



Joyful Waters

Parent Companion Guide

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Joyful Waters Program Disclaimer

Joyful Water is a research-based early aquatic curriculum created by Neva Nicole, founder of Georgia Swim School and Joyful Waters.

Participation in this program may include the opportunity to receive personalized support through virtual tutoring or consultation calls with the creator. These optional sessions are designed to guide instructors, parents, or facilities in applying the Joyful Waters philosophy with confidence and care.

As part of our ongoing effort to build national accreditation and academic recognition, we are also collecting anonymous data from participating programs. This may include observations, lesson reflections, or progress notes related to student outcomes and parent engagement.

By participating in Joyful Waters activities, you have the option to contribute to this research effort and become part of the larger movement toward evidence-based, emotionally intelligent swim education.

For those who wish to go deeper, the Joyful Waters Course Manual is available on Amazon and provides expanded guidance, developmental rationale, and practical tools for instructors and parents.

The founder is also available for on-site workshops, staff training, or conference presentations, offering tailored professional development experiences designed to align with your facility's goals and community needs.

Questions or Opportunities

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The 6-Week Secret to Water Confidence

What if you could give your baby a foundation for aquatic confidence that was perfectly synchronized with their natural development? That's the promise of the **Joyful Waters** method, and it all starts with the six-week curriculum of **First Splash**. This initial program is our secret weapon: it meticulously tracks and supports the cognitive and physical leaps children make from **6 months to walking**. Before we dive into the long-term benefits, let's look under the hood of this powerful six-week structure. It's the critical difference, and here is a detailed look at why it works so well, from both a developmental and aquatic-learning standpoint.



Curriculum (Weeks 1–6)

Age: 6–18 months | Focus: Trust, sensory comfort, and emotional security before technique.

Week 1 – Welcome to Water

Skills:

- Cheek Dips → introduce gentle facial wetting through parent modeling and play
- Push & Glide (front) → short assisted glides toward parent or instructor
- Back Glide → supportive float with song or hum
- Cup Pour Activity → pouring small amounts of water on shoulders, head, or tummy

Repetition goal: 3–5 sessions of the same sequence for confidence and familiarity.

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Week 2 – Exploring Motion

Skills:

- Finger Figure 8s → fine-motor tracing on the surface of the water
- Push & Glide (front) + Bubbles → add blowing bubbles during glide
- Back Glide Wall Work → hold wall, relax shoulders
- Wall Poppers → hands → pop → giggle → release
- Deck Play → sink toys introduced for reach and curiosity

Week 3 – Cause & Effect

Skills:

- Continue Figure 8s
- Introduce Kicks → gentle flutter kicks while supported
- Back Glides → longer duration
- Wall Poppers → independent attempts
- Mirror Exploration → look underwater using a mirror (builds trust + orientation)
- Noodle Support → 3–5 sessions using a noodle for assisted independence

Week 4 – Balance & Reach

Skills:

- Surf the Waves → gentle bobbing on parent's shoulder or noodle
- Kickboard Intro → short rides holding a board with parent support
- Diapering Game with Scarf → encourage reaching below surface, sensory play
- Continue Wall and Back Work for stability

Week 5 – Breath Connection

Skills:

- Bubble Bubble Breathe → two bubbles + inhalation pattern
- Back Balance → longer hold, relaxed breathing
- Wall Climb → motor planning for safety exit
- Sink Toys → visual-motor tracking and retrieval

Week 6 – Confidence & Exploration

Skills:

- Sun Deck Discovery → standing, reaching, splashing with toys
- Climb Up and Look → develop spatial awareness
- Review All Favorites → student-led choices and songs
- Parent Reflection → notice calm cues, shared joy, readiness for next stage

Notes

- Keep water between 86–90°F for comfort; shorten class time if cooler.
- Maintain predictable order each week → safety through routine.
- Mirror language: “We listen to the water,” “We breathe together,” “We float.”
- Parent cue: When your child looks to you—smile before you move.

