

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## Safety

### Are swimming lessons for infants and young children safe?

YES! ISR's Self-Rescue™ program is dedicated to safety and maintaining numerous safety protocols to promote safe lessons. Your child's health and well-being are our highest priority and are closely monitored on a daily basis. In addition, your child's medical and developmental history is a mandatory part of the ISR national registration process, all of which is held strictly confidential. All ISR instructors undergo an intensive and 8-week in-water and academic training that far exceeds any other training program of this kind. Each ISR instructor is also required to attend a yearly re-certification that includes quality control as well as continuing education. Your education in the area of aquatic safety for your entire family is an integral part of your child's lessons. You will receive access to the "Parent Resource Guide," written by Dr. Harvey Barnett and JoAnn Barnett, which will inform you of every aspect of swimming for infants and children. With research, you will find that ISR is the safest survival swimming program but also the most effective for teaching infants and young children.

## Why ISR?

### Why should parents enroll their children in ISR lessons?

ISR parents are intelligent and enroll their children because they understand their children's abilities and want to give them every opportunity to learn. They also feel it is important to teach their children how to help themselves should they find themselves alone in the water. Research shows that there are better times to learn certain things and swimming is best learned early in life. (Newsweek and Drowning Statistics)

### What is ISR and how is it different from other swimming programs?

ISR is the product over 45 years of ongoing development in the area of aquatic survival instruction for infants and children. ISR's primary focus is to teach you child to become a productive swimmer, or floater in any depth of water. The goal of ISR is that your child becomes an "aquatic problem solver." ISR will greatly increase your child's chance of surviving an aquatic accident, even when fully clothed!



### What other benefits do the ISR lesson experience provide students?

Every child is unique. However, many parents report that once their young children have mastered learning to swim, the resulting confidence in their abilities engenders a positive self-concept that is often demonstrated in other aspects of their personalities. There are also obvious health and other psychological gains.

### I hear you say your priority is survival skills. Will my child learn to actually swim?

Yes. At ISR, we believe that part of survival for a child who can walk is swimming. Children learn the swim-float-swim sequence so that they could get themselves to safety. The difference in our program is that they will learn swimming AND survival skills and how to be an aquatic problem solver.

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## About Lessons

### **Why are lessons 5 days per week and for only 10 minutes?**

The reason for this is multifaceted. First, repetition and consistency are crucial elements of learning for young children. Research shows that short, more frequent lessons result in higher retention. Second, most children have fairly short attention spans and will not be able to focus on the task for longer and we want to take advantage of the best time for learning. A third reason is that, though the pool temperature is maintained at 78–88 degrees, the temperature is still lower than your child's body temperature. Lessons are work and therefore your child will also be losing body heat. Instructors check students regularly for temperature fatigue since this is an indicator of physical fatigue.

### **If more frequent but shorter lessons are better, then why don't you teach 7 days/week?**

Everyone needs a little break from learning to process the information and in this case to give muscles a chance to recover. In addition, you need to be able to spend time with your family, as does your instructor. Weekends are family time. Periodically, if weather or other issues have caused lessons to be cancelled for numerous days, your instructor may choose to offer make up lessons on a weekend. This is strictly up to the instructor and based on the availability of parents.

### **Why does it take 4–6 weeks for my child to learn this?**

The 4–6 weeks is an estimate that is based on the average time in which it takes most children to learn these survival skills. Every child is

unique and ISR's Self-Rescue program is specifically designed based on your child's individual strengths and needs. It is important to realize that this is an average which means that some children will actually finish more quickly while others will need more practice. ISR is dedicated to safety and, therefore, we want to provide your child with the time and best opportunity to become proficient in his/her survival skills. We will always honor your child's needs.

### **Why do you have the children swim in clothes?**

Because 86% of children, who fall in the water, do so fully clothed, we want our students to have experience with such a situation. If a child has experienced the sensations of being in the water in clothing prior to an emergency situation, he/she is less likely to experience panic and be able to focus on the task at hand. If you have ever jumped in the water with clothes on, then you know that there is a significant difference in weight and feel with clothes as opposed to a bathing suit.

### **What is the retention rate with ISR lessons?**

ISR claims a retention rate of 94–100% up to one year following lessons. Having said this, children will explore and may pick up bad habits watching other children or with interference like floating in a bathtub or playing on the steps. As your child goes through lessons, you will begin to understand, through communication with your Instructor, what activities may interfere with his/her learned Self-Rescue skills. Contacting and/or returning to your instructor in a timely manner is imperative to maintaining effective habits.

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## **Do you have children that just can't learn the skills?**

No. Every child can learn. It is the Instructor's job to find the best way to communicate the information so that it makes sense to the child. We set your child up to be successful every time. We start where they are.

## **How can you teach babies and young children to swim?**

ISR instructors teach infants to swim by honoring each child's individual strengths and experiences. They understand the fundamentals of the behavioral sciences, child development and of sensori-motor learning as it relates to the acquisition of aquatic survival skills; they use this education to guide each child through the sequence of learning to swim and float.

## **Can you really teach a child who is not verbal how to swim?**

Yes. Consider that children learn to sit, crawl and walk before they learn to speak. Because we teach through sensori-motor learning, verbal skills are not required for a child to acquire Self-Rescue skills. We are able to communicate with our students through touch and positive reinforcement while striving to set our students up for success every step of the way.

## **How do you teach them to hold their breath?**

Breath holding skills are taught in the first lesson. We shape breath control using highly effective positive reinforcement techniques. We continue to reinforce these breath-holding techniques throughout every lesson.

