

Parent Resource Book



By Harvey Barnett, Ph.D. & JoAnn Barnett, ISR SMI

Dedication

Jake Morrison



Jake's parents created the Live Like Jake Foundation to spread the word about drowning prevention and make sure that all families know about Infant Swimming Resource.



Dear Parents,

Congratulations on enrolling your child in the Infant Swimming Resource program. This could very well be the best decision you will ever make to protect your child's life. We only wish that we had enrolled our son Jake in ISR before we lost him to an accidental drowning. We are convinced that he would still be here with us today if we had. Here is our story:

On November 30, 2013 while visiting family for the Thanksgiving holiday our lives were turned completely upside down. Our son, Jake, managed to sneak out of a room with adults present where he fell into the Intracoastal and lost his young life. I remember so clearly hearing the words "Where's Jake" and I thought to myself what do you mean where is Jake? He is right there in the next room playing with his cousins. My heart sank when I noticed the back door open because I just knew at that moment he was gone. The panic set in and we were all running around the backyard in the pitch dark screaming for Jake. The pain knowing that your child needs you more than he will ever need you and

you can't help him is paralyzing. You think to yourself that this can't happen to us because we are good parents. We love our children beyond words and watch them so closely. Unfortunately we realized that it CAN happen to us as it DID happen to us and that drowning is preventable and we must do something about it. We enrolled our daughter Julia in the ISR program 5 months after we lost her brother. She was just 8 months old and watching her rollback and float was one of the most beautiful things we have ever witnessed. We were so impressed with the ISR program that we created the Live Like Jake Foundation so that we could raise awareness for childhood drowning prevention and make sure that everyone knew about this program and that it could save your child's life. We went on to have another child and at just 6 months we also enrolled Josie in ISR and within weeks she was also able to Self-Rescue like her big sister Julia.

I hope you take pride in knowing that your child is going to benefit from over 50 years of research and knowledge that has been developed by Dr. Harvey Barnett. He has

dedicated his life to creating this amazing program and saved so many children's lives with his techniques.

Please join us and our efforts to END childhood drowning by spreading the word about ISR. We do not want another family to have to endure the loss of a child due to a drowning especially since it is preventable!

Many blessings,

Keri, Roarke, Julia and Josie M.

www.livelikejake.com

*Infant Swimming Resource dedicates this book to the families who have experienced the tragedy our organization endeavors to prevent. The courage you show when sharing your story of loss, and your continual dedication to preventing more tragedies, have been a driving force behind our efforts since 1966. We are getting closer to seeing the day when
Not One More Child Drowns.*

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Welcome

Parent Story

I want to start off by telling you how grateful we are for having Lisa Beers in our life as our ISR instructor and the amazing ISR life saving skills she taught our son Michael. On January 3, 2013, I was participating in a mommy boot camp class at a local park here in Wellington, FL. During the class, which takes place in an open soccer field, one of the other moms volunteered to watch Michael, my 15 month old, and a few other babies while I went for a short jog. I was gone for no more than 2 minutes, and on my return I quickly noticed Michael was not where he should be. I instantly panicked and began looking all over for Michael. My heart just about stopped when I noticed the water rippling in a canal about twenty yards away. I ran over as fast as possible, fearing the worst, and pleading to let him be okay. What I saw was absolutely amazing. My 15 month little guy was floating in the middle of the canal. Doing EXACTLY what he was trained to do. He SAVED himself! I dove in, swam out and grabbed him. He was OKAY, shaken up of course and freezing as the water was quite cold, but he was PERFECT and ALIVE! I cannot put into words how deeply appreciative we are for the Lisa and our ISR classes and her patience with Michael. We are forever indebted to the ISR program!

Chapter 1

Welcome!

Welcome to Infant Swimming Resource! We're glad you've made the decision to help your child learn critical aquatic survival skills.



This book is designed to help you understand more about ISR and what you can expect as your child progresses through lessons. You will

learn how our program was developed, how the lessons will be individually tailored to your child, and what you can expect at each lesson. You will gain insight into how your child can become aquatically skilled in a safer environment, under the guidance of a highly-trained ISR Instructor. You will also discover fun and safe ways to enjoy the water with your child.

By choosing this program, you've taken an important first step to keeping your child safer in and around the water. However, please remember that even the most aquatically skilled child is not "drown-proof." Effective adult supervision is the first and most important defense against drowning.

Before your child's lessons begin, we encourage you to observe other children in their lessons. Speak to your Instructor and try to observe lessons of children

Since 1966, we've taught more than 350,000 children to become aquatically skilled.

who are close in age to your child. Even if you've already talked to your Instructor or other ISR parents about the lessons, seeing the lessons firsthand is the best way to understand the ISR experience.

Again, thank you for choosing to be a part of ISR. We look forward to working with you and your child!

Please note: Throughout this book, children may be referred to as either male or female. The author's decision to refer to a child as male or female is purely arbitrary. The principle and teaching methods referred to in this book are the same regardless of whether our student is male or female.

As a result of learning these skills, more than 800 children have used their skills to survive in drowning situations.

All About Us: ISR's Self-Rescue® Program

Parent Story

My son is 2½ years old. Two nights ago we were at my parents playing in the backyard and Will and I were by the pool, not a foot from each other. He was using a swim noodle to pretend fish and went from a bent-down position to standing. But when he stood, he lost his footing and fell into the pool headfirst. I couldn't grab him quick enough, so I went in after him, but in the time he went in and I got to him, he had flipped over, put his arms out and his face was coming to the surface in a floating position. He wasn't panicked, more upset that he was wet than anything. We got out immediately and as we dried off, we kept telling him how proud we were for how he floated and this is why we swim with Miss Marcy. Seeing him react exactly how he's being taught gave me such peace of mind. I don't think there is a gift out there more valuable to give your child and yourself.

With So Much Love, Angela M.

In this chapter, you will learn the fundamentals of ISR—how the program was developed and how we can teach your child to become safer in and around the water.

Chapter 2

Our Beginning

Sadly, our program began as a result of a tragedy. ISR founder, Harvey Barnett, Ph.D., was 18 years old when he came home one day to learn that his neighbor's infant had died as a result of drowning in a drainage ditch in only a few inches of water. The loss of this baby's life from such a senseless accident had a profound effect on Barnett, and he devoted his adult life to preventing childhood drowning. While still working to teach children how to survive in the water, he attended college. Dr. Barnett earned a Ph.D. in Psychological Foundations from the University of Florida. The techniques used to teach your child to survive in the water are based on well-tested and researched principles of behavioral psychology and physiology.



Today's ISR is the result of more than 50 years of research and development, making it a nationally recognized program with a specific mission of seeing the day when Not One More Child Drowns.

The Key to Aquatic Survival: The Back Float

To survive an aquatic accident, your child must be able to float on his or her back to rest and breathe. ISR can teach your child how to turn from facedown in the water to a back float, and to maintain that back float independently while resting and breathing.



Why a back float? Until a child is about 4 years of age, it is unproductive and too fatiguing for him to try to pull his head up from the

water while swimming to breathe and maintain that position for any significant period of time. Because babies and young children have a large percentage of their body size and weight in their heads, when they lift their heads while swimming, their feet immediately drop, leaving them in a more vertical position that is difficult, if not impossible, to maintain until they can be rescued from the water.

ISR requires a commitment from you: for 20-30 lessons, your child will meet with his or her ISR Instructor, five days a week. Each lesson lasts no more than 10 minutes per day.

Chapter 2

Babies from 6-12 Months Old: The Rollback-to-Float Sequence

Babies who are between 6 and at least 12 months old will learn how to orient themselves in the water and roll to a back float position to rest and breathe.

Even though babies at this age have the ability to accidentally get into the water either by walking or crawling, most don't yet have the ability to get out of the water on their own—they simply don't have the upper body strength to pull themselves up and out of the water. However, children as young as 6 months old can be taught how to rollover onto their back, and maintain a stable, life-saving floating position until help arrives. This skill is at the foundation of the entire ISR Self-Rescue® skill-set as it can be the difference between life and death in the event of accidental immersion.

Young Children from 1-6 Years: The Swim-Float-Swim Sequence

Young children, who are older than 12 months and walking well, are generally developmentally ready and physically strong enough to get themselves out of the water should they fall into a pool.

We teach this age group to swim for a short distance, roll into a back float position to rest and breathe, and then turn back over to swim again in search of an exit. If your child cannot find a way out, ISR teaches him to resume a back float until he is rescued.

Children are taught to repeat this swim-float-swim sequence as many times as necessary to be able to find a wall, steps or the shore where they might be able to pull themselves out of the water.