Joyful Waters truly stands apart in the world of infant aquatics. The genius of their First Splash program is not just what they teach, but when they teach it. By structuring the lessons to perfectly match the precise developmental milestones of children from 6 months to walking, they've created a curriculum that is both effective and seamless. This chapter will explain why this intentional, stage-matched design works so well, examining its benefits from both a developmental and an aquatic-learning perspective.

It Aligns with Infant Neurological Development

At 6 months to walking, babies are just beginning to:
Integrate primitive reflexes (like the Moro startle or grasp reflex).

Gain trunk and neck stability.

Develop visual tracking and proprioception (body awareness in space).

Your activities — Cheek Dips, Pushes and Glides, Back Glides, Pouring Water — all stimulate those systems in safe, rhythmic, repetitive ways. That repetition (three to five times a week) reinforces neural patterning and gives their sensory system predictable input, which builds trust in both the parent and the water.

It Respects Emotional Regulation and Attachment

At this age, babies co-regulate through their caregiver's tone, breath, and touch.

Your First Splash structure is attachment-based learning disguised as swim play:

- Parents model calm breathing and smiling during water contact.
- Songs and repetition cue the baby's nervous system that "this is safe."
- The instructor leads through the parent, not around them – preventing fear conditioning.

This strengthens emotional security – the foundation of lifelong comfort in water.

It Builds Early Body Mapping and Motor Control

Your Week-by-Week progressions move from:

- **Passive support** (held glides, cheek dips)
- → **Assisted movement** (finger figure-8s, wall work, kicks)
- → **Emergent autonomy** (surfing waves, kickboard, scarf reach)

Each step matches how infants learn to control their bodies on land – rolling, pushing up, crawling, pulling to stand. You've mirrored that on water, which reinforces core strength, balance, and coordination across gravity transitions.

It Honors Sensory Sensitivity and Trust

Water on the face, buoyancy changes, sounds — all are big sensations for a baby's developing nervous system.

By introducing them gradually — from **cheek dips** to **mirrors under water** — you're teaching them to interpret those sensations as information, not threat.

That's the essence of **trauma-aware infant aquatics**: slow sensory exposure, paired with emotional support, creates confidence instead of withdrawal or freeze responses

It Creates Predictability — the Key to Learning

Repeating the same rhythm (songs, wall work, glides) each week helps infants anticipate what's coming next. Predictability is what allows the brain to shift from *survival* to *learning mode*.

That's why you see faster progress, even though you're teaching gently — because the baby feels safe enough to explore.

It Bridges to Later Independent Skills

By the time a child is walking, they've:

- Learned that the water supports them.
- Practiced coordinated breath and movement.

- Developed curiosity and confidence instead of fear.

That makes the transition to Aqua Explorers seamless — now you can layer skill without rebuilding trust.

The Joyful Waters Way

Teaching Your Little One Through Love – The Joyful Waters Way

In Joyful Waters, our mission goes beyond teaching children how to swim.

It's about helping you, the parent, see your child's learning through a new lens – one that values emotional security over performance, connection over correction, and calm over control.

When you begin to understand that your child's safety comes from trust, not fear, everything changes – the atmosphere, the pace, the smiles. Your baby learns faster, remembers longer, and grows to love the water deeply and naturally.

This chapter will guide you, step by step, on how to bring the Joyful Waters philosophy into your own time with your child – whether that's in the pool, the bath, or simply preparing them to feel confident around water.

Start With Why – Before You Start With What

Before you ever pour a cup of water or guide a glide, take a moment to remind yourself why you're here.

“In Joyful Waters, our goal isn't to rush independence – it's to build trust.

When my baby feels safe, they move naturally, breathe naturally, and love the water for life.”

You're not trying to make your baby a swimmer overnight.

You're giving them emotional permission to explore — at their own pace, in their own time.

See Swimming as an Extension of Development

Babies grow through milestones — rolling, crawling, standing, walking.

Swimming is just another stage in that journey.

