

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Are ISR Self-Rescue® swimming lessons safe for infants and young children?

YES! ISR 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 rigorous training that far exceeds any other training program of this kind. Each ISR Instructor is also required to attend a yearly re-certification symposium 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.

If my child is under one year old, what will he/she learn?

Children between the ages of 6-12 months old are taught to roll over and maintain a back-float position in the event of an accidental fall into the water. Teaching your infant to float takes approximately 4 weeks. Private 10 minutes lessons per day are held 5 days a week, Monday through Friday. Skilled infants are taught to maintain a back-float in a bathing suit and in clothing. If you own a hot tub, pool, boat, or just enjoy the water, ISR highly recommends survival training once your infant begins to crawl.

If my child is over a year old, what will he/she learn?

Children over the age of one year are taught to swim with their face in the water, and when they sense the need for air, to roll back onto their back to float. After resting and breathing, they will roll over and continue to swim to the nearest point of safety. A child can perform this swim-float-swim sequence to reach safety in a survival situation. Children can also perform this sequence in their clothes. If a child does not see a way out of his predicament, he will roll over onto his back and maintain a back-float position. This buys the parent time in the event of an accident. This same sequence is most often used for fun at the pool! The confidence and self-esteem of these young swimmers is truly amazing! Teaching your 12 months to 6 year old will take approximately 4-6 weeks. The lesson format is the same as for the infants.



www.infantswim.com

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.

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 skills between seasons.

What is the AAP's position on swimming lessons for young children?

In May of 2010, the AAP changed its 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 parents 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.

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)

Learning Objectives & Lesson Scheduling **How much will my child remember from his initial lessons?**

Like any physical skill, children don't "forget" the skills but will need to adjust their skills to account for their physical growth. In addition, 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 ISR Self-Rescue® skills. Contacting and/or returning to your Instructor in a timely manner is imperative to maintaining effective habits.

Why do you have the children swim in clothes?

Because most of the 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.

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 than the 10-minute time span 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.

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

No. Every child can learn. It is my job to find the best way to communicate the information so that it makes sense to the child. I set your child up to be successful every time. I start at your child's skill level and set her up for success every lesson.

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.

Health & Safety

How do you know there is no water going into a child's lungs? Will a child aspirate water during lessons and have a dry drowning later?

If the child were to get water in his mouth and swallow some, the epiglottis, a flap of cartilage which lies behind the tongue in front of the entrance to the larynx, closes by a reflexive action over the tube leading to the lungs and prevents aspiration just as it does if they were drinking water from a cup or a bottle. The typical child's anatomy is set up so that if the volume and/or speed of air/water entering the throat is more dense than air, then the epiglottis, by default, will send it to the stomach and not to the lungs. The exception to this rule is if a person is unconscious at which point the involuntary reflex of breathing will take over. Every child is regularly monitored

throughout lessons to ensure that he/she is not taking in water.

Are children tired after lessons?

The lessons are only 10 minutes long each day. The children work hard at learning to swim so we teach them to lie down on their towel and rest for a few minutes after each lesson. They are temperature fatigued, not yet physically fatigued and they need to readjust to gravity.

Are there health concerns with having babies, who are not potty trained, in the pool?

Students swim with a double layer of protection in the form washable swim diapers. The disposable swim diapers do not contain urine or feces effectively. Each child's bowel and urine habits are charted on a BUDS sheet such that lesson times can be scheduled accordingly. Children swim for 10 minutes or less each day, in water that is less than 88 degrees F.

Why do we have to bring 3 towels every day?

In a word, safety. There is truly a reason for each towel. The bottom towel protects your child from anything that could be on the pool deck, germ safety. The second towel protects the deck from anything that might come off your child. The third towel is to dry and warm your child.

Could my child vomit during lessons?

Our goal is that no child ever vomits. However, it does occasionally happen. Most often this is due to feeding issues. We ask parents to avoid feeding children for 1.5-2 hours prior to lessons because having food in the stomach while learning breath holding can cause discomfort. When a child is first learning to hold his/her breath, he/she will often swallow some air which can cause big burps. If a burp gets under food remaining in the tummy, it can cause vomiting. For this reason, we ask parents to maintain B.U.D.S. sheets accurately and

follow the eating guidelines outlined for your children.

Registration & B.U.D.S

You have registration forms, updates, BUDS sheets and sometimes need medical releases to allow a child to participate in this program. Why is there so much paper work? Who looks at all this stuff?

SAFETY. At ISR, safety will always come before convenience. While it is a fair amount of paperwork, any program that involves the safety and well being of infants and young children needs to be conscientious and very thorough. The ISR medical team, consisting of an on-staff team of registered nurses, review the information from the registration form and provide feedback to your child's Instructor so that he/she can provide the safest possible lessons for your child.

Why can't children have anything to eat or drink for 2 hours before lessons?

First off, no one works well on a full stomach. Your child is going to be working hard in lessons. We want them to be comfortable. In addition, when children are first learning to hold their breath, they often swallow air. If you get a lot of air in your stomach it will often come out as a burp. If there is food in there as well the air can get under that food and bring them up together. That isn't fun for any of us, especially the baby. Once again, we want to set the child up for success. In this case, we want them to be comfortable so they can focus on the task at hand.

