

SHAPLAND SWIM SCHOOLS

Home Development Program



HAPPY. GENTLE. SUPERVISED.

Simple ways to help your baby feel comfortable around water and prepare for swimming lessons.

FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

Water confidence starts at home

Your baby's earliest baths can be calm, positive opportunities to become familiar with water. Keep each activity short, playful and completely guided by your baby's response.

THE THREE GOALS

1

MAKE IT ENJOYABLE

Help bath or shower time feel warm, relaxed and fun.

2

SUPPORT A RELAXED FLOAT

Gently support your baby on their back while they experience the feeling of weightlessness.

3

BUILD WATER FAMILIARITY

Use a consistent cue before a small amount of water passes over the head and face.

SAFETY FIRST

- Stay within arm's reach and keep your hands supporting your baby at all times.
- Never leave a baby alone in or near water, even for a moment.
- Stop straight away if your baby becomes upset, tense or uncomfortable.
- Never force an activity. Calm, positive experiences matter more than progress.

Make bath time fun



1 Start with connection

First and foremost, bath time should feel enjoyable. Begin with a cuddle, eye contact, a favourite song or gentle play. Warm water and a relaxed parent help set the tone.

A SIMPLE BATH-TIME ROUTINE

1

SETTLE IN

Use comfortably warm water and support your baby securely.

2

PLAY FIRST

Smile, talk, sing and let your baby enjoy the water before trying anything new.

3

KEEP IT SHORT

Two or three calm minutes is enough when you are beginning.

THE GOLDEN RULE: FOLLOW YOUR BABY'S CUES

Support a relaxed back float



2 Gentle, supported floating

This activity is carried out with your baby lying on their back. Your hands remain in place the entire time. The aim is simply to help your baby feel secure and supported in the water.

1 SUPPORT

Place one hand under the back of the head and shoulders and the other under the bottom.

2 LOWER SLOWLY

Gently lower your baby until they feel light in the water, stopping at the first sign of discomfort.

3 STAY CLOSE

Keep the face clear and your hands firmly supporting your baby. Never attempt an unassisted float.

4 REASSURE

If your baby becomes unsettled, lift them up, cuddle them and finish on a calm note.

DO NOT TRY TO LET YOUR BABY FLOAT BY THEMSELVES

Introduce a consistent water cue

A clear cue helps your baby know that water is about to pass over their head and face. Use the same words, the same calm tone and the same order each time.



THE CUE ROUTINE

1

WET THE HAIR

Use your hand first so the water is not a surprise.

2

SAY YOUR BABY'S NAME

For example, "James..."

3

GIVE THE CUE

Say, "1, 2, 3, under."

4

POUR GENTLY

As you say "under", pour a small amount over the back of the head.

START SMALL. REPEAT ONLY WHILE YOUR BABY IS CALM.

Build familiarity gradually

There is no rush. Repeat the same small, calm experience until your baby is comfortable before increasing the amount or duration of water.

1

A SMALL SPLASH

Begin with only a little water and an immediate cuddle or smile afterwards.

2

A SMALL CUP

Increase the amount only when your baby stays relaxed and happy.

3

A FULLER POUR

Build slowly over time, never in a single session.

4

A SHORT SHOWER PASS

Move to the shower only when bath-time water feels familiar.

WHEN TO PAUSE

Pause if your baby cries, stiffens, turns away, gasps or seems overwhelmed. Return to simple play and try again another day. Progress should always be guided by comfort, not by a timetable.

Moving from bath to shower



Once your baby is comfortable and large enough to be held securely in the shower, the same principles still apply: make it fun, use a consistent cue and keep every experience gentle.

A GENTLE SHOWER ROUTINE

1

HOLD CLOSE

Hold your baby facing your chest with secure support.

2

LET WATER FALL ON YOUR BACK

Begin with the shower stream running over you, not directly onto your baby.

3

USE THE SAME CUE

Say “1, 2, 3, under” before turning briefly.

4

KEEP IT BRIEF

Allow a short pass of water over the back of the head, then turn away and reassure.

The bath remains the best place to practise a supported back float because it provides a calm, fixed body of water.

THE SHAPLAND HOME DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

KEEP IT HAPPY. KEEP IT GENTLE. KEEP IT SUPERVISED.

FUN FIRST

Make water time a positive experience.



SUPPORT ALWAYS

Keep your hands on your baby at all times.



CUE BEFORE WATER

Use the same calm words before each pour.



FOLLOW YOUR BABY

Stop, cuddle and reset whenever needed.



READY FOR SWIMMING LESSONS?

Babies can begin at Shapland from 5 months.



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