- When your baby rolls or reaches for a toy at home, they're learning balance.
- When you help them glide on their tummy, they're doing the same — just in water.
- When they feel water on their cheek and stay calm, it's like learning to enjoy tummy time — it's body awareness and confidence.

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Swimming isn't something separate from their development — it is development.

Narrate What's Happening as You Go

Your baby doesn't need lessons — they need language, tone, and love.

Talk through what's happening in the moment:

- “The water is holding you up.”
- “I'm right here with you.”

- “That smile before the splash — that’s our happy moment.”

Your voice becomes their guidepost of safety.

By narrating calmly, you help your baby connect emotion, movement, and meaning.

Replace Correction With Curiosity

If something doesn’t go how you imagined — maybe your baby cries, or won’t dip their face — take a breath.

Nothing is wrong. This is part of the process.

Say to yourself:

“Right now, I’m not teaching her to put her face in the water.

I’m teaching her to trust the water on her cheek. The rest will come when she’s ready.”

You’re not behind. You’re building emotional safety — and that’s how real progress begins.

Model Calm in Your Own Body

Your baby’s nervous system mirrors yours.

If you’re calm, your baby feels safe. If you rush or hold tension, they sense that too.

Take slow breaths.

Smile gently.

Repeat simple, predictable words like:

“We glide... we breathe... we smile.”

Your calm is the curriculum.

You’re not just teaching your child how to move in the water — you’re teaching them what peace feels like.

End Each Session With Reflection

After every swim or bath, pause and notice what felt good — for both of you.

- “She looked at me before she moved — that was her checking for safety.”
- “We practiced cheek dips in the bath, and she smiled this time.”
- “The goal isn’t the skill — it’s the trust.”

You’ll find that when you celebrate connection instead of correction, your child learns joyfully and naturally.

See Progress Through the Lens of Love

Joyful Waters builds comfort in small, meaningful layers.

Each week, each session, each smile — it all adds up.

At the start, it might just be a few drops of water on the cheek.

By week six, your little one is gliding, exploring, and laughing in the water with confidence.

*“Remember when we only poured cups of water?
Now look – you’re reaching for toys and loving every splash.”*

Progress in Joyful Waters isn’t measured in strokes. It’s measured in trust, joy, and connection.

The Joyful Waters Promise

Joyful Waters = Love, Trust, and Time.

We don’t force. We follow curiosity.

Every splash is a story of safety.


Print this mantra and place it somewhere visible – on your fridge, your pool bag, or your bathroom mirror.

Let it remind you: you are your child’s calm, their courage, and their first swim teacher.


Want to Go Deeper?

If you're loving this approach and want to keep growing, there are a few ways to connect and continue:

- **Read the full Joyful Waters Course Manual** on Amazon for step-by-step lessons and developmental insights.
- **Schedule a video consultation** with the founder for one-on-one guidance.
- **Participate** in our **research** to help bring national accreditation to this gentle, evidence-based curriculum.
- **Host or attend a workshop** where the founder can come on-site to guide a group of parents or instructors through the Joyful Waters experience.

Together, we can change how the world teaches children to swim – one gentle splash at a time. 





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**Aqua Explorers —
From Baby to
Toddler**



Now that your little one is walking, everything changes.

They see the world differently. They want to move, touch, grab, throw, explore.

That means your water time needs to change too. Aqua Explorers is not for your baby – it's for your toddler.

If First Splash was about comfort and connection, Aqua Explorers is about curiosity and confidence.

What Makes It Different

In First Splash, we move quickly through short, predictable routines – 10 minutes, five short activities, about two minutes each. Babies thrive on repetition and rhythm.

But once your child becomes a toddler, routine alone isn't enough.

They need time to explore, make choices, and test what their body can do.

So in Aqua Explorers, we slow down and expand.

We start with connection, move through skill, and end with independence.

Week 1 – Floating Friends

We begin the same way each time:

You get in together. You hold your child close. You bounce. You sing a simple welcome song.

That rhythm and warmth tell your toddler, “You’re safe here.”

Then, you return to the pool steps – a place of grounding and confidence.

