

Because every child should know  
how to swim, we are the

# KIDS FIRST Swim Schools



Parent Handbook

# To All Our New Customers,

Welcome to **KIDS FIRST** Swim Schools, the world's largest provider of year-round, indoor swim instruction. Our objective is to be the best environment for your child to learn how to swim, and to do so properly. The purpose of this Parent's Handbook is to provide you with important information about our swim programs and curriculum and to acquaint you with our operating policies. Should you have questions, please speak with your school manager or the front desk staff.

Children under the age of four are 14 times more likely to drown than be involved in an automobile accident. While our government insists that your child be buckled in a car seat, they have left this important decision to you. Congratulations on making the right decision—you've come to the right place!

This handbook has been created to make your experience a pleasant and productive one. It provides answers to many of the common questions that we are asked, a thorough explanation of our trademarked curriculum, facts about swimming and water, and plenty of tips and suggestions to enhance your child's experience.

Please take the time to familiarize yourself with the contents of this handbook. Should you have any question, please visit our front desk and speak to our manager. We hope that your family's experience is a satisfying one and if it is, please tell your friends about us. Thank you. We are honored that you have entrusted us with teaching your child to swim!

**Gary and Karen Roth, Owners**

# Courses and Levels

## Mommy (or Daddy) & Me / Advanced Mommy (or Daddy) & Me

The objectives of these courses are to develop the natural instincts that your child has for the water as well as the primary skills of propulsion, buoyancy, and breath control.

### Main skills focused on:

- Propulsion phase – Kicking is the initial way we move about the water. We will work on kicking both on the tummy and on the back. Arms are introduced much later in our curriculum.
- Buoyancy phase – Developing buoyancy, both on the tummy and back is an important objective.
- Breath control phase – The tricks to teaching your child to hold their breath underwater are taught.

Both of these courses allow for an interactive experience between you and your child. You have to be willing to participate in all aspects of the class. And you have to be willing to take your child into territories that are potentially uncomfortable for both of you, as that's where real learning occurs.

As you familiarize yourself with the KIDS FIRST Swim Schools' curriculum, please note that, in order to progress from one level to the next, your child must show they have perfected each skill by demonstrating the skill multiple times within a lesson and over several consecutive lessons.

\*\* Enrollment in the Advanced Mommy (or Daddy) & Me course requires approval of a KIDS FIRST Swim Schools certified instructor. This is an advanced-level course meant for children showing advanced skills in propulsion, buoyancy, and breath control. Your child must be at least two years old to be enrolled.



# Level 1-Water Exploration

The objective of this level is to guide your child through any anxieties they may have and to create a level of comfort in the water.

**Main skills focused on (all skills are completed without your child holding their nose):**

- Blowing bubbles.
- Five bobs – completely submerging their head on each bob.
- Submerge their entire head for five seconds.
- Supported front and back float while demonstrating the three keys to creating buoyancy:  
1) correct head position,  
2) body position (starfish) and 3) relaxing.

**Homework assignments:**

- Humming (five seconds)
- Holding breath/making chipmunk cheeks (five seconds)

- Blowing out a candle
- Starfish position – relax (lying on front and back) (REMEMBER – when floating on tummy, look STRAIGHT down, when floating on back look STRAIGHT up)

Remember to bring your child to the weekend family swim. Children who come to family swim while enrolled in Level 1 usually see the most improvement.

Your child must master ALL skills before moving onto Level 2. If your child cannot hold their breath for five seconds, we cannot expect them to front float for five seconds with their face in the water.



# Level 2-Horizontal Position/ Kick Development

Your child will learn to get their feet off the pool bottom and, through proper head position (which is one of the keys to floating), get into the proper swimming position (horizontal). Your child will also begin working on propelling themselves through the water with a strong kick. Rhythmic breathing is also introduced at this level.