Given that most drowning and near-drowning incidents occur when a child is fully clothed, every student, once fully skilled, practices in summer and winter clothing.

Chapter 2

Individualized Instruction for Your Child

Any parent knows that no two children are exactly alike. Every child has his own level of physical skill, unique temperament, and way of learning.

That's why each ISR lesson is individually designed and customized for your child. In the course of each lesson, your Instructor will assess how your child has retained the skills taught in the previous lesson. The goal is to encourage your child to do more and more with each lesson, but always within the boundaries of their physical abilities and their cognitive and emotional learning capacities.

Each ISR Instructor undergoes at least 40 hours of in-water training before becoming certified to teach.

Why We Are Different

If you've had any experience with other programs that claim to teach babies how to swim, you've probably already discovered what sets ISR apart. Our focus is on drowning prevention, not simply learning to swim.

Your child's ability to survive an aquatic accident depends on her ability to orient herself in the water, get a breath, and keep breathing until she can be rescued or can get out of the water on her own. A child who just learns to blow bubbles in the water, or who learns to paddle a few feet to Mom in the water, or worse yet, learns that "floaties" or rafts will keep her in an upright position, will not have the skills necessary to survive if she falls into the water. No one, regardless of age or skill level, is ever "drown-proof." Our goal is to equip your child with independent aquatic skills that will become the foundation for a lifetime of safe enjoyment of the water. We also consider parent education an equally important component of the program in an effort to prevent aquatic accidents. And, while we know that ISR skills can and have made the difference between life and death for many of our students, we hope the only times your child will need to use their skills are while safely playing the in water with you.

ISR Instructors study and are tested in the subjects of child psychology, learning theory, physiology, and the behavioral sciences.

What to Expect During ISR Lessons

In this chapter, you'll learn more about what you'll need to bring to each lesson and what to expect in the first days and weeks of the lessons. You'll also learn about your child's emotional response to the lessons and the important role you play in your child's learning experience.

Parent Story

“Paige cried the first few days, but what I saw after the first week amazed me. My husband tells everyone that they would be crazy not to put their child in the ISR program. Needless to say, Paige is now almost 7, and she swims like a fish!”

—Ellen W.

Chapter 3



Teaching your child aquatic survival skills is a cumulative process. It is similar to putting together the

pieces of a puzzle. Each individual part of the process is taught and as one skill is mastered, the next skill is introduced, which builds upon what has previously been learned. Each child will learn and master these skills at a different rate, and sometimes even in a different sequence.

Although most children learn these skills during 20-30 lessons, a wide variety of factors can affect your child's rate of progress through the lessons. Illness, absences from lessons, teething, and diet can all play a role in how quickly your child masters the skills. In addition, your child's previous experience in the water can greatly affect how long it takes him to learn. Many parents begin lessons thinking that if their child has had some type of previous instruction, then fewer lessons will be necessary. In reality, the opposite may be true.

Floaties

In addition, children who have become accustomed to using devices like floaties, flotation swimsuits, or vests have become comfortable in a completely different posture in the water than what is required to learn to effectively swim and float. These devices hold the child up vertically in the water while swimming and floating require a horizontal posture in the water. Thus, it's not uncommon for children who have had these types of exposure to the water to need more lessons, rather than fewer.

ISR lessons are student directed, meaning that we are constantly assessing how your child is learning, what she has mastered, and what she is still learning before moving to the next step.

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Your Instructor

It's also important to note that while all ISR Instructors are taught the same methods, each Instructor has his or her own individual style and way of communicating. Both you and your child should be comfortable with the Instructor, and there should be a calm, professional atmosphere at the lesson—or, at least as calm and professional as one can expect when there are babies and toddlers involved! If you have any concerns or questions about your Instructor or your lesson experience, please do not hesitate to contact us via our website at www.infantswim.com



What to Bring to Each Lesson

Three Clean Towels

Our Three Towel Rule was developed with your child's safety in mind. You will need two towels to layer on the pool deck, and one towel to wrap your child in after lessons. Layering two towels on the pool deck helps to minimize the contact your child has with the wet surface of the pool deck, which can harbor germs.

Sun Protection

If lessons are outdoors, please prepare to keep you and your child safe from the sun's rays at the pool. If you choose to use sunscreen during the lesson, please apply a waterproof sunscreen on your child at least 1 hour before the lesson, using the minimum amount necessary. This will help to ensure that the sunscreen has been absorbed enough to be effective against sunburn, and that your child isn't too slippery for your Instructor to handle!

Swim Diaper

The most effective swim diapers are the ISR Swim Diapers that are available at www.isrsealstore.com. Swim diapers can also be purchased at most children's clothing stores and a few discount stores.

As you prepare for each day's lesson, remember your child should not eat ANY food for at least 1 hour prior to the lesson, and your child should not have any milk products for at least 2 hours prior to the lesson.

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Please do not use any type of disposable swim diaper. They are not effective in containing bowel movements that might otherwise end up in the water.

The Daily BUDS Discussion

At ISR, we believe you know your child best, which is why we rely so heavily on the information you provide when customizing lessons for your child. One of the single most important tools we have in terms of collecting this information is the ISR BUDS Discussion. The Daily BUDS Discussion was developed as an easy way to collect fairly detailed information about bowel, urine, sleep and dietary habits. Doing the absolute best you can to communicate BUDS information as accurately as possible will ensure that your ISR Instructor can provide the most appropriate lesson possible for your child. Please refer to Chapter 4, Keeping Lessons Safe for your Child, for more information about BUDS data.



What to Expect at Every Lesson

At the beginning of each lesson, and before you hand your child over to your Instructor, you will have a conversation with your Instructor about how your child feels and acts between lessons. Plan on



discussing the BUDS information with your Instructor for a few moments, and be sure to advise your Instructor if your child has had any signs of illness, any injuries, or has taken any type of medication in the past 24 hours. Your Instructor will record this information on the BUDS Discussion Sheet to be initialed daily by you and the Instructor.

If your Instructor discovers anything during the BUDS discussion that raises a concern, he or she may decide to change the length or the pace of the lesson, or possibly advise that your child not participate in lessons that day.

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While your child is learning to hold her breath, it's not uncommon for her to swallow some air which can lead to a few big burps during your child's lesson. Rest assured that your ISR Instructor is watching your child's stomach closely for signs of swallowed air in her abdomen and you may notice that your Instructor will pause the lesson to burp your child. Certain foods in your child's diet can also lead to increased air in her stomach, which is uncomfortable for her and can make learning some aquatic skills more difficult. Chapter 4 has more information about foods to avoid and your child's Instructor can discuss a customized approach for your family.

Your Instructor will have allotted 10 minutes for your child's lesson. Your child's actual time in the water may be slightly less if your Instructor sees any signs of temperature fatigue (by pressing on your child's heel, hand, or back) or if your child is having difficulty releasing air from her stomach.

Sometimes, if the lesson is nearing its conclusion, and your child has done a particularly good job at mastering a skill that day, your Instructor may choose to end the lesson the high note of your child's big accomplishment for that day. Keep in mind that because the lessons are individually tailored to your child, our focus during the lesson is more on your child's ability, accomplishment, and safety, rather than adhering to a strict maximum amount of time for

Remember to refrain from apply products during the time that your child is involved in ISR lessons - even apple juice!

your child to be in the water.

As soon as the lesson is over, the Instructor will place your child on his left side on the 2 towels you have placed on the pool deck. Having your child lie on his left side helps to release any air that may have been swallowed during the lesson. Use the third towel to dry your child and cover him. Some children are tired out by the lesson and don't mind lying still for a minute or so; others want to jump up right away. Try to keep your child lying on his left side for a couple of minutes. This is also a good time to tell your child what a great job he did in the lesson today and reinforce his effort!

Please also keep in mind that many ISR Instructors keep a very full schedule, and may have a child scheduled to be in the water soon after your child's lesson is over. If your Instructor doesn't have a lot of time to talk to you after the lesson is over, please keep in mind that he or she is trying to keep to his or her schedule and prepare for the next child. If you have any concerns at all, please be sure to contact your Instructor via phone or email at the end of the day.

Chapter 3

PART ONE: BABIES and NEW WALKERS The Rollback-to-Float Sequence

What to Expect on Your First Day of Lessons

On the first day of lessons, your Instructor will focus on building a rapport and showing your baby what it feels like to be on her back in the water by providing support and allowing her to “balance” herself in the water with this support. The goal is to teach your baby to trust this position so she is comfortable breathing and resting on her back in the water.