Why can't children have apples?

This is often a tough one for parents because many children are introduced to apples early and most juices contain some apple juice as an ingredient. The reason we ask that you don't feed your child apples for the duration of lessons is because apples cause gas. Apples metabolize at a

temperature of 104 degrees. This is the same temperature that they ferment at. This gas causes the child to be uncomfortable and feel full and no one works well on a full stomach.

Methodology

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 ISR 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 Center for Disease Control and Accident Prevention, drowning is the leading cause of accidental death for children ages 1-3 in the United States.

Parent Involvement

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.

Do parents have to leave during the lessons?

No. You are truly the best cheerleader your child could have. Your positive support and encouragement is invaluable to creating an effective learning environment for your child.

Crying

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 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.

Once competent in their skills, many children cannot be dragged away from the pool. They are having entirely too much FUN.

Why do the babies cry?

Babies don't yet have the verbal skills to express themselves, and crying is a completely normal reaction for a young child who is in a new and challenging situation. However, as the child's skills increase in the pool, the fussing will decrease.

Water Safety

What does it mean that ISR lessons are an additional layer of protection?

Constant, undivided, 100% effective supervision would be the only sure way to eliminate drowning. Unfortunately, as parents we know this simply is not realistic. Infants and toddlers love to explore, and with everything else that goes on in our lives, as parents, we can get distracted. A moment's inattention can allow a child to move out of our line of sight. This is not a failure, it is just part of our busy lives.

This brings us to the next layer of protection, pool fences. Pool fences exist so that should a child escape a parent's supervision, there is a barrier between the child and the pool. We know that children are drawn to water, but we don't want them to be able to get to the water alone. Unfortunately, pool fences are only as effective if they are used correctly EVERY time. Because many are not set up to be self-closing and self-latching, they allow for a high likelihood of human error. Even if they are self-closing and self-latching, if there is not regular maintenance, then they can fail. Another aspect that is often highly underestimated is the intelligence of children. A child needs only a chair or a small table to climb on to emulate opening the gate and/or climbing over pool fencing rendering even the best pool fence, useless.

The fact that drowning is the leading cause of accidental death for children under the age of four is a grim testament to the fact that traditional approaches can, and do, fail. ISR's Self-Rescue® program exists so that, when other protective measures break down, your child can save himself.

If fences were required around all pools...then the baby wouldn't have to go through the lessons?

Fences should be required around all pools. However, it is not possible to fence every body of water, or to predict where and when supervision will break down.

What is the ISR position on floaties and life jackets?

Flotation devices give children a false sense of security and hold them in postures that are not compatible with swimming skills. If a child learns that he can jump in the water and go into a vertical posture and he will be able to breathe, he is getting the wrong idea about that environment. Flotation devices are for children who cannot swim. Children, who cannot swim, should not be allowed to learn that it is safe to play in the water while relying on a crutch. Life jackets must be worn in a boat or around the water when there is the potential for a submersion as a result of an accident i.e. a boat collision or capsized; they are not a substitute for the ability to swim or for adult supervision.

Does this program give parents a false sense of security and raise the risk of a child drowning?

In addition to educating infants and young children, ISR also teaches parents that there is "no substitute for adult supervision" and "No child is drown proof." If a child needs his/her

ISR Self-Rescue® skills, it means what should be several layers of defense have failed. The first goal is that the child is never able to access the water alone. ISR lessons are the last line of protection such that, should all else fail, your child has a chance at helping him/herself by using the survival skills they were taught.

ABOUT ISR

Founded in 1966 by Dr. Harvey Barnett, ISR is now the global leader in the industry it pioneered: survival swimming lessons for infants and young children. Our team of nearly 450 highly trained ISR Instructors provides the safest and most effective survival swimming lessons available. The ISR Self-Rescue® instruction our students receive today is the product of over 45 years of research and achieves unparalleled results.

Today, our mission, "Not One More Child Drowns," is the foundation of everything we do and is the driving force behind ISR's employees, our independent ISR Instructors, and our major corporate partnerships. We believe the successful prevention of the leading cause of accidental death for children under the age of 4 in the U.S. will require a large group of caring and capable professionals whose sole focus is to save lives. To date, we have delivered more than 7,750,000 ISR Self-Rescue® lessons and saved more than 800 lives.

ISR believes pool fences, supervision, and pool alarms are important parts of a necessary multi-layered approach to drowning prevention. However, traditional lines of defense break down, and the over 4,000 drowning deaths per year bear a grim testament to the fact that traditional approaches are missing a key component: the child. ISR's core conviction is that the child is the most important part of a drowning prevention strategy and our over 260,000 ISR graduates and 800 documented survival stories are proof that children can save themselves. Children are curious, capable, and have an uncanny ability to overcome obstacles like pool fences; at ISR we take that ability and teach them skills to potentially save themselves if they find themselves in the water alone.

ISR RESOURCES

- [ISR Website](#)
- [ISR Water Safety Page](#)