Your child can stand, feel their own balance, and hold a toy.

This week’s toy floats.

It’s easy, comforting, and playful – perfect for exploring cause and effect.

We still do our glides (three of them), our back glides, and our cheek dips just like in First Splash.

But now, we finish with core and balance.

Let your child stand in chest-deep water, hold your hands, sway, or splash.

That upright balance strengthens the muscles that make floating and swimming possible later on.

Week 2 – Sinking Surprises

This week, the toy sinks.

That simple change introduces a whole new challenge – curiosity and breath control.

We start the same way: enter, sing, bounce.

Your child already knows what's coming, and that predictability builds emotional regulation.

Now, bring in the new toy. Let it sink. Watch what your toddler does – maybe they reach, maybe they dive, maybe they just observe. All of it is learning.

We still glide, and we add the airplane acclimation:

“Up, up, up, up, up... down, down, down, down, down...”

It teaches body control and fun rhythm in movement.

At the end, we play on the stairs again. Add a watering can or sponge – let your child scoop, pour, and feel how water moves. This helps them understand flow and gravity through play.

Week 3 – Building Strength

Now your toddler knows the rhythm.

This week is all about strength – hands, shoulders, and core.

We begin with the same song and bounces for regulation.

Then introduce wall poppers – suction toys they can pull from the wall.

This builds grip strength, coordination, and confidence.

Next, we do our glides — forward glides, bubble blowing, and toy retrieval.

Tie a scarf to a dive toy so it flutters as it sinks. Encourage your child to grab it before it reaches the bottom.

That moment of timing — grab, lift, celebrate — is the first hint of reaction training.

We move to back glides on a mat.

The mat helps them feel supported while learning to float with water above their ears — a key comfort skill.

Then we end at the wall again, standing tall, pouring water with the watering can.

We always finish grounded and calm.

Week 4 – Floating Freedom

Now your toddler starts to explore independence.

The toys are placed above and below the surface — poppers they can reach for and dive toward.

This week, they use a noodle to practice pushing and gliding — transitioning from vertical (standing) to horizontal (floating).

That shift between standing and gliding builds true water balance and core control.

We still include mat work, making sure the water line is above their ears for comfort.

Push, glide, return to the stairs. Vertical → horizontal → vertical again.

This repetition teaches both strength and safety.

End the class playing with the watering can – a familiar close that keeps emotions regulated.

Week 5 – The Kickboard Challenge

We're adding resistance and rhythm this week. Start as always with your welcome song and bounce.

Now, introduce the kickboard.

Your toddler will push, glide, and then return to a standing position – learning how to coordinate the movement of their arms and legs.

On the stairs, keep that grounding routine.

End with a little fun: jumping or gliding through a hula hoop.

If your child isn't ready to jump, that's fine – they can glide through instead.

The goal is comfort, not perfection.

Week 6 – Confidence and Coordination

This is where everything comes together – comfort, breath, and balance.

We start with song and bounce, then move into exploration above and below the surface.

Push and glide. Return to the ground.

Practice a starfish float on the back – water above the ears, face relaxed, body supported.

Aim for five calm seconds.

Now we combine our safety sequence:

Jump in → glide to wall → climb out → repeat three times.

If your child isn't ready to jump, start from the stairs:

Step in → submerge → resurface → glide back.

By the end of week six, your toddler will understand how to move in water, how to breathe, and – most importantly – how to trust it.

The Purpose Behind Aqua Explorers

Each week builds not just skill, but ***self-awareness***.

Toddlers are learning how to balance freedom with security – how to explore while knowing where “safe” is.

That's why Aqua Explorers always circles back to the stairs:

It teaches “this is where I can stand, breathe, and start again.”

And that's the heart of Joyful Waters:

We don't force confidence. We grow it — through connection, play, and calm repetition.



Curriculum (Weeks 1–6)

Age: 19–24 months | Focus: Confidence, balance, and independence through exploration and play.

Week 1 – Floating Friends

Goal: Establish comfort and rhythm through song, play, and grounding.