Depending on your child’s response, your Instructor may also begin teaching your baby to close her mouth, hold her breath, and open her eyes

underwater while she starts to learn how to move in the water. Your baby will *never* be thrown into the water.

You may have heard or read that babies can swim “naturally.” That is false. All purposeful swimming behaviors must be taught. If swimming was natural for a baby, why do so many drown each year?

What to Expect During Your First Week of Lessons

Each ISR lesson—not just during the first week, but throughout the entire series of lessons—will begin with the Instructor briefly reinforcing the skills learned in the previous lessons. As your child is able to do more and more on her own, your Instructor will begin introducing more complex skills.

During this first week, you’ll notice that your Instructor may pick your child up and praise her after a successful back float. Verbal praise - along with touch, support, and even the timing of when she picks up your child - are all ways your Instructor reinforces your child and communicates that she has performed the skill she’s learning correctly. Take your cues from the Instructor and verbally praise your child at the same time.

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What to Expect During the 2nd and 3rd Weeks of Lessons

For young babies, the 2nd and 3rd weeks of lessons are most often devoted to teaching your child to float independently and to roll from a facedown position in the water into a back float to rest and breathe. As an example, while your Instructor may start teaching the float by supporting your baby's body fully, you will notice the support will become less and less as your baby takes more responsibility with her head orientation, balance, and breathing.

By the 3rd week, the Instructor may be able to use less and less support as the child learns to steady the float on her own. During this time, your baby will learn how to make the small adjustments, such as slowing the kicking and keeping the arms out farther, which are necessary for her to maintain the float on her own. The Instructor will also continue to work on teaching your baby to roll onto her back on her own.

What to Expect During the 4th and 5th Weeks of Lessons

These lessons are typically devoted to fine-tuning the skills of rolling onto the back from the facedown position and other postures in the water. In addition, your Instructor will focus on extending the time your baby will float with only minimal support, and then eventually, without any support, in the water.

Your Instructor may also place your child in the water in a variety of different positions, such as vertically, from her side, or in a sitting-type position, and teach your child to roll onto her back from these positions. Teaching your baby to orient herself in the water and get into a back float from a variety of different positions is important because of the numerous ways a child could potentially fall into the water in the event of an aquatic accident.

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During the final week of lessons, your Instructor will teach your baby to perform these skills while wearing clothes and a regular diaper. Swimming and floating in clothes is a completely different experience than what your child has been accustomed to during the lessons. The extra weight of the clothes and a fully-saturated diaper, the feeling and sensation of the wet clothes, and the “drag” that the wet clothes place on your baby’s ability to move in the water all come together to make the process of swimming and floating slightly more difficult.

Given the number of pediatric drownings that occur when a child is fully clothed, it is vitally important that your child experience what it feels like to be in the water fully clothed, and learn how to make the necessary adjustments to perform their skills in clothing. After your child has been in the water with clothes on, your Instructor may want to have another lesson with your child wearing just a bathing suit or a swim diaper if there are any small adjustments that the Instructor wants to work on before that initial series of lessons is concluded.

Because most children who drown are fully clothed at the time of drowning, we make sure your child practices her aquatic survival skills while fully clothed.



These photos show the rollback-to-float sequence at the conclusion of lessons.

Chapter 3

PART 2: TODDLERS and CHILDREN The Swim-Float-Swim Sequence:

What to Expect on Your First Day of Lessons

Most likely, the first day of lessons will be devoted to building a rapport and introducing the edge or stairs of the pool. In some cases, it might be more appropriate to introduce your child to the back float posture first. In either case, your child will be given small challenges that her Instructor feels confident she will be successful with in each attempt.



Your Instructor will gently introduce your child to the water. Because each child reacts differently, the Instructor will work with your child to make him or her comfortable in the pool.

What to Expect During Your First Week of Lessons

During each lesson, your Instructor will reinforce what your child has learned in earlier lessons, and continue working on new skills. Your Instructor will teach your child to hold onto the wall and make small movements to get to the wall. Although your child won't learn any particular "stroke," she will learn to coordinate her arms and legs to propel herself through the water while keeping her head down and properly orienting her body. Learning to find the wall, swim to the wall, and hold securely onto the wall are important skills for aquatic survival.

In the first week, your Instructor may start working on the back float with your child. Your Instructor will begin the process by floating your child on her back and will support your child's back as necessary to help her learn to trust this posture and to rest and breathe for a short period of time. Depending on your child's size and coordination, the Instructor may even begin working with having your child roll from a swimming position into the back float.

Once this level of trust is established, your child will begin to learn swim survival techniques.

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What to Expect During the 2nd and 3rd Week of Lessons

As mentioned previously, each lesson will begin with your Instructor reinforcing the skills that have been learned in the previous lessons. This serves several purposes: it allows your child to “warm up” to the process of the lesson, it allows the Instructor to see how well your child has retained the skills, and it allows the Instructor to determine if any of these skills need to be modified or adjusted. It is especially common to need to make small adjustments to how your child performs a particular skill if they have been out of lessons for a few days (such as at the beginning of a week, or after a prolonged absence), or after your child has spent time playing in a pool outside of lessons.

After the first week of lessons, your Instructor might begin focusing on teaching your child how to roll onto his back from a facedown swimming position. When your child is first learning this skill, your Instructor will gently assist your child with the rotation as he learns to roll onto his back to rest and breathe.

When your child is first learning to float, your Instructor will support his back. As the lessons progress, your Instructor will use less and less support until your child is floating on his own. Your Instructor will also work with your child to learn the small adjustments needed to be made to his body

ISR students learn to respect the water and to enjoy swimming. With the confidence they gain from ISR instruction, they are ready to learn more as their physical abilities increase.

position to float on his own. Once your child has begun to learn the float, your Instructor will teach your child to rotate out of the float and to swim again in search of an exit such as the wall or steps. It is during this time that the pieces of the swim-float-swim sequence begin to come together.

During this time, you may also see your Instructor working on teaching your child to turn around in the water while swimming, in order to be able to find an exit. For example, your Instructor may start the child with her back to the wall, or away from the wall, so she learns she has to turn to be able to find the wall. In addition, your Instructor may place your child in a variety of different orientations in the water—such as vertically or from a sitting position—to safely simulate the different potential positions your child could be in if she were to fall into the water, and to teach her to perform the swim-float-swim from nearly any position and orientation in the water.

Learning to swim is one thing, learning to survive is another. ISR doesn't simply teach your child to swim—we teach your child to be an aquatic problem solver.

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What to Expect During the 4th and 5th Weeks of Lessons

The last weeks of the lessons are devoted to putting the entire swim-float-swim sequence together and making any final adjustments that are necessary for your child to be able to perform these skills on her own. Up until this point in the lessons, your Instructor has given your child the cue to roll to her back onto float or with a series of physical prompts. In the final weeks of the lessons, your Instructor will use fewer and fewer prompts as your child learns to perform the skills on her own.



For example, early on in the lessons, your Instructor prompted your child to roll onto his back by physically assisting, but by the 4th or 5th week of lessons, your Instructor may not need to prompt your child at all. Your Instructor will always be present, attentive, and prepared to assist your child when necessary, but always with the goal for your child to perform these skills independently.

Toward or during the final week of the lessons, your Instructor will ask you to bring your child to lessons in regular clothes, including shoes, socks, and if necessary a diaper, so that your child can learn to perform the rollback to float and/or a swim-float-swim sequence while fully clothed. Your Instructor may ask you to dress your child in summer clothes on the first day, and in winter clothes, such as long sleeves, pants, and a coat, on the second day. The experience of swimming fully clothed affects every aspect of the swimming experience, because of the weight of the saturated clothes, the drag of the clothes in the water, and the feel of the saturated clothes on the body.

Regardless of how well your child can swim, no child is EVER “drown proof.” Your child must be effectively supervised ANY TIME he or she is around water.

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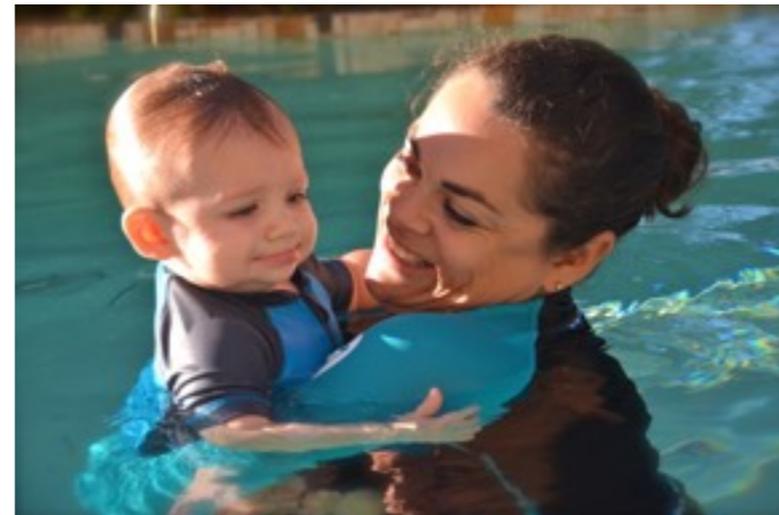
Again, because the vast majority of drownings occur when a child is fully clothed, it is vital that your child has enough experience performing the swim-float-swim sequence while fully clothed. Swimming while fully clothed is one of the best ways we know to safely simulate a potential aquatic accident.



