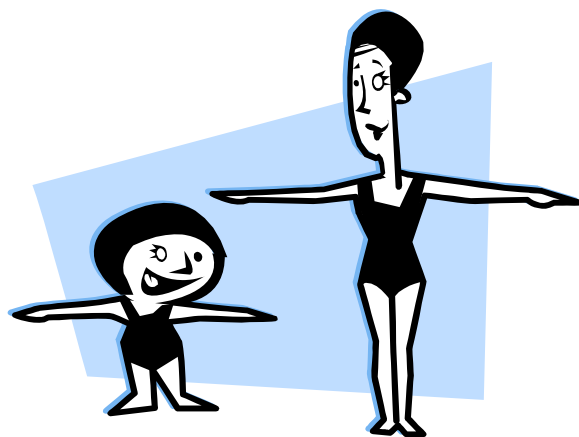


Aquatics'  
Pre-school Program  
(3-5 years old)  
Parents'  
Handbook



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**Welcome** to the West Suburban YMCA's **SKIPPERS** Pre-school Swimming Program! **SKIPPERS** is the National YMCA program for swimmers ages **6 months to 5 years of age**. The National YMCA along with the United States Coast Guard collaborated on this program to help our pre-schoolers become more water safe by enjoying the water. They do this while continuing to respect the dangers associated around an aquatic environment.

We are dedicated to making this a rewarding experience for all children involved. If you have any questions please contact the YMCA at (617) 244-6050 ext 3127 and ask for Amanda Wong, the Aquatic Director or email her at [amandaw@westsuburbanymca.org](mailto:amandaw@westsuburbanymca.org).

The focus of this packet is on the **3 to 5 years** old portion of the program. The age group is broken down into 5 levels at our Y. The definitions of these levels are written below as well as other important information to be read before beginning the program.

***Beginner Pike***- (3-5 years) this level is the first level without a parent in the water. Swimmers wear 3 bubbles. Beginner Pike is for swimmers who have no swimming experience OR no swim lesson experience. Beginner Pikes develop confidence in swimming independently with the aid of 3 bubbles.

***Advance Pike***- (3-5 years) there can be no crying in this class. Swimmers wear three or two bubbles and are independently swimming.

***Beginner Eel***- (3-5 years) these swimmers can put their face in the water. They can also swim across the pool on both their FRONT AND their BACK independent of the instructor. They must have horizontal body position while swimming and arms must come out of the water during crawl. All Beginner Eels must wear 2 or fewer bubbles.

***Advance Eel***- (3-5 years) Advance Eels are in 1 or 0 bubbles. They should be able to swim the length of the pool with a bubble in each of the following: Front Crawl, Back Crawl, Breaststroke, and Elementary Backstroke. These swimmers MUST swim with their face in the water.

***Ray Starfish***- (4-5 years) "Rays" we call them are our most advanced swim level in the preschool group. These swimmers must be completely bubble free. They must be able to swim multiple lengths of the small pool in a lesson with their faces in the water and no breaks. They must also be swimming Backstroke and Elementary Backstroke the full length without stopping.

### **3-5 Year SKIPPER Program**

The focus of this program is on swimming skills. A child is participating on his or her own rather than being accompanied by a parent. Each class consists of a sequence of activities that is repeated in each lesson which allows the children to anticipate what will happen next and feel more at ease.

At this age children can begin to learn fundamental swimming water safety and boating skills that will last them a lifetime. They can also learn elementary lifesaving skills, including throwing and reaching assists with objects normally found around and aquatic environment. These skills could possibly save their own or someone else's life.

The YMCA provides a safe environment in which children can learn at their own pace. Children in the 3-5 year old programs are asked only to do what they are developmentally ready to do and they are grouped according to **ability rather than age**.

Self confidence and a good self image are our highest priority. It is an important part of our mission and we are dedicated to making every child leave here with a stronger sense of confidence than when they came.