- Skills:
- Welcome Song + Bounce: Begin each session holding your toddler close. Gently bounce up and down while singing a calm, predictable song to build emotional regulation.
- Pool Steps Exploration: Move to the stairs so your child can stand, feel secure, and explore independently.
- Floating Toy Play: Provide one floating toy for sensory exploration and control.
- Push & Glide (front): Assisted short glides toward you or a toy, repeated three times.
- Back Glide: Support under shoulders; encourage face **relaxation and floating**.
- **Core & Balance Practice: Standing in chest-deep water; gentle movements to strengthen posture and coordination.**

Repetition Goal: 3–5 sessions using the same sequence to establish routine and safety.

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Week 2 – Sinking Surprises

Goal: Introduce breath control, cause and effect, and sensory curiosity.

Skills:

- Song + Bounce Warm-Up: Begin each lesson with familiar rhythm and connection.
- Sinking Toy Exploration: Introduce a toy that sinks; allow your child to observe, reach, or retrieve at their comfort level.
- Airplane Acclimation: “Up, up, up... down, down, down...” – rhythmic lifting and lowering for vestibular and sensory awareness.
- Push & Glide (front): Repetition for muscle memory.
- Back Glide + Water Above Ears: Encourage comfort with submersion sensations.
- Stair Play with Watering Can or Sponge: Pour, scoop, squeeze – building grip strength and understanding water flow.

Focus Concept: Exploration without expectation.

Week 3 – Building Strength & Coordination

Goal: Develop upper-body strength, fine-motor coordination, and confidence in movement.

Skills:

- Welcome Song + Bounce: Continue ritual for emotional stability.
- Wall Poppers: Encourage pulling suction toys from the wall for shoulder and hand strength.
- Push & Glide + Bubbles: Combine movement and breath play.
- Scarf Dive Toy: Tie a scarf to a sinking toy – encourage reaching before it hits the bottom. Builds timing and control.
- Mat Back Glide: Lay on a floating mat; practice gentle glides with water above the ears.
- Stair Play: End by standing, pouring, and balancing to return to calm.

Focus Concept: Strength through play; building trust in balance transitions.

Week 4 – Vertical to Horizontal Transitions

Goal: Improve balance, body awareness, and smooth transitions between positions.

Skills:

- Song + Bounce + Connection: Maintain rhythm for regulation.
- Dual-Level Play: Place poppers above and below the surface to encourage reaching and diving motions.
- Noodle Glide: Use a noodle for independent front glides; practice transitioning from standing (vertical) to floating (horizontal).
- Mat Work: Waterline above ears; three push-and-glide repetitions.
- Grounding on Stairs: Return to standing after each glide to reinforce orientation and confidence.

Focus Concept: Core strength through repeated transitions between floating and standing.

Week 5 – Kickboard Confidence

Goal: Build propulsion skills, self-regulation, and joy in movement.

Skills:

- Welcome Song + Bounce: Continue consistency for emotional comfort.
- Kickboard Glides: Practice pushing, gliding, and standing again for control and strength.
- Bubble Play: Encourage blowing bubbles while moving forward.
- Hula Hoop Glide or Jump: Glide or jump through a hula hoop, depending on comfort level.
- Stair Play: End with balance activities to reset and regulate before leaving the water.

Focus Concept: Controlled independence and joyful experimentation.

Week 6 – Confidence & Coordination

Goal: Combine all skills through confidence, balance, and gentle challenge.

Skills:

- Song + Bounce + Exploration: Begin calm and connected.
- Push & Glide Sequence: Practice smooth transitions between movement and grounding.
- Starfish Back Float: Water above ears, relaxed head, body supported – aim for five seconds of stillness.
- Jump-In Practice:
- Jump in, glide to wall, climb out, and repeat three times.
- If not ready, start from stairs: step in, submerge, resurface, and glide.
- Free Play Above and Below Surface: Combine exploration, toys, and repetition for mastery and fun.

Focus Concept: Independence built through trust and repetition.