## **How is it that babies can learn to respond to the danger of water when they fall in?**

A baby does not need to perceive danger or be afraid to respond appropriately to being underwater. If a baby has learned to roll over and float when he needs air, he doesn't need to perceive danger in order to respond in this manner. He needs skill, practice and confidence to calmly deal with the situation.

## **Is it the baby fat that makes them float?**

Actually, the primary factor in a baby's ability to float is the ability to take air into the lungs. To maintain this access to air, the child must adjust his/her posture. The difference in positioning for an adult can be inches. For a baby, this adjustment is reduced to centimeters. If a child's body posture is just a few centimeters off, it can make the difference between the face being submerged or the child having access to air.

## **Can't babies swim naturally?**

Unfortunately, babies cannot naturally swim. If this were the case, there wouldn't be so many drownings every year. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), drowning is the leading cause of accidental death for children ages 1-4 in the United States.

## **Why don't parents participate in the water during the lessons?**

We do not want the baby to initially associate the water with the love, attention and affection of the parent while in the water. Also, it takes incredible concentration and objectivity to teach the baby how to respond to an aquatic emergency and our research shows that parents often find it too difficult to be objective to be effective teachers with their own children in the water.

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## How do the kids react during the first few lessons?

Children often fuss during the first few lessons because they are in a new environment, learning something new and around new people. As your child becomes more confident in his/her ability in the water, the fussing will decrease.

It is not unlike the first time you tried a new exercise class, or were asked to perform a task at work that you'd never done before: the first time you try a new task it is always challenging, until you get the hang of it. It is the same for your young child. Your child is learning to perform a skill that he/she's never done before.

## Will my child fear the water because of lessons?

There is an important difference between being fearful and being apprehensive because you are not yet skilled in a new environment. ISR is not like traditional swim lessons; it is a drowning prevention program that teaches survival swimming. Sometimes as a parent, you make choices for your child's safety, like sitting in a car seat, because you know they are important. The same can be said for ISR.

FUN can be defined as when SKILL meets CHALLENGE. Once competent in their skills, many children cannot be dragged away from the pool. They are having entirely too much FUN.

## Refresher Lessons

### Will my child need additional lessons?

Based on our research, we know that refresher lessons are important because children change so much both cognitively and physically during the first 4-5 years of life. It is important that their water survival skills grow with their bodies.

Frequency depends on the child's age, growth rate, skill level and confidence level. The goal of refresher lessons is to help your child adjust his/her new body size and weight to his/her existing skill level. Your instructor will work with your child to help fine-tune his or her aquatic experience to assist with building efficiency, which will result in self-confidence. This is especially important if your child has not been able to practice any appropriate aquatic skill between seasons.

## American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)

### What do doctor's have to say about swimming lessons?

In May of 2010, the AAP has now changed it's policy regarding the age at which children may start swimming lessons, based on research stating that swim lessons may actually provide reduction in drowning risk of children ages 1- to 4-years-old. That study, [Association Between Swimming Lessons and Childhood Drowning](#) published in the Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine, March, 2009, by Brenner et. al. was the first study to probe the relationship between drowning reduction and swimming skills. That study concluded that, "Participation in formal swimming lessons was associated with an 88% reduction in the risk of drowning in the 1- to 4-year-old children..."

The AAP encourages parent's to consider that starting water-survival skills training at an early age must be individualized, based on the child's frequency of exposure to water, emotional maturity, physical limitations and health concerns related to swimming pools.

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## Chlorine

### How safe is it for young children to swim in a chlorinated pool?

The pH balance and overall chemistry of all pools are affected by many variables, such as air temperature, water temperature, sunlight, humidity controls, fans, the type and amount of water treatment, as well as, the delivery system for the chemicals, etc.

Studies have shown that a properly maintained pool causes no respiratory threat to young children. Specifically, when the exposure to the pool is limited, as in the case of ISR lessons, which are limited to 10 minutes per day. The ISR Registration Evaluation Team (RET) screens for children with existing and family histories of asthma and other respiratory issues and alerts the Instructor for special procedures to accommodate the situations as they are presented each day at lessons. For more than 30 years, ISR's use of BUDS (Bowel, Urine, Diet & Sleep) sheets and poolside BUDS have allowed us to document any related health issues at indoor as well as outdoor pools.

ISR's protocols, prompts and procedures are time tested and approved by our medical advisors to provide the safest lesson and pool environment possible.

Of course, we can only speak to ISR's protocols and safety. Overall, parents must be aware of their child's sensitivity to chlorine and the impact of heavily chlorinated pools and excessive chlorine derivatives on respiratory health. In our constant pursuit of delivering the safest and most effective survival swimming lessons, we continually monitor our program and have collected data on each of our 200,000 students since 1966, including follow up reports and input from medical experts. ISR's comprehensive health screening process, conducted by trained medical professionals, begins by assessing the child's overall health. If ISR's panel of medical experts determines that a child has a condition that could be adversely impacted by exposure to chlorine, the child is not accepted into the program until the health concern has been resolved.

## ABOUT ISR

Infant Swimming Resource (ISR), with its Self-Rescue™ program, is nationally recognized as the safest provider of survival swimming lessons for infants and young children. With a primary focus on safety and effectiveness, and as the world's leading behavioral science based instruction program, ISR is the only choice for parents who are dedicated to their child's safety, education and developmental needs. ISR's worldwide network of highly qualified, certified Instructors has successfully delivered over 7 million safe lessons to infants and young children, which have resulted in our record of nearly 800 documented cases of a children utilizing ISR's survival techniques to save their own lives. For more information on ISR, water and swim safety or to find an instructor in your area, please visit [www.infantswim.com](http://www.infantswim.com).