Near or on the last day of lessons, your Instructor may ask you to come into the water with your child. Your Instructor will show you ways to play with your child in the water, such as how to hold and release your child in the water so she can swim to the wall or the steps. This is a fun way to conclude the lessons, and it's been our experience that children really love to show off their skills!

Your Child's Emotional Reaction to Lessons

Nobody likes to hear their baby cry. But, because your child is in a new environment and around new people, he's likely to cry during the lesson. It's 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 become more skilled and the tasks are more familiar. It's the same for your young child. Your child is learning to perform a skill that he's never done before. Keep in mind that babies don't yet have the verbal skills to express themselves, and crying is a completely age appropriate behavior for a young child who is in a new and challenging situation. As your child becomes more confident with his ability in the water, his crying will likely decrease and eventually stop completely.



It's important to remember that your child is NOT crying because he is hurt, or afraid or being forced to do something he's not capable of doing.

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Many parents of preschool age children or particularly verbal toddlers can find the first several days of lessons quite challenging. It's not uncommon for older children to announce that they "don't want to" do what the Instructor asks, or they may call out for Mom or Dad before or during lessons. Again, this is simply a reaction to the fact that the first few days of learning any type of new skill can be more challenging. This period is usually brief and these same children are often, within just a few lessons, demonstrating how proud they are of their accomplishments and will love to show off what they've learned. They also may be more interactive with the lesson, perhaps by describing that they are floating "like a starfish" or counting "1, 2, 3, go!" before swimming to the wall, or looking around while floating on their back.

Your Role in the Lessons

As you observe the lesson, your child might need a positive reaction from you and your verbal support. So, it's important that you show your enthusiasm, especially if your child is crying. Watch intently, smile, and clap approvingly to show your child that you are proud of her accomplishments.



During lessons, try to avoid saying anything instructional, like "Float on your back!" or "Swim to the wall!" even if it appears to you that the Instructor is working on that particular skill. Your Instructor needs your child's complete attention during the lesson, and hearing your verbal instruction could be very confusing to your child.

*You are your
child's number
one
cheerleader!*

Chapter 3

Moreover, your child must learn to swim and float without any type of verbal prompt from anyone—because if your child falls into the water unsupervised, no one will be there to tell him to float on his back to get a breath.

After the lesson is over, when your child is resting on his left side, is a great time to talk to your child about how proud you are of what they accomplished in that day's lesson. By giving your child specific examples of what he did well—such as “you did a great job today getting onto your back and floating all by yourself” or “I saw you hold onto the wall all by yourself!”—you'll show your child that you are proud of what he did, and you'll be reinforcing the concepts he is learning.

Keeping Lessons Safe For Your Child

Parent Story

I just want to thank you for the seriousness with which ISR treats food allergies. The awareness and strict safety guidelines are highly appreciated! Although my daughter's severe allergies are to flax and cashews, rather than peanuts, the protocol helps me feel confident that we are doing everything possible to avoid a severe reaction poolside. It makes me wish the preschools, public pools, and public parks had similar protocols!

—A thankful parent

In this chapter, we'll introduce you to the methods we use to ensure that each lesson is safer for your child. Our commitment to your child's safety begins before your child ever gets in the water, and continues through each and every lesson.

Chapter 4

One important distinction between ISR and other programs is our emphasis on safety during the lessons. Through the years, we've heard of programs that throw children into the water, or drop them off a diving board, or keep them in the water for up to an hour; any of which could seriously harm a young child. In many other programs, the "teacher" is very often a teenager on the high school swim team with little training other than a basic course in CPR—someone who may enjoy swimming and working with children, certainly, but not someone who has had extensive training in how to teach an infant or a young child to survive in the water. These lessons are vital for survival in the water.



In 2010, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) changed its Drowning Prevention Policy Statement regarding the age at which children may start swimming lessons, based on research stating that swim lessons may actually provide a reduction in drowning risk of children ages 1 to 4 years old.

The AAP encourages parents to consider that the decision to start water-survival skills training at an early age must be individualized, based on the child's

[Click here to read an overview of the updated AAP Statement regarding Pediatric Drowning Prevention Guidelines](#)

frequency of exposure to water, emotional maturity, physical limitation, and health concerns related to swimming pools.

It's important to keep in mind that ISR lessons are not swimming lessons in the traditional sense. That is, your child will not be learning competitive strokes such as the back-stroke or butterfly. At ISR, we believe the core competency survival swimming skills your child will be learning provide the basis for a lifetime of safe and enjoyable aquatic activities. We believe in the old adage of "you must crawl before you walk, and walk before you run" and in that regard, our students have a history of excelling in a variety of aquatic activities from competitive swimming to water polo.

What your child will be learning, however, are aquatic survival skills: the ability to roll over onto his back to get a breath and remain floating, and when developmentally ready, to continue the process of swimming face down and floating on his back until he can locate an exit and possibly get out of the water.

And most importantly, your child will learn these skills from a well-trained Instructor using principles that have been researched, proven, and tested for more than 50 years.

ISR lessons are different than most other swimming lessons; your child will never be thrown into the water and your child's Instructor will always be near your child throughout the lesson.

Chapter 4

Safety Before the Lesson

By now, you have already completed the initial ISR registration form. On this form, we asked for information about your child's health history and current health status, such as whether your child is allergic to anything or is taking any medication. We ask these questions so that we can identify any potential health issues that might affect your child's lesson, and to further individualize each ISR lesson to meet his health and safety needs. Your child's information is reviewed by a team of professionals, including a pediatric nurse, and is held in the strictest confidence.

BUDS Information: Bowel, Urine, Diet, and Sleep

Before each lesson begins, your Instructor will ask a series of questions about your child's health, habits and activities in the previous 24 hours. During this discussion, you'll be asked about your child's urination and bowel movements; the time of day that your child eats or drinks; and the time she spends sleeping.

In addition to bowel, urination, diet, and sleep information, you should also report any medication that your child is taking, any allergic reactions, if she has been to see a doctor, and if she has had ANY kind of injury, fever, rash, or vomiting episodes since the last lesson.

Since 1966, ISR Instructors have given over 8 million safe lessons to children ages 6 months to 6 years.

We need to be aware of any of these circumstances because certain medications, allergic reactions, or injuries could affect the pace of the lesson or possibly lead us to determine that a lesson should not take place that day. Discussing this information every day will allow you and your Instructor to monitor these aspects of your child's health during the course of the lessons, and help us to make sure that lessons are safer for your child.



On the following pages, we have provided a more detailed explanation of the BUDS information and discussion that will occur daily.

Chapter 4

Bowel Movements

The frequency, amount and consistency of your child's bowel movements is one way to monitor her well-being. A child who has not had a bowel movement in several days may be constipated, which could make lessons very uncomfortable. Or, if your child has had frequent, loose stools, it may be a sign of an illness that may warrant keeping your child out of the pool that day.

Urine

Monitoring urine output is important to ensure that your child's fluid levels are in balance. A significant decrease in urine output could be due to many factors, such as dehydration, introduction of new foods, or even teething.

We also monitor urine output for any potential signs of water intoxication, also known as hyponatremia. Water intoxication can occur if your child drinks too much water in a very short period of time or is not urinating out enough water. During lessons, one of the first things your child will learn is to close her mouth underwater, and your Instructor will listen and watch throughout the lesson to make sure she is not drinking water. However, even if your child drinks some water, the lessons are purposefully kept short enough, at a maximum of 10 minutes, to significantly reduce the possibility of your child ingesting a notable amount of water.

Chapter 4

According to the medical literature on this subject, most reported cases of water intoxication have occurred when a child is in a “swimming lesson” that lasted 40 minutes or more. Again, because your ISR lesson will never exceed 10 minutes, the risk that your child could ingest a large amount of water is significantly decreased. By monitoring your child’s urine output, we can look for possible signs of water being ingested during lessons and adjust the lessons as needed.