Parent Reflection

Each week, ask yourself:

- Did my child feel safe enough to try something new?
- Did I stay calm, slow, and encouraging?
- Did we end the lesson with smiles and connection?

Progress in Joyful Waters isn't about what your child can do – it's about how they feel while doing it.

Age Overview: “Walking to 24 Months”

This is a transition zone in early childhood – they’re not babies anymore, but not yet preschoolers.

Developmentally, it’s a period defined by:

- Emerging autonomy (“I do it myself”)
- Rapid motor growth (core stability, walking, squatting, climbing, early jumping)
- Sensory curiosity (pouring, filling, cause-effect play)
- Limited impulse control (explore first, process later)
- Short attention spans (2–3 minutes per activity max)
- Emotional co-regulation (still rely on your calm voice and rhythm to return to center)

That means the class has to feel like play but still be organized and predictable enough to anchor their nervous system.

It Begins with Connection, Not Control

Every week starts the same way – song, bounce, and holding close.

That’s not just cute; it’s neurobiological rhythm setting.

- The bounce stimulates the vestibular system (balance).
- The song creates predictability (safety).
- The parent’s tone regulates the child’s heart rate and breathing.

At this age, regulation is learning – it’s what makes attention and coordination possible.

So this flow respects the toddler’s limited self-regulation skills by starting every session with co-regulation.

Grounding on the Stairs Is Developmentally Essential

Returning to the pool steps throughout the lesson is perfect for early walkers because:

- They need a solid surface to reset their equilibrium after floating.
- Standing gives proprioceptive feedback (muscle awareness through weight-bearing).
- It reinforces the concept of safe zones in water – “I can always find my footing.”

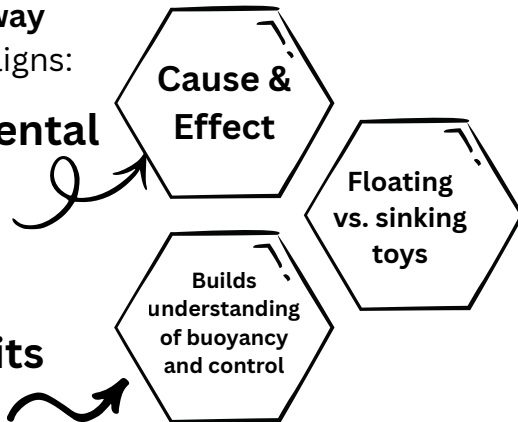
For a child still building leg strength and stability, this up-and-down rhythm (float → stand → float → stand) teaches both water safety and motor control.

The Weekly Progression Matches Their Sensorimotor Learning Pathway

Here’s how it aligns:

Developmental Skill

Why It Fits



Developmental Skill	Aqua Explorers Activity	Why It Fits
Cause & Effect	Floating vs. sinking toys	Builds understanding of
Fine Motor	Wall poppers, sponge squeezing	Strengthens grip and coordination
Core Stability	Vertical to horizontal	Strengthens trunk and supports
Vestibular Integration	Airplane lift, noodle glide,	Supports balance and body
Imitation	Songs, routines	Strengthens social-emotional
Bilateral Coordination	Push and glide, climbing out	Builds foundation for later swim

Every element is an intentional mirror of the toddler’s developmental timeline.

Duration and Repetition Match Their Cognitive Bandwidth

The structure – 20–25 minutes max, with each segment 2–3 minutes – matches a toddler’s attention span.

They need frequent shifts in activity, but those activities must feel familiar to anchor their focus.

That’s why you repeat skills week to week – same rhythm, small new challenge.

- Week 1–2: Predictable cause and effect (floating vs. sinking)

- Week 3–4: Transitional balance and strength (wall, noodle, mat)
- Week 5–6: Controlled freedom (kickboard, hula hoop, jump)

The body stays active, the brain stays curious, and the emotions stay safe.

Skill Demands Fit Their Physical Readiness

At 12–24 months, most toddlers can:

- Walk and squat confidently.
- Climb stairs with support.
- Kick spontaneously in water.
- Maintain a back float with gentle assistance.
- Begin blowing bubbles (imitating adults).

