

SWiMBiES – Frequently Asked Questions

Our teaching philosophy

- “To deliver a baby swimming programme that supports bonding & attachment, underpinned by a sound understanding of the developmental, social and emotional needs of the adult and child.”

What should I expect?

- Even for those who are confident swimmers, bringing a baby into a pool environment for the first time is a big step. To manoeuvre both yourself and a child, with no hands to balance with, can seem daunting and at times overwhelming.
- Classes for small children are a big step for all involved, however the rewards in terms of the both the child's development and enjoyment make overcoming early anxieties worthwhile.
- From the swimming teacher's perspective being able to adapt to every adult and every child is key. A visit to the pool should be a fun, enjoyable experience and the teacher's job is to give both adults and children the skills that will enable them to maximise their positive experiences in the water.

Do I need any special equipment?

- All children must wear an appropriate swimming nappy (not a normal nappy). These can be bought in either disposable or reusable versions.
- Swimsuits / wetsuits are optional but recommended if your child feels the cold or during the winter months.
- Appropriate swimwear for the adult.
- Towels for both adult and child (bring the child's towel to poolside for the end of the lesson)
- All floats and equipment will be provided by the centre.

Who can attend?

- Any guardian / carer for the child is welcome to the lesson.
- Each lesson is for one adult and one child. Mum's dads, grandparents, nannies, will all be made to feel welcome so don't just think a class will be full of mummies.
- If you are a non-swimmer or a weak swimmer this won't stop you taking part, however you should let your teacher know before the start of the class.

Do I have to sing?

- We would encourage all adults to join in. Teachers will lead the singing and children don't care how out of tune you are as long as you have a smile on your face.

Tips for before the lesson

- Before taking the plunge, think carefully about whether you as a parent and your baby or toddler are ready
- Complete a dry run and consider how long the journey will take you and how you're going to get to the class. Assess access, is there somewhere you can park your buggy?
- How long will it take you to change yourself and your child? Perhaps have a practice run at home first. Putting your own swimwear on before you leave the house can save lots of time at the pool
- What is the best time to attend a lesson? Plan around feeds and naps
- Have you packed everything i.e. appropriate swim nappy, swim suit and towels for you both, additional feeds or snack for afterwards.
- Identify somewhere at the pool or leisure centre where you feel comfortable for feeding after the lesson

Tip for during the lesson

- You will be expected to get into the water with your baby or toddler and be low in the water at eye level with your child
- Your teacher will instruct you on how to hold your child correctly
- The lesson will last approximately 30 minutes, however sometimes your baby or toddler may not be happy to participate in the whole lesson. Don't panic, this is not unusual and can be down to a change in routine, being unsettled or 'grisy' or just having an 'off' day.
- There should be no expectation that your child will swim a particular distance during a lesson. At this stage they are just learning basic skills to enable them to be safe and comfortable around water.
- Be prepared to socialise with other parents. As with other adult and child classes taking part in group swimming lessons is a great way to expand your social circle and make new, like-minded friends.

Tips for after the lesson

- Your teacher may give you tasks to complete during bath time at home to increase water confidence or enhance skills through repetition
- Ensure a towel for your child is within easy reach after the lesson, as they feel the cold much more than we do

- Your child is likely to be hungry and tired after the lesson, so ensure you pack a feed or snack
- Encourage family swimming outside lesson time so that not all swimming sessions are structured. Recreational swimming can provide an opportunity for children to try out skills at their own pace, without the need to feel like they have to perform when asked.

Top tips

Most importantly I'd advise any parent to come along with a positive attitude and give swimming lessons a try. Be prepared to splash and get wet and don't worry if your child doesn't want to join in with every task. Toddlers are notoriously non-compliant... teachers and other parents will have seen most toddler traits many times before so there is no need to feel embarrassed or worry about naughty behaviour.