Although a child may learn swimming skills during the 3-5 programs, a parent should not develop a false sense of security. A child must always be supervised by an adult who can ensure his or her safety in or near the water. This is important not only near the pool or at the beach but anywhere there is water.

#### **Why Parents Cannot Stay In the Pool Area**

Some Pre-schoolers are physically reassured by the presence of their parents while others develop anxiety. The latter is quite frequently evident if the parent is a non-swimmer who consciously or unconsciously shows anxiety or "concern" for the child. Due to potentially inconsistent performances from the swimmer, and keeping with National Aquatic Pre-school recommendations, parents may not stay on the pool deck during class time. We find the most success from a child comes when the parents are out of sight.

Though there is a need for the above policy we do respect all parents' need to know and trust the instructor with whom you leave your child. If it is your first time participating in our program, or if the instructor is new to you and your child, please feel free to stay on deck for the first class.

For the sake of safety, during all of our pre-school classes we may ask one parent to stay as a "deck parent." Your job is to help us with bathroom runs, changing bubbles, fearful children, and any other unforeseen needs that pre-schoolers might have.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> week, we do offer a "Peek Week." This is the time for all parents and family members to observe the lessons. At this time swimmers will be given a progress report stating all they have accomplished and what class they can consider for the next session.

## Instructional Aids

We use “bubbles” in all our SKIPPERS classes whenever it is necessary. Bubbles allow a safe, steady progression for beginners while not impeding the quick learners. Bubbles allow the children to propel themselves safely without a constant need of an instructor assisting them across the pool. Children will spend more time swimming and less time sitting. The bubbles we use have one strap with three bubbles attached. Progression of each child will allow them to start with three bubbles and then progress to two then to one then to none as they become more efficient swimmers.

Our philosophy concerning bubbles is that they are a “teaching aid” not a lifesaving device. They help children stay afloat so that they can concentrate on their skills rather than “staying up.”

## How You Can Help

- ❖ Praise your child for every accomplishment no matter how minor, we do as instructors.
- ❖ Teach your child good locker room procedures. For example use the Parent/Child changing rooms, **use the toilet and shower** before entering the pool.
- ❖ Prior to your first lesson visit the YMCA. Show your child the locker room, the pool, the showers, toilets and where you will be during their lesson.
- ❖ To avoid confusion please do not make promises to your child about lessons. (i.e. “the teacher is not going to make you jump in today or get your face wet.”) Saying this only dissolves the trusting relationship the instructor is trying to build. We cannot always keep the promises you make.
- ❖ Our pre-school instructors are sensitive to your child’s fears and concerns, help us lessen them.
- ❖ When a child expresses a fear about a skill (i.e. getting their face wet) emphasize the skill in other atmospheres (i.e. the bathtub.) This will help make the skills less threatening. Family Swim times are another great time to practice the skills in a different atmosphere. It is very important your child learn to do all the skills we present to them. We will progress slowly with the children who are fearful. How quickly your child accomplishes the skills is not the goal. Developing the confidence necessary to perform the skill and having fun on the way is the important thing.
- ❖ Swimmers should not enter the pool area any earlier than 5 minutes prior to the start of their class. This prevents any distraction for swimmers and their instructors currently in the pool. It is also important to be prompt. This is helpful so all children receive their full lesson.
- ❖ Please put the appropriate number of bubbles on your child when entering the pool area. This can help assure a timely start to class.
- ❖ If your child has any special needs please let the instructor know before the start of class.

## **For Your Information**

- 1) Please help us keep the pool clean by not wearing your street shoes on the pool deck.
- 2) Bathing caps are required for all swimmers.
- 3) All swimmers must shower prior to entering the water.
- 4) We do not provide make-up classes for absences. The classes are generally too full for extra swimmers.
- 5) Registration week is usually the week after Peek Week. Member registration is Sunday and Monday. Open registration begins on Tuesday.
- 6) Refund Policy:
  - a) All course fees are non-refundable.
  - b) Refunds are not given unless the YMCA cancels the class.
  - c) Program credit will be issued with a doctor's note if 50% or more of the classes are missed due to illness.