## Main skills focused on:

- Ten bobs with rhythmic breathing (rhythmic breathing – blowing bubbles while fully submerged then taking one breath above water, all in a controlled manner).
- Submerge their entire head for 10 seconds.
- Unsupported front and back floats – your child **MUST** be able to get into the float position for both floats, establish their own buoyancy, and then stand up all by themselves. A proper head position must be maintained.
- Front and back kick with a buoyant noodle, demonstrating proper head position.

Remember to come to family swim. Children who come to family swim while enrolled in Level 2 usually see the most improvement.

## Homework assignments:

- Chipmunk cheeks for 10 seconds
- Bobs – exhale three seconds while submerged, inhale one time above the water (do 10 times)
- Starfish position – relax (lying on front and back)
- Lay down and kick on front and back, trying for straight legs

Make sure to utilize the weekend family swim. Children enrolled in Level 2 who take advantage of family swim can explore how to get their own feet off the bottom of the pool and can work to build their confidence.

Your child must master **ALL** skills before moving onto Level 3. They must know how to establish their own buoyancy before we can teach them to properly propel themselves through the water.





# Level 3-Perfecting the Kick

Your child must perfect the **KIDS FIRST** Swim Schools six-beat kick before we can build the remainder of their stroke. Your child will develop the streamline position (see below), and will be introduced to deep water skills. We will also help them further develop their rhythmic breathing technique. This is the most challenging level to master and it typically takes the most time to advance through. This is clearly the most important level in our curriculum and ensures your child has a strong swimming foundation.

## Main skills focused on:

- Fifteen bobs with rhythmic breathing (rhythmic breathing – blowing bubbles while fully submerged then taking one breath above water, all in a controlled manner).
- Streamline position (arms straight and against head directly behind (or squeezing) ears with hands flat on top of one another) with proper head position.
- Unsupported front kick for five yards in the streamline position with proper head position. Legs should be straight with pointed toes, creating “white water” using a six-beat kick.
- Unsupported back kick for five yards with proper head position. Legs should be straight with point-

ed toes, creating “white water” using a six-beat kick.

- Unassisted “pop in.”
- Jumping into deep water with confidence.
- Sitting dive.
- Float and turn over, one of our main safety skills.

## Homework assignments:

- Streamline position – arms straight and against head directly behind (or squeezing) ears with hands flat on top of one another
- Pointing toes • Kicking – lying down on front and back with straight legs and pointed toes, doing small kicks

Again, remember to come to weekend family swim to practice. As this is the most difficult level to master, your child will benefit from practice.

Children must master ALL skills before moving onto Level 4. A child must establish AND perfect their six-beat kick before we attempt to add their arms into the process. Perfecting the six-beat kick while your child is on their front seems to come much easier than it does on their back. Your child will NOT be allowed past this level until they have mastered the six-beat kick on both their front and back.

# Level 4-Introduction of Arms

Now that the kick has been established as the foundation of the stroke, the arms can be introduced. All strokes start from the top. From the top we can pull; there is no opportunity to propel ourselves from the bottom of the stroke cycle.

## Main skills focused on:

- Front crawl for five yards – arms must start from the top of the stroke (streamline position) and legs must perform a six-beat kick (six kicks for every stroke cycle).
- Back crawl for five yards – arms must start from the top of the stroke (arms remain opposite) and legs must perform a six-beat kick (six kicks for every stroke cycle).
- Kneeling dive.

## Homework assignments:

- Pointing toes
- Kicking – lying down on front and back with straight legs and pointed toes, doing small kicks
- Front crawl arms (circles away from a wall) – hand moves down wall, back away from the wall, then up to top of wall
- Back crawl arms – standing up, arms stay OPPOSITE and

straight, rub arm against ear, then down to touch side of leg. Keep arms moving slowly.

Make sure to utilize family swim on the weekends. Mastering a six-beat kick with arms in motion takes concentration and coordination. The more your child practices this technique, the better their chance of mastering the skill.

Children must master ALL skills before moving onto Level 5. Your child must be able to maintain their six-beat kick while properly using their arms.