Diet

Why do we ask about diet? It is important that your Instructor knows the kinds of foods your child has eaten recently, including any new foods that have been introduced.

In our experience, we’ve found that certain foods are difficult for children to digest. If a child has difficulty digesting certain foods, it might increase the amount of gas in his system, which can affect buoyancy and make lessons more difficult or even uncomfortable for your child. Excessive gas can also make it difficult for your child to take good, full breaths during his lesson. Those foods, once identified, should be avoided during lessons.

Chapter 4

From our many years of work with the ISR BUDS information and from what we have learned about certain foods as they relate to our students, we have discovered that the following foods may cause digestive difficulties and may need to be avoided during ISR lessons:

- Apple (including apple juice, applesauce, or in any other form)
- Pineapple
- Papaya
- Peach
- Passion Fruit
- Celery
- Honey
- Spinach
- High fat foods
- Processed foods
- Refined sugars

The timing of eating and drinking before lessons is especially important. Your child should not eat any food for at least 1 hour prior to the lesson. In addition, your child should not have any dairy or milk products for at least 2 hours prior to the lesson.

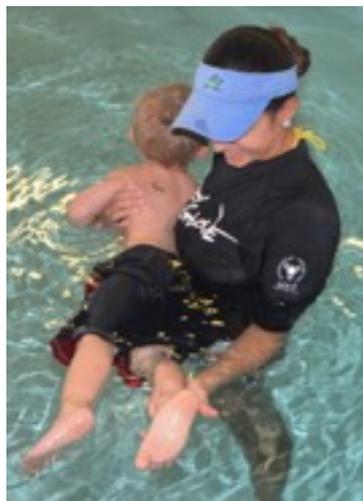
Restrictions on types of food and time limits are guidelines for safe lessons. ISR Instructors will individualize a plan for each child based on his or her medical history, age, BUDS information and physical responses to lessons.

Sleep

ISR lessons require physical effort using muscles that your child may not have used much yet. As a result, expect that your child might be tired after the lesson.

Although many babies and young children sleep for a longer period of time after their lesson, some changes in the quality and duration of your child's sleep patterns may occur. Please rest assured that these responses are normal.

Chapter 4



Safety During the Lessons

Throughout your child's lesson, you will see your Instructor following several different safety protocols to make sure that your child's lesson is as safe as possible. A key part of keeping lessons safer for your child is keeping the lessons brief. Your child's

lesson time in the water will not last any longer than 10 minutes. Keeping the lessons short helps to reduce the possibility of true physical fatigue. In addition, if your child shows any signs of having excessive air in her abdomen, or has had a recent illness or injury, your Instructor may shorten the lesson.

All ISR lessons take place in a pool that is at least 78 degrees and no warmer than 88 degrees. Our Instructors are specially trained to check for and recognize signs of temperature fatigue. Because temperature fatigue occurs before physical fatigue, monitoring for temperature fatigue reduces the chances that your child will be too physically fatigued during or after the lesson.

During the lesson, you may notice your Instructor pressing his or her thumb on your child's heel, or possibly on your child's back. Pressing on your child's heel or back and watching the color return to the skin is a way for your Instructor to check for potential temperature fatigue.

If you'll be bringing other children with you to the lessons, please make sure that they stay out of the water. This is for the safety of all children involved. If another child is in the water during a lesson, your attention may be focused on the child in the lesson, rather than the child playing in the water.



Because no child should ever be in the water unsupervised, we do not want any child in the water in a situation where an adult is not fully focused on watching him. In addition, other children in the water may be a distraction to your child and the Instructor during lessons.

More than 500 ISR Instructors across the world have been trained to safely teach infants and young children aquatic survival skills.

Chapter 4

Safety After the Lessons

You will be asked to bring three clean towels with you to every lesson. Place two towels on the pool deck, and save the third towel to dry your child, wrap him up and keep him warm after the lesson. Keeping two towels on the pool deck creates a clean, dry surface for your child to lie on that will limit his exposure to the damp pool deck, which could potentially harbor germs.

When the lesson is complete, your Instructor will lay your child on the towels, on his left side. Encourage your child to remain lying on his left side for at least a couple of minutes.

You may also want to gently massage his back to help him expel any air he may have swallowed during the lesson. Be sure to wrap your child in the third towel so that he stays warm.

If your child wants to eat or drink immediately after the lesson, allow him small sips of water or a drink that is easy to digest. It's important that your child not "gulp down" a large quantity of fluids immediately after the lesson, because if he has any air in his stomach from the lesson, quickly drinking a large quantity of fluids could cause a stomachache and/or gas pain.

As Your Child Grows: Refresher & Maintenance Lessons

Parent Story

Both my children have taken ISR under the care of Christie DiMisa. Each of them is a strong, confident swimmer thanks to Christie.

My two year old daughter just finished a refresher class on Friday morning. Monday afternoon, under the watch of my husband, our daughter, fully clothed, accidentally fell into our pool. She did not panic; she flipped over and did just as she was taught. I knew from our first lesson, this was a life-changing decision and our family would forever be grateful to have enrolled in ISR lessons. Christie will forever be an important person our lives. She has taught us all a new respect for the water. She is a caring, confident and calming force in the pool with the kids.

Thank you for all your organization does for children and parents.

In this chapter, you'll learn about the importance of refresher lessons and maintenance lessons after your child becomes aquatically skilled.

Chapter 5

Why Does my Child Need Refresher or Maintenance Lessons?

All parents know how quickly a young child grows. It seems like children outgrow clothes and shoes about as quickly as you can buy them! Needless to say, your child's height, weight, body composition, center of gravity, strength, and coordination are always changing and evolving.

Developmentally, children are constantly acquiring new motor skills. A young baby may very well go from just learning to crawl on all fours to walking without assistance in just a few months. Toddlers go from an unsteady walk to a full-out run, sometimes seemingly overnight. And preschool age children are constantly mastering new physical feats like jumping, climbing, balancing, kicking, and catching, to name just a few.



Even after a full year without lessons, ISR students retain between 94%-96% of the skills they have learned.

Learning to swim is a sensorimotor skill— just like riding a bike or roller-skating. Once learned, the skill is never forgotten. However, in time your child will outgrow the body that learned the swimming skills. As he grows, your child's center of gravity lowers, and he will need to learn to make different types of adjustments to be able to achieve and maintain the back float position easily. He will also be capable of more and more coordinated arm and leg movements while swimming. His confidence in his abilities will grow as he practices periodically with his Instructor.

It is critical to point out that even though your child needs refresher or maintenance lessons, he will not “forget” his skills. These refresher lessons simply help to ensure that he can perform the skill well, with ease and confidence. Your child's need for refresher or maintenance lessons will depend on how old he was when he first started lessons, how consistently he attended the initial lessons, how much he has been in the water since the last series of lessons, and how much he's grown since the last lesson. Later in this chapter, we've set out some general guidelines about refresher and maintenance lessons, but your Instructor is best suited to determine when refresher or maintenance lessons will be needed for your child.

Chapter 5

Refresher Lessons

Refresher lessons are, in many respects, a condensed version of the initial sequence of lessons. All the same safety procedures and protocols apply, just as in the initial series of lessons. Each refresher lesson will last no more than 10 minutes, follow the same dietary guidelines and require the Daily BUDS Discussion, just as you did with the initial sequence of lessons. Most refresher lessons will last between 1-2 weeks, although the exact number of lessons will vary greatly depending upon how much your child has grown since the last lesson.

During refresher lessons for older students, your Instructor will review the skills of swimming and rolling to the back float, maintaining the back float, and the swim-float-swim sequence. Much of your Instructor's attention will be focused on teaching your child how to make small adjustments that are necessary to easily roll onto her back and to maintain the float. Since your child will have grown and acquired new physical skills since the initial sequence of lessons, the refresher lessons will focus on teaching her to perform the same skills in her "new" body.

Refresher lessons are like taking your child to the doctor for a check-up. Chances are your child is healthy, but the purpose of the check-up is to make sure.

It is important to remember that, during the first few refresher lessons, your child may not swim with the same level of skill and confidence that she had the previous session after completing the initial series of lessons. Don't worry—she did not forget how to swim over the winter! Your child simply hasn't used her best swimming skills in several months, and has matured physically and mentally since the last summer. Refresher lessons help your child to swim and float in her newer, more mature body, and boost her confidence in her skills.

Refresher lessons are especially important for children between the ages of 12 months and 4 years, since children in this age range grow physically and developmentally at such a rapid pace. Please keep in mind that babies under 12 months, who learned the "rollback to float" sequence, should now take the full series of lessons to learn the "swim-float-swim" once they are over one year of age, rather than refresher lessons for the rollback to float.



