



**BEATTY  
PARK**  
LEISURE CENTRE  
SWIM SCHOOL

# PARENT + BABY HANDBOOK



## About the Parent & Baby program

Our Parent & Baby program is designed to enable you to assist your infant to feel confident and comfortable in water. This will help lay the foundation for learning basic swimming skills and help create a healthy respect for aquatic environments. Infants will learn aquatic skills more readily if they have a sense of safety and security within a relaxed, warm and happy atmosphere. Parent & Baby swimming lessons also provide a wonderful opportunity for bonding with your child.

Our program allows your baby to explore the water and play in small groups with regular routines that promote safe habits in and around water. We believe that lessons should be a positive, safe, caring and relaxed experience for both parent and baby. We also aim for a fun experience with lots of hugs, positive reinforcement for effort as well as achievement. The program will introduce survival skills that may one day help save your child's life. Classes will encourage learning through songs, games, toys and the use of aids (sparingly) without the pressure to perform. Please remember that your infant is an individual and as such will progress at his or her own pace. As adults we must consider their individual needs, fears and struggles.

## Level Guide

The Beatty Park Swim School caters for babies aged from 4 months to 3 years and operates within a framework of four structured levels based on physical and social development. Skills covered in the water replicate to some extent, the developmental level the children are achieving on land.

- **Puggle:** Babies aged between 4 and 6 months of age (Free introductory classes)
- **Jellyfish:** Pre-crawlers or crawlers aged from 6 to 12 months of age
- **Penguin:** Walkers between 12 to 24 months of age
- **Otter:** Walkers between 24 to 33 months of age
- **Goldfish:** Walkers between 33 to 36 months of age. This is a transitional level to independence, requiring parents in the water during lessons (teacher discretion)

## What to bring and wear

We supply all necessary equipment required during the lessons, but do ask you to dress your baby in either disposable or washable swimming nappies, as this is a compulsory Health Department requirement.

We recommend that your child wear a chlorine-resistant one-piece swimsuit OR swim trunks which are snug around the leg with a close fitting t-shirt. We also recommend that you wear chlorine-resistant swimwear and a t-shirt, which will encourage and develop your child's grasping skills. All the swimwear in our retail shop is chlorine-resistant and available to Swim School customers at 10% off.

### Checklist of what to bring:

- Swim nappy
- Baby's swimsuit
- Spare swim nappy and normal nappy for after
- Your swimsuit
- T-shirt to wear in the pool during lesson
- Towels and child's hooded bath robe
- Toiletries and comb
- Plastic bag for the wet items
- Change of clothes and some spares
- Toys or books to amuse your child while you get changed
- If your baby has sensitive skin, almond oil and sorbolene are excellent as a skin barrier





## Lesson structure

Our instructors follow a consistent format when conducting lessons. New instructors train with one of our experienced instructors before commencing with their own classes. This ensures that our Program is delivered effectively and that our clients are able to follow the program with ease. Lessons are usually repeated consecutively for two weeks. This repetition promotes the learning process.

Our instructors will always ensure that new clients are made to feel welcome and are given every opportunity to learn what experienced clients may already know. This may result in repetition of previously learnt skills for some children. Do not be concerned as repetition of specific skills will enable your child to consolidate the skill. You may notice that your child becomes more confident and relaxed in performance of the skill.

## Skills covered during lessons include:

- Learning the correct holds (front, side, pendulum and back)
- Body position
- Breath control and submerging
- Rolling
- Floating
- Pulling
- Kicking and basic dogpaddle
- Safe entries and exits
- Survival skills and safety issues

Lessons will begin with a welcome song and conclude with a farewell song which remains consistent throughout the term. Starting and finishing each lesson in the same way assists you and your child to adapt gently to the structure of the program and promotes a steady environment for the child.

An introduction song will generally follow the welcome. This will incorporate many of the skills to be learnt throughout the term. It will be a fun song encouraging relaxation and enjoyment.

Skills are then incorporated into the rest of lesson structure. Dependant on the aims the instructor has predetermined to achieve, this may vary week to week.

For Penguin, Otter and Goldfish levels you will find that at some time during the lesson you may be given the opportunity to use aids. We use aids for short periods (5 to 10 minutes) as they enable the child to experiment with their own buoyancy, balance, movement and independence. Please remember that **aids should not be used continually** as we do not want the child to become dependent on them. Whenever a child is using aids, it is essential that constant supervision by an adult is maintained.

Please feel free to approach your instructor with any concerns at any time during the lesson. If you do not understand a skill or instruction please speak to your instructor, who will then be able to explain in more detail.

## The parent's role

You are your child's first teacher. Parents are the first and most influential teachers in a child's life. From birth you are continually teaching your child through example and attitude.

Introduce your child to the aquatic experience with a positive, happy approach. The greater the participation by the parents in the lessons, the greater the benefit will be for your infant.

