float or the swim to float program previously, expect to spend another 3-6 weeks depending upon individual development and attendance to learn the complete sequence.

**Your Child: at least one year old (with a good solid walk) to 6 years will learn:**

* to hold his/her breath underwater
* swim, using propulsion from face down to face up in a back float, rest and breathe
* roll back over to resume swimming until they reach the side of the pool, a step or a hand target

Requires; 4-6 weeks of lessons 4 days per week (Mon-Thurs) with lessons lasting 15 minutes.

**All children will have a clothes check out. Full clothing will be worn in the pool during a lesson to insure your child can perform, then be tested on all the skills taught. This sequence is done toward the end of the initial lesson phase of lessons.**

**Maintenance and Refresher Lessons**

Once your child has become skilled in swim, float, swim it is very important that they maintain their skills. As their bodies grow, their center of gravity shifts. This shift makes it hard for them to sometimes find their float. Maintenance lessons are suggested and can be as little as once or twice a week.

If you are not able to make maintenance lessons you should schedule refresher lessons at least twice per year. Updates are needed; not because children forget their skills, but because they outgrow them. Particularly during the first two years, rapid growth causes a shift in a baby’s center of gravity affecting his ability to float. Refreshers are similar to a well-baby checkup; they allow the instructor to readjust the float position and keep your child’s swimming skills sharp. Your child will retain most of what he/she learns after being out of the water for up to a year, however, will likely lose his/her self-confidence if out of the water for this length of time. After being out of lessons for a substantial length of time you may find that your child may cry, cling or refuse to use his/her skills. **Don’t Panic!** Your child has not forgotten at all. After only a few days in refresher lessons, all will be well. Children have many fears, some which stem from a lack of confidence. During refreshers they will soon regain the needed confidence and know **they can do it**!

Refreshers are conducted in weekly increments. Cost is calculated the same as your initial series of lessons.

**Stroke Ready and Snorkeling**

In stroke ready, skilled swim-float-swimmers begin the basis for stroke work. We will work on fine tuning the basics skills of balance, kicking and arms. Strokes are added in as basics are mastered. Eventually your child will be skilled in freestyle, butterfly, breast and back stroke. All strokes incorporate the roll to float. If you have a cruise or vacation coming up and plan to snorkel I can also add snorkeling to your child’s skill set.



**REGISTRATION/SCHEDULING**

Every effort tis made to accommodate your scheduling preference and your location request for lessons. Please understand that Host Pools do take precedence over individual travel locations. I try to schedule host pools at key times (late mornings and afternoons}. I only offer evening lessons for the first 6 weeks of the swim season. This is typically April and May.

If you would like individual lessons at **your** home pool:

I have a very limited schedule for these types of lessons, and you may have to wait a while if this is your only option. Please consider sharing your pool after or before your child’s lesson, so that you can get on my schedule sooner.

I would like to schedule a time to meet you and your child (if time allows). This is beneficial for several reasons:

* it helps to eliminate the “stranger” factor for your child,
* I will know where your location is physically, and
* I’m able to assess your pool to see if there are any additional strategies needed to teach your child there

If you are attending lessons at a host pool:

Please try to arrange a time, in advance, to watch lessons in progress.

In the week prior to your child’s scheduled lessons you will receive an email with specific instructions for that specific host pool, including address, parking, pool entry, etc.. Please pay close attention to those instructions and ask for clarification if needed in advance.

There is a onetime $30.00 registration fee per child. If you have siblings, there is a discount for additional children within the same household, and a family max of $50.00 for registration. Please answer completely all questions on the registration form. Your registration fee is a contribution to Josh the Otter foundation, which is dedicated to educating children on water safety. [www.joshtheotter.org](http://www.joshtheotter.org) I am very proud to be associated with them and encourage you to take the time to read through the website and view the videos. I use Josh the Otter materials to head up this campaign in Seminole and Orange Counties. I also offer scholarships to underprivileged children. If you would like to donate or if you’d like to join me in this effort please let me know

**TUITION and ATTENDANCE**

Tuition for lessons is $120.00 per week per child (siblings are discounted) **when I travel to** **your home pool**.

Tuition, **when you travel to me**, is $80 per week per child (discounts for siblings).

Weekly tuition is due on Monday of each week. If you have more than one child, I offer sibling discounts for each additional child. If you live outside of the Winter Springs/Oviedo community, and wish for me to teach at your home, there will be a trip charge based on the number of miles.

If you are hosting lessons at your home pool; discounts apply, based on the number of children attending. (Hosting at your pool means that, you are opening your home pool to other students outside of your own family, acquired either by yourself or by me). Speak with me about this if you would be interested in hosting. There is a huge need for host pools and I will give you a generous discount for offering your pool to others in the community.

**Weekly Payments**

I accept checks, cash, Pay Pal and Venmo.

* For Venmo please use: @Tina-Baron-2
* Pay Pal please use: baron\_tina@yahoo.com - please use the friends and family option
* Please make checks payable to Tina Baron.
* For cash and checks: please place your payment inside a blank envelope with your child’s first name, last initial, date and place in my binder, in the envelope labeled “payments”.

**Missed Lessons**

If your child will miss a week or more due to illness/family emergency please notify me as soon as possible for scheduling arrangements to be made. Please try not to schedule vacation times in the middle of the initial set of lessons. Consistency is a vital part of this process. I understand that it is not always possible to make a scheduled lesson time. Please call or text in advance if for some reason you must cancel your child’s regularly scheduled time. I will try to offer another time slot for that day.

**Weather**

I carry a lightening indicator device with me. It will indicate the presence of lightening within 20 miles. If there is lightening within 10 miles we will not swim.

