

# Aberdeen Learn-to-Swim Syllabus

This syllabus should be used in conjunction with the criteria chart for movement between levels.

The aim of the scheme is to produce competent swimmers who show a high level of competency in strokes/aquatic skills.

The aim will be achieved by concentrating on the following:

- 1 At beginner level, water confidence is the most important skill, in order to obtain a horizontal body position. Stroke work should not commence until a swimmer is confident in and under the water, able to control their breath under the water and hold a horizontal position on their front and back.
- 2 The next important skill is a strong continuous flutter kick on the front and back. This maintains the desired body position and builds stamina.
- 3 The position of the head controls the position of the body and it is very important that the correct head position is introduced from the start of teaching the stroke. The head must always be back and perfectly still in backstroke. In front crawl, breathing should always be to the side from Level 3 upwards. By the end of Level 4, all swimmers should be skilled in front crawl and backstroke.
- 4 Breaststroke kick is introduced in Level 2 and the swimmers should be able to kick legally before they are moved to Level 4. Any swimmer who does not turn their feet out should be taken back onto the side. If they cannot do it on the side, they will not be able to do it in the water. Use the assistant in the water to help the swimmer turn their feet out. Swimmers can be promoted to Level 4 if all other criteria are passed, provided they agree to go to breast stroke classes.
- 5 Butterfly wiggles should be practised in nearly every lesson from Level 3 upwards even if only for short distances.
- 6 In Levels 1 and 2, all the lessons are based on games and fun activities. From Level 3 upwards, the lessons should still be fun and are based on the standard lesson plan.
- 7 Part of every lesson should be conducted without goggles, so that if a swimmer moves into competitive swimming, they can cope with swimming without goggles if necessary.
- 8 Use the syllabus and stay within the skills at each level. Work on perfecting the basics and do not introduce more advanced skills.
- 9 At this age, swimmers are skill hungry, so take time to instil good practice and FUNdamental skills.
- 10 All activities should be based on LTAD, so speed work should be included at this stage.

The success of your teaching is proportional to the planning and preparation you are willing to do. You may have a potential Scottish, British or World Champion in one of your classes and their success depends on you!

	Swimmers/Teacher Level 1& 2	Swimmers/Teacher Level 3	Swimmers/Teacher Level 4	Swimmers/Teacher Level 5	Swimmers/Teacher Level 6 & 7
Aberdeen	6 Plus 2 Assistants in water	8 Plus 2 Assistant s in water	9	9	18

# Aberdeen Learn-to-Swim Syllabus

## Level 1 Based on Activity Cards/Games

**Aim:** To introduce the swimmer to the water so that they are confident in and under the water, but also understand the dangers, by short, fun activities and games.

To introduce the skill of breath control

To develop a flat body position on the front and back

### Rules for health/safety

Go to toilet before class

All swimmers must wear a cap

Stay above water and holding onto the side unless asked otherwise

If putting on goggles, place eyepieces on the eyes first and then pull the strap over the head

Listen to and watch the teacher

### Entry/Exit

Down steps backwards, holding rails

Exit via steps, holding rails

Swivel from the side if deck level pool

### Water Confidence & Movement

Wet ears, face, hair using games

Moving along the side, holding on with 2 hands

Moving along the side at different speeds, holding on with 1 hand (If depth permits)

Move across pool with noodle

Jump/run across pool forwards and backwards, using hands as paddles

Submerge, eyes open, to identify colours/numbers. Swimmers should not wear goggles at this level.

### Breath Control

Blow bubbles at surface/turn an egg flip

Trickle/explosive breathing through mouth and nose

Submerge holding breath

Submerge blowing bubbles

Controlled bobs. These must be done slowly, with only one inhalation when at surface

Run/jump across pool touching tiles/picking up objects, sitting on the black line etc

### Floating

Lying on back and front on a large float

Start float on front and back with buoyancy aid and support from assistant

Star Float on front and back with noodle

Regain upright position from prone and supine position

## **Notes on Level 1 – the non-confident swimmer**

Fear affects us physically and mentally. It interferes with our breathing and our ability to control our movements. It can stop us thinking clearly. The swimmer must learn to be at ease in the water and the teacher must exude confidence. The non-confident swimmer does not understand that water will support them if they lie flat out and still or that water will only enter the lungs if it is actively drawn in.

The non-confident swimmer is usually not afraid of putting most of their body in the water, apart from their face! So, start by building up confidence by submerging parts of the body apart from the face. Use a variety of games.

Eyes – We protect our eyes by shutting them, but with practice, we can learn to override this. Even swimmers who keep their eyes tight shut under the water want to wipe them when they surface. This must be discouraged. Goggles can help overcome this fear initially and they help the swimmer see clearly under the water, but we want the swimmer to be comfortable with their eyes open under the water, without goggles.