At a minimum, refresher lessons should occur annually. However, many parents choose to enroll their child in a short refresher lesson series every six months or so, to keep their child's skills finely-tuned. Please speak with your Instructor for more information about the best time to schedule refresher lessons for your child.

What are Maintenance Lessons?

Maintenance lessons are designed to regularly practice your child's skills, or to prevent problems that may appear in your child's technique. After your child has completed the initial sequence of lessons, and has been swimming on his own for a few months, his technique in the water may start to get "sloppy." For example, you might see your child swim farther and farther distances without rolling over, or you may see your child attempt to swim with his head up. Children who spend a lot of time in the family pool with friends or siblings will often try new ways to test their newfound skills. While it's a good thing that your child is confident enough in the water to try new skills, your child may also try to swim like older children or adults he sees in the water. In the process of copying older children or adults, he may pick up some habits, which may affect his ability to swim and float with the same efficiency he demonstrated in lessons.

Chapter 5

Again, it's important to note that your child hasn't forgotten how to swim or float on his back. Rather, your child may be simply repeating, and thus reinforcing, a competing behavior. During maintenance lessons, ask your ISR Instructor to show you ways to swim with your child in the water that help to reinforce the correct swimming behavior.

When a child completes the initial series of lessons or refresher lessons in the spring or at the beginning of the summer, many parents desire to schedule regular maintenance lesson through the summer. They can be scheduled once a week, or once every other week—whatever works best for your schedule and your Instructor's schedule. Maintenance lessons can alleviate the need for refresher lessons in the fall, and are a good way to address any potential problems that could arise if left unchecked for too long.

Even for maintenance lessons, your Instructor will discuss the BUDS information and follow the same safety procedures and dietary guidelines that applied to the initial sequence of lessons.

Remember, flotation devices like floaties should never be used to play or practice swimming. These devices teach your child a vertical posture in the water, which may prevent him from effectively using his skills if he falls into the water.

When to Call Your Instructor

Because children are always growing and learning new skills, your child's abilities in the water will change from year to year (and sometimes even from month to month). Contact your ISR Instructor immediately if your child accidentally falls into the water, or if see your child doing any of the following:

- **Swimming with her head up.**
- **Swimming for longer and longer distances without rolling over to get a breath.**
- **Rolling over too frequently, without swimming between back floating.**
- **Rolling over but not staying in a float long enough to breathe.**
- **Swimming in a vertical or upright position.**
- **Coasting in the water, rather than kicking forward.**
- **Rolling over to float and then not turning back over to swim.**
- **If your child has had any type of accidental fall into the water.**

If at any time you see something problematic, don't let it go. Advise your ISR Instructor of the issue because most likely the problem will not fix itself.

Movie: When to Contact Your Instructor



And please, don't try to fix these problems yourself. ISR Instructors are specifically trained in how to remediate these types of behaviors, and in many instances the matter can be resolved in only a few lessons. Trying to fix the problem yourself may make matters worse, and may lead to other problems in your child's swimming technique that could seriously affect her aquatic survival skills.

Safe Family Fun

In this chapter, we will explain how to make your family's pool environment and other aquatic environments safer for children, and how to safely have fun with your child in the water.

Parent Story

Everyone thinks, "It won't happen to me." My son drowned in someone else's pool, at a house that we had never been to before. We were not even outside near the pool. Sterling found a dog door that was in the master bathroom and was the size of an 8" x 11" piece of paper and crawled out if it.... I am 100% sure that if my son had ISR lessons, he would still be here today. ISR lessons are the best gift that I could give to myself, for peace of mind and to my daughter, for lifesaving skills and confidence in the water.

—Marla C.

Chapter 6

I Can Swim...Just Watch Me!

As parents, we don't give a second thought to using a variety of different types of safety devices in our homes like baby gates, monitors, or cabinet locks. Yet safety precautions for pools and bodies of water are often an afterthought, especially when visiting friends and family who aren't used to having little ones around day and night. In reality, it takes multiple layers of protection to prevent an aquatic accident from becoming a tragedy - and that begins with supervision.

Adult supervision is the first and most critical line of defense to prevent drowning. If there is only one thing you remember from reading this book, let it be the importance of effectively supervising your child in and around the water.



Effective supervision and a safe pool environment are the first two lines of defense against drowning. If these defenses fail, the person closest to the problem—the child—must know how to survive an aquatic accident.

Pool Fences and Alarms on Doors and Windows

The second line of defense is proper fencing around your pool, locks to prevent access to the pool, and pool alarms. However, there is no device in existence that is guaranteed to keep any child out of the water, or that will prevent a child from drowning in any circumstance.

At best, these devices buy us more or alert us to a child's proximity to the water. The effectiveness of these devices is often dependent on our ability to remember to consistently use them. It is a simple fact of life that, on occasion, alarms get turned off or doors or gates don't get latched behind us.

ISR Lessons

The third line of defense, should the first two fail, is your child's ability to solve an aquatic problem. This is where the skills your child has learned at Infant Swimming Resource come into play. If you are reading this, you have already taken the vital step of having your child learn these skills.

Chapter 6

What is Segmented Supervision?

As stated earlier, effective supervision is the first and most important way to prevent drowning. But, we have to be realistic. Regardless of the best efforts and intentions, no one can constantly supervise their child every second of the day. The phone will always ring; there will be a knock on the door; a neighbor will stop by to chat. Constant supervision becomes much more difficult, if not impossible under those circumstances, particularly if you have more than one child. Yet, it is in these few moments, your child can slip away from your watchful eye and quietly wander into another room, or even outside. Sadly, we've found over the years that these moments of brief distractions, where the parent was away for "just a second" too often end in tragedy. After years of experience, we've developed a technique that we know balances the need for supervision with the demands of the real world. We call it "segmented supervision."

Segmented supervision is a technique whereby you designate a specific period of time to devote your complete and undivided attention to your child who is in or around the water. During that segment of time—usually no more than 15 minutes—distractions of any type are to be ignored. Set a timer for the designated amount of time, and don't answer the door, don't answer the phone, don't read, and don't talk to other

Supervision of a baby or young child should never be delegated to a sibling or older child. Many drownings occur with older children supervising younger children.

adults—instead, give your child 100% of your attention. After the segmented period of time is up and the timer beeps, take a few minutes to yourself by bringing your child inside to play, or to play in an area away from the pool environment. Or, if another parent or caregiver is around, take turns supervising in segments.

The primary purpose of segmented supervision is to provide your child with the constant supervision that he needs and will expect when he is in or around the water. We know that parents are busy and cannot devote every minute of the day, all day long to watching a child. So, during the segmented time of supervision, devote your undivided attention to your child around the water, and after the time segment is over, remove your child from the water and be sure barriers are back in place or alarms are set before taking care of other things you need to do.

This is an especially effective strategy to use when several adults are watching children in the water. It becomes all too easy to assume that someone else is watching, so designate an adult in charge of supervision and provide a timer, switching off after each segment of time.

*Remember, you are the CEO of the pool:
Constant
Eyes
On*

Chapter 6

Educating Others

As the saying goes, it really does take a village to raise a child. Your child will quite likely be in contact with many different caregivers in his young life. Nannies, babysitters, neighbors or family members all may have the responsibility to supervise your child at some point. Because your child will inevitably be supervised by other adults at some point, it is vitally important that everyone who has any responsibility for caring for your child is educated about water safety.

So, what does that mean? It means that everyone who cares for your child should be informed about the safety devices or procedures in your home, such as making sure the pool alarm stays on and that the pool fence is secured. Everyone who cares for your child should learn about and understand segmented supervision, especially if other children will be in their care.

ISR parents know about the importance of segmented supervision, but other people who learn that your child has had swimming lessons may assume that this means your child can be in the water alone. Don't let that assumption be made—make it very clear that your child should be effectively supervised any time he or she is anywhere near the water.

Perhaps the most important thing you can do is raise awareness of the issue by talking about it. For too many, water safety is something they don't think about until it's too late. Make it known to everyone who has responsibility for your child that water safety is an important issue.