# Level 5-Rotary Breathing

Converting the rhythmic bobs into rotary breathing is the next step in perfecting the most efficient stroke. Here your child will focus on rotating their head (NOT lifting it) while maintaining both their stroke and forward momentum.

## Main skills focused on:

- Front crawl with rotary breathing for 10 yards. The head rotates to the side and never lifts during the breath, and the stroke cycle is not broken. Kick remains on top of the water during the entire 10 yards.
- Back crawl for 10 yards. Kick remains on top of the water during the entire 10 yards.
- Standing dive.
- Deep water object retrieval.

## Homework assignments:

- Pointing toes
- Kicking – laying down on front and back with straight legs and pointed toes, doing small kicks
- Practice rotary breathing by laying on the ground with one arm in the streamline position (with the ear on the shoulder) and the other arm on side of leg. Practice rolling to side of the arm that is down for a breath and rolling back to stomach

- Front crawl arms (circles away from a wall) – hand moves down wall with breath to side, keeping ear on the opposite shoulder while taking a breath, then hand moves back away from the wall, then up to top of wall as head rotates back down
- Back crawl arms – standing up, arms stay **OPPOSITE** and straight, rub arm against ear, then down to touch side of leg. Keep arms moving slowly.

Remember to come to weekend family swim and practice all Level 5 skills. This can help with not only perfecting Level 5 skills but also building your child's confidence in swimming longer distances.

Children must master **ALL** skills before moving onto Level 6. Your child must perfect rotary breathing (rotating their head for a breath and **NEVER** lifting) while maintaining their stroke and six-beat kick.



# Upper Levels

## Level 6, Lengthening the Stroke

Your child develops the ability to swim longer distances.

## Level 7, Introducing New Skills

Your child learns new methods of propelling themselves via the breast-stroke and sidestroke.

## Level 8, Advanced Skills

Your child polishes their skills and learns advanced methods of propulsion such as the butterfly stroke.

### Main skills focused on:

- Front crawl and back crawl
- Elementary backstroke
- Breaststroke
- Side stroke
- Introduction to butterfly stroke skills
- Treading water



**Homework assignments:** Please see front desk

## Developmental Swim Team

A program designed for the proficient swimmer (who has graduated from Level 6) who is interested in perfecting the competitive strokes—freestyle, backstroke, butterfly and breaststroke. Starts and turns will also be taught. Practice swim meets are held throughout the winter months and a Championship Swim Meet is held in May to demonstrate the progress that the kids have made and to further introduce them to competition.



# Policies

## Registration

All lessons are sold on a first come, first served basis. Lesson spots are only reserved with payment. The first come, first served policy also applies to our customers who have purchased multi-sessions. If you have purchased a multi-session, you still need to reserve your day and time for each session once the registration books have opened.

## Refunds

We have a strict NO REFUND policy. Once we reserve one of our lesson spots for your child, it becomes a spot we cannot sell to other customers. Please be sure to check your schedule for conflicts before committing to a session/day/time.

## Make-up Classes

The make-up policy may vary depending on the type of lesson your child is registered for. Please make sure you become familiar with the policy that pertains to your child (see the front desk for details). Our policies are strictly enforced.

## Changing Class Day/Time

Children learn best with consistency, therefore, we do not allow the changing of class day or time once the session has started. We want your child to work with the same instructor and the same group of students. While we do not allow you to change your day and time once the session begins, we may suggest a day and time change if your child's skills are not commensurate with those of the group they are assigned to.

## Cancelling Sessions/Pulling Out of Class

Once you have registered your child for a session, you may not cancel the session without a minimum of two weeks' notice prior to the session start date. Once you register for a spot, it becomes a spot we cannot sell to other customers. We need a minimum of two weeks' notice before the session start date because we need to open your spot and have time to resell it. If you need to cancel a session (with two weeks' notice), you will be given a KIDS FIRST Swim Schools credit for future use—you will NOT be issued a refund. Please be sure to check your schedule for conflicts before you commit to a session/day/time to avoid the need to cancel your child's session.