Ears – Children can be afraid that their ears will fill up with water or that water will remain trapped in their ears. Also, sounds are different and can be magnified under the water. For example a swimmer may put off blowing bubbles because of the sound. Teachers can make this a game.

Mouth – The swimmer must learn to avoid inhaling water with air. On land, the best way to inhale is through the nose, but in water, it is through the mouth. The swimmer must learn that we have an oral seal that acts as a barrier to water entering the lungs. We can submerge with our mouths open and water does not rush down to our lungs. We can inhale through an open mouth when it is partially submerged, without water entering the lungs. Inhalation should not be rushed and when the swimmer surfaces, a split second is required to allow water around the mouth and nose to run away before a breath is taken in. Some swimmers think they are metres under the water and have a fear of not being able to bring their head out of the water in time to breathe. This leads to panic and gulping, before the face is clear of the water. Swimmers should be taught to breathe on the surface, using toys, before being asked to put their face in the water and finally they should be taught to submerge.

Nose – Sniffing water up the nose is very uncomfortable and beginners should be taught to exhale through the nose to avoid this.

Slow, controlled breathing keeps the body balanced. Exhalation underwater takes longer than in the air because of the different pressure, but it is vital to exhale properly.

Once swimmers are at ease under the water, they benefit from the dive instinct. When mammals submerge, the metabolism slows down and this can lead to a feeling of tranquillity.

Large, cold, wet, noisy environment – Familiarity and positive experiences initiated by the teacher will overcome this.

Slow Movement – On land, the swimmer can move around quickly and change direction quickly. In water, it is very different and this apparent lack of control can be a source of fear. The side can look very far away when you know you cannot move fast.

Redirection of concentration can be very beneficial to overcoming fears, without the swimmer realising what is happening.

# Amateur Learn-to-Swim Syllabus

## Level 2 Based on Activity Cards/Games

**Aim:** To increase water confidence and improve body position

To introduce and develop a flutter kick on the front and back (long legs, pointed toes, loose ankles), with flat body position

To introduce breast stroke kick sitting at the edge of the pool, circling legs with feet everted and dorsi-flexed.

### Entry/Exit

Swivel entry from the side, controlled, no splashing  
Exit on to the side

Jumping in starting with toes curled over edge, checking that area is clear. Swimmers must not jump into assistants arms, as this is dangerous.

### Breath Control

Controlled bobs, gradually increasing number

Introduction to turning head to the side to breathe, on poolside/ holding on to the side

### Streamlining

Stand with back to the wall, holding the wall with two hands and having both feet on the wall, head down and push off with hands by sides

Stand with back to wall, arms extended above head, 1 hand on top of the other, ears squeezed, then inhale, lean face into water by flexing at the waist and push off (if depth permits)

### Floating

Star Float on front with no aid

Start float on back with no aid

Mushroom float, lungs full of air, chin on chest, arms wrapped tightly round bent knees and trickle breathing

### Front Crawl

Flutter kicking sitting on the side - long legs, toes pointed

Flutter kicking holding onto side

Flutter kicking with noodle under arms/stretched out/1 float/no float. As this is to develop kick, there should be no arm action and head should be up so that breath control is not an added skill

Flutter kick with face in the water, arms by side, with no aid and no breathing, gradually increasing the distance

### Back Stroke

Flutter kicking on back holding onto side

Flutter kicking on back with noodle over chest/round back/ tight round neck/stretched out (room for head to rest right back)/ 1 float on chest/ no float, hands by side

### Breast Stroke

Sitting on edge of poolside leaning back, legs extended over the pool, drop heels, frog feet, kick heels in a circle. Repeat with eyes closed. **Do not sit swimmers on the pool deck, as they will then have to pull their knees up to their chests.** This action must be avoided. Keep the knees narrow.

### Stamina

Swimmers should be taken into Level 3 tank to practise widths of kick before they move to Level 3.

## **Notes on Level 2- Starting to kick and jumping in**

Swimmers can be divided into 2 groups based on their ankle flexibility. The first group walk with their feet straight or with one or both feet turned in. These swimmers are usually good at flutter kicking. The second group walk with their feet turned out and these swimmers tend to be good breast stroke swimmers. Each group finds the opposite way of kicking very hard and great patience and imagination is required to teach this. Watch how your swimmers walk along the poolside. When swimmers start very young, they have a tendency to cycle kick. This is the natural way for them and so the teacher has to take time to lengthen out the legs. Again, this requires patience and imagination.