The activities in your outline – push and glide, noodle support, kickboard introduction, and basic jumps – are the upper end of that ability range but still realistic.

They build coordination without requiring independent swim ability.

You're teaching water relationship, not stroke form.

Sensory Variety Supports Brain Integration

The alternation between:

- Up and down (vestibular),
- Wet and dry (tactile),
- Heavy/light (proprioceptive),
- Quiet song/loud splash (auditory),

...keeps the toddler's sensory system integrating-

smoothly instead of overloading.

This is especially helpful for emotionally sensitive or neurodiverse children — it keeps water learning regulated, not reactive.

The Flow Builds Autonomy Within Boundaries

By repeating a “start together → explore → return together” cycle, toddlers learn:

“I can move away safely because I know where to come back.”

That’s the foundation of water safety and emotional independence.

It also mirrors attachment theory — secure base, exploration, return — which is why Joyful Waters feels different from traditional “training” lessons.

You’re building both muscle and mind resilience.

Small Adjustments for the 12–24 Month Range

To fine-tune this plan specifically for the younger end of the toddler spectrum:

- **Shorten hold times** — 3-second glides, 3-second floats, brief repetition.
- **Use visual transitions** — always show the next toy or tool before changing activity.
- **Allow one “opt-out” behavior per skill** — if they’re hesitant, model it or let them observe once, then try again.

- **Keep songs rhythmic and simple** — “Up and down,” “Ready, go,” “Splash-splash” — these become neural cues for timing.
- **Never remove toys abruptly** — let them exchange one toy for another to teach sequencing and closure.

These small behavioral rhythms help a 14–20 month-old thrive where a 2-year-old might otherwise resist.

Aqua Explorers is more than a class — it’s a bridge between your baby’s first water memories and your toddler’s growing sense of independence.

At this age, your child is discovering that they can move, explore, and make choices — and your role is to create a safe, steady rhythm that lets them do just that.

Every glide, every splash, and every return to the pool steps teaches balance, awareness, and trust.

These moments may look simple, but they are shaping how your child experiences the world: how they recover from challenge, how they regulate their emotions, and how they connect with you.

Repeating familiar routines, and celebrating curiosity over perfection, you’re not just teaching swimming — you’re nurturing self-confidence, body awareness, and emotional security that will last long beyond the pool. This is the heart of Joyful Waters: a place where learning unfolds gently, love leads every movement, and safety begins with connection.

Safety

Parent Pool Safety Essentials

How to Keep Water Time Joyful and Safe

Whether you're attending lessons or visiting a community pool, the water should always feel like a place of connection – not fear. Safety doesn't start with rules; it starts with awareness, preparation, and presence. Here's how to set yourself (and your child) up for success every single time.

Be the Watchful Calm

When you're at the pool, your attention is your child's greatest safety tool.

Put phones away, face the water, and stay within arm's reach at all times – especially for children under 5.

Even if there's a lifeguard, remember: you are your child's primary water watcher.

Your calm presence not only keeps them safe but teaches them what confidence looks like.

Prepare Before You Go

Before every swim day:

- Pack sunscreen, snacks, dry clothes, and hydration.
- Make sure your child's swimsuit fits snugly but doesn't restrict movement.
- Use coast guard-approved flotation devices if needed (never arm floaties – they can slip or give a false sense of security).

- Review pool rules together: no running, stay near mom/dad, wait for “ready, go.”

When children know what to expect, they feel safer and more confident.

Know the Pool Environment

Each pool has its own rhythm – take a few moments to observe before getting in:

- Where are the ladders, steps, or shallow areas?
- Is there a designated “baby/toddler” area?
- How deep is the water where you plan to play?
- Who is supervising? (If there’s no lifeguard, that responsibility shifts entirely to you.)

Familiarity reduces stress for both of you and helps your child orient to their surroundings.

Model Respect, Not Fear

Children mirror what they see.

If you treat water as unpredictable but safe, they’ll learn the same.