## Policies (continued)

Since consistency is important in the learning process, we request you avoid pulling your child out of an ongoing session unless it is absolutely necessary. If you do find it necessary to pull your child out of an ongoing session, please see the school manager.

### Multi-sessions

You can purchase multi-session packages as a way to save money. They are available with 10, 15, and 20 percent discounts depending on how many sessions you buy (sessions last six weeks with one lesson each week). Purchasing a multi-session package does not lock you into any particular session, day or time. So please make sure to schedule your class with the front desk before each new session.

### Swim Diapers

All children that are not potty trained **MUST** wear a swim diaper. Whether reusable or disposable, the diapers must be two layers (i.e., a disposable diaper with a reusable cover or a swim suit bottom over either style.)

### Inclement Weather

In case of inclement weather, please call your school. Please note that we **DO NOT** operate by the local county school system—your **KIDS FIRST** Swim School may be open even if the local schools are not.

### Your Children

Please keep an eye on any of your other children while in our facilities.



# Why KIDS FIRST Swim Schools?

KIDS FIRST Swim Schools is the world's largest provider of year-round, indoor swim instruction. We operate in a manner that ensures the best learning environment for every child to learn to swim properly.

**All of our schools have specific features to help in your child's learning process**

- Our pools are teaching pools that are two to five feet deep, enabling children to be in the water the entire lesson rather than learning from the pool deck.
- Our pools have steps and/or benches that allow for easy access for small children, as well as parents in a Parent & Me program. Beginners feel safe in areas where they can sit and stand while keeping their head clear above the water surface.
- Each of our pools features one-way glass observation rooms that minimize distractions.
- The water and air temperatures in the pool room are maintained at a comfortable 90 degrees, ensuring that shivering is not a distraction to the learning process.

**Most important of all is our trademarked curriculum**

- The KIDS FIRST/KICK FIRST® Learn to Swim System requires the student to train one set of muscles (the legs and feet) to move at a short, fast rate of speed before we introduce the other major set of muscles (the arms and hands) into the stroke. By isolating and training the legs and feet first, we can ensure their proper movement before introducing the arms.

KIDS FIRST Swim Schools prides itself on teaching children the proper way to swim. Children progress through our curriculum when they have demonstrated their abilities—we will not pass a child just to pass them. We are providing children the foundation in skills that will last a lifetime!

# Progress Reports/Report Cards

## Verbal Progress Reports

During Weeks 3 or 4 of each session, parents will be invited onto the pool deck at the end of class (please wait for a school staff member to call you into the pool area). You will then have the opportunity to receive feedback from your child's instructor about their progress. Please feel free to ask questions, but do not expect the instructor to know if your child is definitely passing the level or not—working with your child three times is not enough for the instructor to gauge if they have mastered the skills in that particular level.

## Report Cards

Report cards displaying your child's progress in the level in which they were enrolled will be distributed to your child at the end of every session. The report card can be used to determine what your child still needs to work on before they can pass onto the next level.

## How to Read the Report Cards

On the inside of each report card is a list of skills that need to be **MASTERED** before your child can pass a level. On the far right are lines for the instructors to place check marks against each skill. If there is a **CHECK MARK** against the skill, the skill has been mastered. If the line is left **BLANK**, it means that

the skill still needs more practice before it can be considered mastered. If your child can pass to the next level, there will be a check mark in the box at the bottom of the card. If there is no check in that box, they still have skills they need to work on, and they need to repeat the level.

## The Parents' Role

We cannot stress enough the importance of your role in the report card process. Regardless of whether your child is passing a level or not, they should be encouraged by both you and the staff of **KIDS FIRST** Swim Schools. Your reaction to your child's report card means much to them, and they need to know it is okay if they have to repeat a level. It is illogical and impractical to assume your child will pass each level the first, second, or even the third time they try. Each level has many skills to master, and each skill takes a lot of practice.