### We recommend that you:

- **Wear a t-shirt** to encourage and develop your child's grasping skills. Wearing a loose item of clothing allows your infant to grasp the material and pull themselves up or onto you. Grasping is an integral part of survival skills taught throughout the term.
- **Submerge with your infant.** If you are willing to submerge with your infant, your infant will be more comfortable and you will see how relaxed they are under water. Remember that babies originate from a fluid environment within the womb. Infants have few inhibitions and usually have no inbuilt fear of water. Introducing babies patiently and lovingly to external water experiences will result in a natural and pleasant experience for you both. You may find that wearing goggles under water will enable you to see any reaction more clearly.
- **Sing along with the group.** Children love songs and are more likely to join in if you do

It is not imperative that the adult attending lessons can swim, as lessons are conducted where adults can stand comfortably.

It is very important during lessons that you remain as calm and relaxed as possible. Your infant will be able to recognise any stressful situation from your facial expressions or your body language. Unfortunately, any anxiety you feel in your body will be transferred to your infant. If you can smile throughout an uncomfortable situation your infant will respond accordingly. Remember if your infant becomes upset, stop what you are doing, cuddle your infant, soothe them and calm yourself.



## The parent teaches and supports their infant throughout the lessons by:

- Praising and encouraging both effort and achievement
- Promoting a sense of trust and security
- Allowing freedom to explore safely and express themselves
- Being realistic in expectations of abilities in the water
- Doing activities with their infant, not to their infant
- Modelling new skills
- Providing assistance and physical support as needed
- Assisting participation and interaction in small group activities
- Taking responsibility for water safety whenever they are in or near water.
- Allowing time to practice skills acquired during lessons providing an opportunity for consolidation

## Bath time

Bath time offers parents and infants the perfect opportunity for bonding and practicing skills learnt during lessons. Much of what you are taught in the pool can be further developed at bath time

## Some of the skills you may wish to practice at bath time include:

- Floating
- Cup pouring
- Bubble blowing
- Head wetting
- Dipping face in the water
- Kicking



## Your instructor's role

Your instructor will assist you on how to teach your child all the skills they need to learn to become comfortable and capable in and around water. They will impart to you their knowledge regarding the capabilities of the age group, reasons for teaching a certain skill, the use of aids, safety techniques and songs and activities.

Your instructor will always provide a high level of safety within the program, and be responsible for creating awareness of general water safety. They will also help to create a relaxed and happy atmosphere and allow you time to enjoy your aquatic experience with your baby.

## Concerns and health issues

### Separation Anxiety

Separation anxiety may occur when a child is held at arms length or separated physically from the parents. It may appear that the infant does not enjoy the lesson or does not want to be submerged. However it is usually a reaction that requires close contact from the parent. It is advisable in this situation that the parent holds the infant close and performs the skill with the infant. Once the infant feels secure again the parent will be able to relax and increase the distance between them. Infants may experience separation anxiety numerous times through their first years of development.

### Refusal to perform skills

At various ages infants experience an independent stage and consequently may not want to participate in the lesson. At approximately 2 years of age, infants enter a very independent learning stage in their development. Any experiences occurring at home may also be conveyed in other situations. It is preferable to recognise this stage but at the same time encourage participation as much as possible in the lesson. To do otherwise may reinforce their behaviour and consequently result in frustration for both child and parent.

### Crying

Infants cry for many reasons. In a water environment, especially in a large public pool, infants will see and hear many new and seemingly frightening sounds. This may startle some infants. It is important that you remain as calm as possible. Remaining calm, talking gently, smiling and maintaining calm body language will most likely result in a more relaxed infant.

### Submerging

Throughout the term you will be taught the appropriate technique for breath control and submerging. This may be a very gradual process. Understanding your own infant's response is vital for a successful submersion. If your infant emits a big bubble under water, bring him/her to the surface immediately to prevent inhalation underwater. If your infant cries every time he/she is submerged and/or comes up with a frightened look on the face and a tense body, you may need to go back to the start of submersion process.

### Moro Reflex (Startle Reflex)

This reflex creates a sensation of falling for the infant. Infants will react to this usually when on their backs with their arms free or with sudden movements that create the sensation. As they feel they are falling they will fling their arms out and hold their breath. It may appear that they can't take another breath and attempt to cry. To stop this reaction, hold the infant's arms in by their chest as this minimises the falling sensation.



### A final note

It is extremely important to remember when learning, children progress at their own pace.

To assist in this process you should provide lots of positive re-enforcement, support and encouragement even when he/she is having a bad day.

Please remember that the most important thing for both you and your child is to relax and enjoy your lessons together.

**For more information, please email [swimschool@vincent.wa.gov.au](mailto:swimschool@vincent.wa.gov.au) or give us a call on 08 9273 6082.**



#### **BEATTY PARK IS A WATCH AROUND WATER FACILITY. THAT MEANS:**

- Children under 5 must be under adult supervision and within arm's reach at all times.
- Children under 12 must be under adult supervision and always kept in sight.

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