Chapter 6

Keeping Your Pool Environment Safer for Children

If you have a pool in your backyard, you have a responsibility—both to your children and other children—to keep the pool environment as safe as possible. Below is a checklist of some of the ways you can keep your pool safer:

- ❑ **Pool alarms and alarms on all doorway access to pool.** Pool alarms can be purchased that sound an alert if the water surface is broken. Many home security systems can also be programmed to sound an alarm if the patio doors giving access to the pool are opened. While these alarms are helpful, the drawback is that these alarms are often not used consistently, and we tend to “tune out” these alarms if we hear the sound every time a door opens.
- ❑ **Permanent pool fencing with a self-latching gate.** We recommend a pool fence at least four feet in height that is permanently installed around the pool, on the pool deck. The fence should prevent direct access from both the house to the pool and the yard to the pool. A

self-latching gate is a critical feature. Keep in mind, however, that many toddlers can easily scale even a four-foot fence in only a few minutes. Keep pool furniture well inside the fence because children can use furniture or even toys that are outside the fence as a stepping stool to climb over the fence.

Safety devices like a pool fence are an important deterrent, but are not a solution.

MOVIE 6.1 Water Safety: Pool Fences



Remember to keep furniture well inside the fence, and never outside the pool fence, as toddlers can use the furniture to climb over or open the fence.

Chapter 6

- ❑ **Keep all doors and windows leading to your pool locked at all times, preferably with locks that your child cannot reach.** This includes sliding glass doors, French doors, and any windows that allow access to the pool area including “pet doors.”
- ❑ **Keep toys stored away.** Keeping toys in or around the pool is inviting the child into the pool area. Remove the incentive to be in the pool area by keeping toys away from the pool when they are not in use. Riding toys should never be used in or around the pool area.
- ❑ **Keep your phone with you by the pool.** Keep a phone by the pool so if there is any type of accident you can call for help immediately without having to leave the pool area. Remember, the phone by the pool should be used for emergencies—don’t answer it during segmented supervision. No phone call is important enough to justify compromising your child’s safety.

- ❑ **Keep jets aimed towards the shallow end and the steps.** If your child does fall into the water, properly positioned jets will create a current that will guide her towards the shallow end and the steps so that she can more easily exit the pool. A good way to test the direction of your jets is by floating a watermelon in the middle of the pool and watching where the watermelon ends up. If necessary, adjust the jets so that the watermelon floats towards the sides of the shallow end or the steps, rather than towards the middle of the pool.
- ❑ **Keep the water level at the uppermost limit.** Unlike community pools or hotel pools, most home pools do not have an edge around the inside of the pool that your child can easily attain. Keeping the water level at the uppermost limit will help make it easier for your child to reach an outside elevated ledge, and to either get out of the water, or to hold on to the edge and more easily call for help.

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This photo demonstrates how certain pool edges, such as this decorative rock formation, prevent a child from being able to easily exit the pool. In a pool environment like this one, consider creating something for a child to hold on to while calling for help.

- ❑ **No diving boards.** It's as simple as that. The ways in which a child can injure herself on a diving board are practically too numerous to list. A diving board isn't necessary to any home pool environment and creates a high risk of serious injury, and even death.
- ❑ **Drain entrapments are a serious danger.** Please make sure your children do not play or swim near drains or suction outlets. Check with your local pool product store to make sure your drains and grates meet the newer national safety standards.

- ❑ **Doggy doors.** Please be cautious of the curiosity and fun doggy doors can be for young children. Please Read "[Sterling's Story](#)" on our website.



It bears repeating that no safety device in the world can guarantee to protect your child from drowning. As important as these precautions are, they are merely deterrents. If they are properly used they might deter a child for a few seconds, or give you a few extra seconds to respond, but they do not guarantee your child's safety. And, it's a simple fact that as humans, we are prone to error—alarms get turned off or are ignored; gates are not closed or are propped open; and toddlers can find a way to scale a fence in the blink of a distracted adult eye. As a result, effective supervision is the first and most important defense against drowning.

In the United States drowning ranks second only to automobile accidents as the most prominent cause of accidental death.

Chapter 6

It's Not Just the Pool: Staying Safe in Other Aquatic Environments

Although most drowning incidents occur in pools, many children die or are seriously injured each year in other types of aquatic environments. Water is everywhere: lakes, rivers, beaches, retention ponds, and irrigation ditches can all pose a serious aquatic risk to your child. Below are examples of ways to keep your child safer in other types of aquatic environments that you and your child may encounter.

Hot Tubs. Spas, Jacuzzis, and hot tubs, with their warm water and bubbles, can be particularly enticing for children. To prevent dehydration or heat-related illness, keep the water temperature below 100 degrees Fahrenheit, and limit your child's playtime in the water to less than 10 minutes. Also, keep the jets off; the currents that can be created by the jets can be particularly strong, and are very dangerous for a young child. When the spa or hot tub is not in use, secure it with a hard top cover with a latch that locks.

Drowning is a silent epidemic. A child can slip into water without a sound or a splash, and since the struggle is under water, drowning rarely makes any noise.

Boats. If your family owns a boat, or you enjoy boating with others, it's imperative that you take special precautions to keep your child safer on the boat. Most state and U.S. Coast Guard regulations require children to wear a Personal Flotation Device (PFD) in the boat while it is moving. In our testing of various PFDs on the market—including those that were Coast Guard approved—we were shocked to discover that many actually float a child in a facedown position! Even some of our most skilled students found it difficult, if not impossible, to rotate onto and float on their backs, or even get upright in the water, with certain kinds of life jackets and vests. Thus, it is imperative that you test the PFD in your pool to make sure that it does not float your child facedown.

Docks. If you have a dock on or near your property, take some special precautions. First, paint or tape a brightly-colored "do not cross" line on the dock at least 2-3 feet from the edge of the dock, and teach your child that he should never cross that line unless he is holding an adult's hand.

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Second, because the vertical dock pilings are often covered in algae or barnacles, it can be very difficult for a young child to hold onto the piling if he falls into the water. To address this problem, install PVC piping on the pilings of the dock so that there is something for your child to hold onto if he falls into the water near the dock. The piping should be installed at various heights, to account for different water levels and tide levels.

Finally, keep your dock well illuminated, and keep a dive mask in a box right on the dock. In the event that a child falls into the water, the lights will help you to search the dark water, and if you have a mask handy, you can immediately get into the water to start looking. Lakes and rivers can be especially dangerous because of their dark and sometimes fast-moving water, and thus, effective supervision of your child anytime he is around a dock, river or lake is especially critical.

CPR is, at best, an after-the-fact emergency management procedure with an uncertain outcome. Learn CPR, but do not rely on it to save your child from drowning.

Beaches. At the beach where waves, currents, and undertows can impact your child in an instant, it's especially important that you remain within 10 feet of your child at all times. Keep in mind that if your preschool-age child is standing in 12-18 inches of water, a two-foot wave will bring the water completely over his head. Make sure your child remains in knee-deep water.



When your child is at the beach, make sure he is dressed in bright colors so that he is easier to spot in a crowd of people. Designate a specific brightly colored beach bathing suit, take a picture of your child wearing it, and bring the picture with you to the beach. Make this your child's "beach bathing suit." That way, if your child is ever lost at the beach you can show others helping in the search exactly what your child looks like and what he is wearing.

At home, remember to keep toilet lids locked—a child can drown in a toilet because they lack the upper body strength to pull themselves out if they fall in head-first.

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If Your Child Is Missing

One of the scariest experiences a parent can have is when their child is missing, even if it's only for a few moments. Most parents, at some point in time, have that heart-stopping moment when they can't find their child.

If your child is ever lost and you have a home pool, the *first* place you must look is in your pool and/or hot tub. Don't waste precious time looking in your closets or under the bed—your child is less likely to be fatally injured hiding or playing in those types of places. Bring your other children with you, so that they are not left unsupervised around water while you are searching.

After looking in your pool or hot tub, immediately search around all nearby retention ponds or irrigation canals or ditches, or any other nearby source of water, including toilets if they are not locked. Make searching all potential drowning hazard areas your first priority when searching for your missing child.

Children love to play hide and seek, but please teach your child that the pool area is strictly off limits to any type of hiding game. Children often run while playing these types of games, which dramatically increases the chance that they could fall into the water if running on a slippery deck.

Other common household items, like 5-gallon buckets, can also pose a serious drowning risk to a child. Instead of a 5-gallon bucket, use a wider, shorter bucket with holes drilled in the bottom.

Having Fun in the Pool

Enough of the facts and statistics. You now know how important it is to more effectively supervise your child in and around the pool, and to take safety precautions to keep your pool environment safer. It's also important that you and your child have fun together in the water.

Although we've stressed the importance of aquatic safety throughout this guide, we also think that it is important that parents and children enjoy the water. The water should be respected, not feared, and by playing in the water under your supervision and guidance, your child will learn to have more confidence in his ability and skill in the water. And, playing with your child in the water is the best possible type of supervision, because it's often more fun to be playing in the water with your child than sitting and watching on the deck.