If weather is a threat I will (group) text you to monitor your location’s weather.

If time allows I will post to social media: Facebook, then twitter.

Please like the FB page to get the updates and add me on twitter: <https://www.facebook.com/LittleOttersSwimAcademy> . My twitter account is: Little Otters Swim @swimnkidz

I will call last, if I am unable to get confirmation from you.

Calling is time consuming and tedious. So please respond to the text favorite the tweet, like the FB post so that I know you saw it. Please be sure I know the best way to contact you/Grandparent/Nanny in the event of a cancellation. I realize that some grandparents/Nannies will not use social media or text, so in that case I will call first – just let me know that is the case.

If you hear thunder and have not heard from me, please contact me. I use the NOAA AP($2) on my smart phone and I ask parents to download the Weatherbug Ap (its free) and gives a mile range for lightening. The biggest flaw to weather bug and NOAA is that there is about a 5 minute delay from a strike to publishing. The lightening indicator is the most dependable. The rule for storms is: 20 minutes without thunder = clear to swim. If there is only light rain we **WILL** swim. Cancellation due to inclement weather, emergencies or instructor illness will be fully credited back to you the following week.

**HOW TO PREPARE FOR LESSONS**

**FOOD and DRINK**

Please do not feed your child for at least one hour prior to lessons. Dairy takes a little longer to digest, so please allow at least 1.5 hr to 2 hrs before lesson start time. Please avoid foods with skin that are a little harder to digest, i.e.: grapes, strawberries, apples. The reason for this is due to the amount of air that children will swallow in their initial phase of lessons. When there is air in their bellies they tend to burp. If there is food in their tummies, that will come up with the burp. If this happens to your child do not be frightened or distressed. It happens to some children and can usually be controlled by feeding time. We may find that we need to avoid food for 1.5-2 hrs before lessons.

**ATTIRE**

Any child 3 years of age and younger, or not potty trained must wear a non-disposable, reusable swim diaper. Disposable diapers, like little swimmers don’t meet our requirements for containment should an accident occur, and therefore cannot be used. Please plan ahead and purchase a reusable elastic waist/leg swim diaper. The cost is $11-$14. Please, do not buy the snaps or Velcro version as they do not contain contamination effectively. Please make certain you order in time so that you have the swim diaper on hand for the first lesson. Some parents like to line their reusable swim diaper with a little swimmer disposable. That way if there is an accident you will have easy clean up.

If your child chills easily please consider ordering a Warm Belly Wetsuit at [www.warmbelly.com](http://www.warmbelly.com) The cost is $32, and they are extremely durable. If you mention Little Otters Swim Academy- Florida in the notes section of the order form you will be given a discount of $5. I especially like them for April, May, October and November swimming. The child who typically chills easily will have a shortened lesson, and will not find lessons enjoyable.

I have been extremely satisfied with the outcome of using Warm Belly wetsuits on my students.

If you are attending lessons at a pool other than your own, please take your disposable diaper (that you will remove prior to slipping on the swim diaper) home with you. Please be respectful of our host. Do not allow your children to climb on furniture, or play with any of the host pool’s toys or equipment. Do not bring any food or drink with you, as it attracts ants. Please require your children to sit quietly and be respectful to the other students in lessons, if you are waiting. It is a distraction to me and a disruption to the lesson if I have to stop lessons in progress to redirect a child on the deck.

Be sure to have 2 large, dry towels available immediately for your child following lessons. If your child tends to chill easily have warm clothes ready to put on him/her. Require your child to lie down on one towel and cover up with the other one. Please allow rest after lessons before getting up to leave, or allowing play.

Please keep your child’s fingernails trimmed. ☺

**Photos and Videos** are a fabulous way of preserving memories. Please do take photos and please share them with me – I love them! If you wish to video, please do, but I must ask you not to put any video of lessons on the internet, or social media site without my approval. I will occasionally bring my “GO PRO” underwater camera with me to lessons and I am happy to share these images with you as well.

Add me to your social media for quick photo exchanges:

* Facebook: Little Otters Swim Academy
* Instagram: Little\_Otters\_Swim\_Academy
* Twitter: @swimnkidz

I am always thrilled to have your reviews there as well, if you are so inclined.

As the first several weeks of lessons are truly critical in establishing the skill set I must ask that you to keep your children out of the water (with the exception of lessons) during this time period. Most importantly, if you have any flotation toys (noodles, floaties, inflated rings, vests, rafts) I must ask you to please remove them altogether while we are in lessons. We can slowly add noodles and rafts back in (usually about week 3 or 4), but will no longer need any puddle jumpers, floaties, vests or inflated rings. Improper use of these toys tends to break down skills.

**Once initial skills are mastered (usually by week 2 and 3) parents are invited into the pool (after our swim lesson) to learn how to correctly interact with their child so that skills are not broken down and so that they can fully enjoy their newly independent swimmer. I will give you plenty of notice and I will teach you (parent) how to launch your child to the step/wall, how to offer a hand target and only after it is mastered, how to back up and require a float. Please do not attempt to use these prompts until after your “parent lesson”. Incorrect use of prompts can interfere with your child’s progress.**

In your welcome folder (given on the first day of lessons) I will include common questions/answers about swimming lessons. This includes dry drowning (which should not be a concern), crying babies information, as well as swimming progression. Please read through all of this information carefully. These articles are also published on my FB site if you would like to read ahead.

Thank you again for choosing to give your child this precious gift, that will be used for the rest of his/her life. I look forward to working with you and your child. I humbled and honored that you chose me to teach this very valuable skill!

Welcome again to the Little Otters Swim Academy family!!

Best,

Tina