## Repeating Levels

Many parents come to us with the concern that their child is repeating the same level again for the second, third, fourth, or even fifth time. Have no fear parents—this is **OKAY!** It doesn't mean your child isn't progressing. And it doesn't mean they aren't doing well. It just means they have not perfected every single skill in that level.



# Progress Reports (continued)

Each level requires mastery of a set of skills, and each skill requires a lot of practice. It is very rare for a child to pass any given level in one, or even two, sessions. Every child progresses at a different rate. There are many variables that can affect the number of sessions it takes to pass a level. Did you take a session or more off? Did you bring your child to weekend family swim to practice? Are they utilizing the homework assignments?

## Discrepancy in Report Cards when Repeating Levels

Occasionally, when your child repeats a level, there will be a discrepancy in the report card from the last instructor to the current instructor. Even though all of the instructors are trained in the same curriculum, what defines mastery can still be subjective. Take school work for example: one English teacher may grade a paper as an A, but another teacher could grade the same paper as a B. Also some children work best, and learn best, with certain instructors. Knowing how your child learns best will help in this process.

## Look at it Another Way

Let's say your child starts with us at the age of four. There are eight instruction sessions in a year (of six weeks each) and our curriculum is composed of eight levels. If your child passed each level the first time, then in one year they would be completing Level 8. This would mean your now five year-old child would be doing a perfect butterfly stroke across the length of our pool. That scenario is not a practical expectation of your child or of any swimming instructor at any aquatics facility.

Our instructors work with your child to progress at the fastest pace possible, but we also need your help. Please do our homework assignments, practice at weekend family swim, and most of all, help us stay positive by encouraging your child even if they need to repeat a level.

Please don't give up on them, and don't give up on us! We are striving for perfection, and we are taking the time to make sure your child learns to swim the RIGHT way. This is a skill that can last a lifetime and that can one day save their life!

# Testimonials

“Our triplets were 2½ when they started with KIDS FIRST Swim Schools and we cannot believe the progress they have made in three short months. The staff has been AMAZING!!! All of the staff is well trained and you can tell they love teaching kids how to swim. We are looking forward to many more sessions at KIDS FIRST Swim Schools. Thanks for giving our kids a wonderful experience.” - Kristen G

“My daughter has taken swim lessons at KIDS FIRST Swim Schools since she was little. We have tried several other lesson programs, but none have provided the instruction as well as KIDS FIRST Swim Schools. I was initially skeptical about the KIDS FIRST/KICK FIRST® Learn to Swim System because I felt like my daughter worked for weeks to perfect her kick. However, my daughter is now on a competitive swim team. While her peers struggle with the kicking drills in practice, she completes the drills with little effort. Learning the basics first has provided her with the ability to excel on her swim team. And, I'm always happy to recommend KIDS FIRST Swim Schools!” - Megan H

“KIDS FIRST Swim Schools provides a personal experience that my child loves. The instructors take the time to know the kids to provide the best experience for them.” - Deanna D

“The most succinct swim training program I have ever seen.”  
- Mary B., 40-year Educator

“I wish (as a kid) that I had been taught to swim like this!”  
- Meredith Eyler, Director of Training & Development at KIDS FIRST and  
Two-time Collegiate All-American Swimmer

# Tips for Parents

- Practice the skills by doing the homework assignments.
- Practice in our pool at weekend family swim or in other pools.
- Goggles are not encouraged until the child has reached Level 3. We want the child to get accustomed to water contacting their eyes and face.
- Group lessons focus on all skills for that particular level for the entire six-week session. Private and semi-private lessons move at the child's pace once the child shows they have **MASTERED** the skills.
- Please show up on time each week and allow time for your child to change into their swim suit.
- Talk to the school manager or front desk staff if you have questions about anything (e.g., your child's progress, skills in the levels, etc.) Please don't wait until the last week to make a suggestion/complaint. We can't address an issue unless we're made aware that it exists.
- Be patient. We want to teach your child the **RIGHT** way to swim. Have patience with our curriculum. We are helping your child develop the best swimming habits and a skill that will last a lifetime.