Many parents tell us that they are their child's favorite toy in the water! Most children, and especially those who have learned

the ISR technique, love swimming and showing off their skills.

Your ISR Instructor can show you techniques for swimming and playing in the water with your child that will reinforce the skills learned in ISR, while helping to make more certain that this playtime does not interfere with his skills. Some ISR Instructors have parents come into the water toward the last day of lessons to give a “hands-on” lesson in the water.

ISR-trained children learn to respect the water and to enjoy swimming, and have confidence in their abilities in the water.

Good Toys

As parents ourselves, we also realize that children love toys in the water. Some types of toys, however are better than others. It is important to avoid any type of toy in the water that “floats” your child. Flotation toys including “noodles” and inflatable rings teach your child to trust the wrong posture in the water – a poor posture that might affect his ability to perform the necessary skills if he slips off of them or falls in the water at another time. Below is a list of toys that your child can have fun with in the pool without compromising what he’s learned in ISR lessons:

- ❑ **Pouring cups:** Children like pouring water in and out of cup sets, such as plastic measuring cups.
- ❑ **Waterproof dolls:** Some children may enjoy “teaching” a doll to rest on her back, just like she learned in her ISR lessons!
- ❑ **Sinking toys, like dive rings:** These can be good for use on the steps or the shallow end, to teach your child to swim to the toy and retrieve it. But remember – your child should never dive off the edge for any reason.

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- ❑ **Noodles for older children only.** For an older child, place a noodle at least one foot off the edge of the pool, and teach your child to jump over the noodle. This teaches your child to jump a far enough distance out that he is less likely to injure himself while jumping in the water. Remember, however, that noodles should not be used as floatation devices.
- ❑ **Goggles.** Goggles are okay on an occasional basis. Children who become accustomed to goggles may begin to resist opening their eyes underwater without the eye protection. So, goggles are okay as long as their use does not become a habit.

Remember, all pool toys should always be put away after use —keeping toys on or around the pool invites a child into the pool area.

Toys to Avoid

As mentioned earlier, there are some types of toys that should be avoided because the toy can be dangerous, or because the use of the toy will compromise the skills your child had learned.

These toys include:

- ❑ Floaties or Arm Bands
- ❑ Flotation Vests
- ❑ Flotation Rings and Tubes
- ❑ Any other toy that allows your child to float vertically in the water
- ❑ Noodles for younger children if they are used to float the child

[Click here to see the ISR Family Aquatic Safety List](#)

Help to Save the Lives of Children in your Community

Parent Story

My three daughters have been ISR trained. I wouldn't have it any other way. With the number one cause of death among children in Florida being drowning, why would anyone take the risk of not having their children trained? My first daughter took ISR lessons at the age of 3. When we first met Lauren, Claire would not even allow me to get her face wet in the bath tub. Within three days, Lauren had her swimming and already beginning the swim, float, swim sequence. It was amazing! Not only was my daughter more comfortable in the water, but I was also more comfortable with her in and near water. I had the confidence, in just two short weeks, that if Claire were to have an accident in the water she would be able to sustain herself until help arrived. Following Claire's experience, there was never any doubt that my younger daughters would also be trained with ISR. Both girls began at the age of 18 months. Ava is now a confident swimmer at the age of 3, and Logan will continue with refresher classes now at 2 years old. All three girls have been successful with the course. Infant Swimming Resource is an amazing way to give children confidence in the water, and also provide children with the skills needed to survive a water accident. I would recommend ISR to anyone with small children. Our trainer, Lauren, is highly skilled and capable of working with any child, no matter how fearful. Believe me, I have seen this! The ISR team believes in educated instructors and takes the responsibility of survival swimming very seriously. ISR is the only method I have seen effective with young children.

Jennifer W.

In this chapter, you'll learn how you can help save the lives of children in your community and throughout the nation by making other people aware of the critical importance of water safety and drowning prevention for infants and young children.

Chapter 7

The Epidemic of Childhood Drowning

What would you think if you were told that there was a disease that took the lives of 11 children every day in this country? And, that this same disease causes 39 children every day to suffer serious brain damage? Certainly, you would hope that there would be resources dedicated to addressing the problem.

Childhood conditions and disease like premature birth and cancer, and the need for safety devices like car seats, receive a great deal of public and private support, and rightly so – public awareness and support of causes like these has helped to decrease the overall childhood mortality rate over time. But, there is significantly less public awareness of a problem that affects so many children – and their families – every day in this country. Drowning is the leading cause of death in 18 states – Florida, California, Texas and Arizona lead the nation in these statistics. They are four of the most heavily populated states in the country, and these are also the locations where many families from across the country visit and vacation.

There are over 800 documented cases of children who saved themselves from a certain drowning scenario because of the skills they learned in ISR.

Regardless of where you live, there is water nearby, and there exist significant drowning risks even in homes without pools. Drowning is a nationwide problem and is not localized to any one area.



What is so tragic about a drowning death is that it is *preventable*. It can be prevented if a child is effectively supervised. It can be prevented if proper safeguards are in place, such as door locks and pool fences. And, if these safeguards fail, it can be prevented if a child knows what to do in an aquatic accident. With your help, we can put a stop to this epidemic that takes the lives of so many children each year.

Chapter 7

What Can You Do to Help?

As a parent who has made the decision to have ISR teach your child aquatic survival skills, you are in the best position possible to help us spread the word about water safety. By taking the safety recommendations throughout this guide – effectively supervising your child around the water and making sure everyone else who has contact with your child does the same, installing appropriate safety devices at your home pool, and taking appropriate precautions at other locations where there is water, you've taken a huge step towards protecting the lives of your child and other children.

But more can be done. The following are several ways you can help to spread the word about water safety, and help save the lives of children in your community.

Every year, 4,000 children in the US die as a result of accidental drowning. According to WHO, drowning is among the ten leading causes of death for children and young people for children and young people in every region of the world.

Talk to other parents. Share your ISR experience with other parents of young children. ISR has reached over 350,000 young children over the past 50+ years in large part because of one parent telling another parent about what ISR has taught her child. Sharing your experience is the best way to get the word out about the importance of water safety and aquatic survival skills.

Talk to your pediatrician. A child's pediatrician is in the best position possible to educate a multitude of parents about the need for water safety. Ask your pediatrician what he or she does to educate parents about water safety. Does he or she discuss water safety with parents? When does he begin talking to parents about the need for water safety? Does your pediatrician identify families who are particularly at risk—families with swimming pools—and counsel these families to make sure that the parents remain aware of the risk of drowning? Does your pediatrician know about ISR? Does your pediatrician know about the American Academy of Pediatrics Drowning Prevention Policy Statement?

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Talk to your local firefighters, paramedics, and police officers. Unfortunately, many firefighters, paramedics, and police officers have experienced the immediate aftermath of a drowning or the near-drowning of a child—many times by trying in vain to revive a child poolside. It’s an experience that they will never forget, and don’t want to repeat. If you know any firefighters, paramedics, or police officers, invite them to see your child swim or invite them to observe your ISR Instructor teaching. After they watch what your child and other children can do and realize how aquatic survival skills can help to prevent drowning, they are often especially eager to get the word out to others.

Police officers and firefighters, in particular, are often involved in public safety awareness campaigns, which are excellent venues to get the word out to the public about the importance of water safety for infants and young children. Many ISR Instructors are also happy to participate as guest speakers in safety awareness campaigns or to other groups. Ask your local firefighters, paramedics, or police officers about other ways they can think of to help educate the public about water safety.

“Never doubt that a small group of dedicated people can change the world, indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”
Dr. Margaret Mead

Talk to your Community Leaders. Your mayor, city council members, county commissioners, and state and federal representatives are in a unique position to have access to both the legal avenues and the funding to bring about change. They also have access to the media, which is an important tool in educating a large number of people about the importance of water safety.

Again, if you know any community leaders, invite them to observe ISR lessons. Seeing what an ISR student can do in person is the best way to understand how lives can be saved with aquatic survival skills. After speaking with other people in your community (like firefighters or paramedics), you may have some ideas about what kind of change is needed in your community to keep children safe. For example, are there laws in your community requiring a four-foot pool fence around the pool? Are there laws requiring a fence around the outside of the pool to prevent outside access?

Community leaders, and especially elected officials, are usually willing to listen to their constituents, and they know that child safety is always a hot-button issue. They may be ready, willing and able to do something about the problem.

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Think about what should be done in your community to promote water safety. Are there laws that should be enacted or changed? Could ISR lessons be made available to a larger segment of children in your community? Write letters or emails, or pick up the phone and call. Your efforts could truly save a life.