Say things like:

“The water listens when we move slow.”

“We always check how deep it is before we splash.”

You’re teaching awareness, not anxiety – and that’s what builds lifelong safety habits.

Practice Smart Supervision

The CDC and Georgia’s Izzy’s Law emphasize **active, designated water watchers**.

- Here’s what that looks like:
- Always know who’s watching the water — don’t assume someone else is.
- Rotate “watcher” duty every 10–15 minutes if multiple adults are present.
- Avoid alcohol or distractions while supervising.
- Keep a phone close only for emergencies, not scrolling.
- Know basic CPR — it saves lives. (You can even host a class at your local pool or rec center.)

Respect the Weather and Water Conditions

- If you hear thunder or see lightning — clear the pool immediately.
- Watch for shivering or blue lips; toddlers lose body heat quickly.
- In hot weather, encourage frequent hydration and rest breaks.

Safety isn’t just about the water — it’s also about your child’s body in changing conditions.

Izzy’s Law is specific to the state of Georgia. It was signed into law on May 3, 2023, and it requires that private swim instructors in Georgia develop and adopt an aquatic safety plan before providing lessons

Make Every Exit a Win

End each swim on a positive note – calm, happy, and connected.

Celebrate small victories: “You blew bubbles today!” or “You waited for ‘ready, go!’ all by yourself.”

Leave while they still feel successful; it keeps the emotional association with water joyful.

If Something Feels Off – Pause

If your child seems fearful, tired, or overwhelmed, step back.

Sit on the steps together. Sing your welcome song. Splash gently.

The most powerful safety tool you have is connection. A calm body learns; a fearful one shuts down.

Remember

Water safety isn’t a single rule – it’s a relationship you build over time.

By staying present, prepared, and emotionally aware, you’re teaching your child that the water can be both powerful and peaceful.

That’s what Joyful Waters is all about.

The National Drowning Prevention Alliance (NDPA) has a strong national “Water Watcher” message:

“Designate a Water Watcher when you are in, on, or around water... Young children or inexperienced swimmers need to be within arm’s reach of an adult at all times.”

<https://ndpa.org/designateawaterwatcher>

The United States Lifesaving Association (USLA) – while more focused on beach / open water – still promotes water safety tips including the concept of a “Water Watcher.

<https://www.usla.org/page/safety-tips>

CHECKLIST

- Do you have a written aquatic safety plan?
- Who is the designated Water Watcher during lessons or while I'm in the pool area?"
- What is the student-to-instructor ratio?
What is the emergency plan if something happens?
- Is parent/caregiver access/unobserved supervision allowed or encouraged?

For more information on safety training related to water chemistry, filtration systems, and required safety equipment, check with your Environmental Health Department (often part of your County Health Department).



4 WAYS TO GET YOUR CHILD READY FOR SWIM LESSONS



01

Visit the pool/meet the instructor!

02

Practice in the tub! Laying back and getting ears wet.

03

Practice exhaling or humming in the water, and submerging nose and mouth.

04

Practice pouring water the back of your head and getting your face wet.

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READY TO SWIM!

Daily

S M T W Th F St

Lay back, ears wet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pour water on face	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Face in	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Exhale blow the water	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Exhale under water	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



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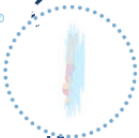
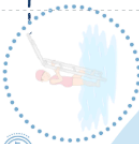
Preschool Level 1



Today's Date

Safe Entry

- You have entered the pool safely.
- Sitting on the side and sliding in
 - Walking down the steps
 - Using a ladder



Floating

- Back float 3 sec
- Back float and go vertical
- Front float
- Front float and go vertical
- Roll from back to front

Full Body

- Combined arm and leg action on front
- Combined arm and leg action on back
- Vertical hand treading action



Legs

- Alternating legs on front
- Alternating legs on back
- Simultaneous legs on front
- Simultaneous legs on back



Glides

- Front Glide
- Back Glide
- Front Glide and go vertical
- Back Glide and go vertical