# Aberdeen Learn-to-Swim Syllabus

## Level 3

**Aim:** To develop breath control  
To develop a streamlined body position  
To develop a strong, continuous flutter kick on the front and back  
To introduce front crawl and backstroke arm action  
To develop front crawl breathing to the side  
To introduce butterfly kick (wiggles)  
To develop breaststroke kick

## Entry/Exit

Jumping in starting with toes curled over edge, checking that area is clear  
Exiting on to the side

## Breath Control

Controlled bobbing, exhaling completely through mouth/nose both trickle and explosive

## Streamlining

Push and glide, starting with face in water before pushing off

## Floating

Pencil float on front and back  
Controlled star float on front, flat body position and looking directly down  
Controlled star float on back, flat body position and looking directly up

## Front Crawl

Flutter kicking on front with 1 hand holding the end of the pull buoy, other arm by side and looking directly down. Exhale completely then turn head to side, keeping ear against arm, to inhale.

As above, but adding single arm pull. Turn head to inhale as hand passes under face and return hand onto float while exhaling. Long, stretched out arm, slow pull, fast kick, breathe every pull.

## Back Stroke

Flutter kicking on back with flat body position with float on chest/arms by side/arms extended above head, squeezing ears

Introduce arm action on pool deck, thumb exit, straight arm, with pinkie entering in line with shoulder then push water to feet. Ensure arm does not pull behind body.

Single arm, holding float on chest with opposite arm. Check for regular, controlled breathing

## Butterfly

Butterfly (disco) wiggles on pool deck, legs together, pushing tummy in and out, shoulders stable and head still

Butterfly wiggles on front, looking down and back, arms by side, on surface and below the surface, starting with 2 hands holding side, behind swimmer

Butterfly wiggles on back, legs together, chin on chest and arms by side, gradually increasing distance and developing a continuous rhythm

## Breaststroke

On back with a noodle, feet turned out before kicking, then on front with a noodle, then with float

Check floating skills if a swimmer has great difficulty with Breast Stroke kick, as they may not be balanced in the water, in which case a body board may be used. Swimmers who achieve all criteria except Breast Stroke kick may move to level 4, provided they attend Breast Stroke classes.

# Aberdeen Learn-to-Swim Syllabus

## Level 4

**Aim:** To develop front crawl, back crawl, butterfly and breaststroke technique  
To develop different methods of entering the water  
To develop body awareness in the water

To introduce sculling  
To introduce treading water

## Entry/Exit

Jumping in showing variations – star, pencil, soldier, tuck

## Streamlining

Streamlining off the wall on front, starting with 1 hand holding the side

Streamlining off the wall on back, starting by dropping down and extending arms above head as pushing off

## Floating

Star float into pencil float on front and back, absolutely balanced

## Sculling

Sitting on pool deck, pushing cupped hands away from (pinkie slightly up) and towards (thumb slightly up) body. Use beach scene, moving dry sand.

Standing in water, showing sculling action. The outward and inward movement is with equal speed and force. No rowing or paddling.

On back, flat body position, arms straight, by side, with firm wrists, stationary scull

On back, arms by side, head first scull, with fingers pointing slightly upwards

## Treading Water

Legs only using noodle/2 floats for support, Breaststroke kick

Arms and legs then arms only and legs only for short periods

## Front Crawl

Front crawl kick on front, holding onto side of float, head up

Front crawl kick in streamlined position, no breathing

Introduce 2 arm action, starting with 2 hands on end of float, breath as 1 arm pulls, blow as other arm pulls, always returning hand onto float. Slow arms, fast legs, ensuring head is turning and not lifting.

Front crawl full stroke, no breathing, arms extending after entering the water and pulling directly under the body, exiting at the thigh, pinkie first

Full stroke with unilateral breathing

## Back Stroke

Flutter kicking on back, flat body position, with arms extended above head, squeezing ears

Flutter kicking, arms by side, head absolutely still, roll body to the side and do 6 kicks, then roll onto opposite side and do 6 kicks

Full stroke with fast continuous kick, controlled continuous arm action, ensuring very little splashing as hand enters. Ensure hand does not extend below body when pulling. Head back and still.

## **Butterfly**

Butterfly wiggles on back, legs together, chin on chest and arms by side, gradually increasing distance and developing a continuous rhythm

Butterfly wiggles on front, looking down and back, arms by side

Butterfly wiggles on side, lower arm extended, upper hand against thigh, ear resting on lower arm

## **Breaststroke**

Legal breaststroke kick on front, with float

Breaststroke arm action on the poolside. Stroke starts with arms extended and does not stop until back in that position. Pull fast under the body

Develop full stroke by streamlining off the wall, 1 pull, 1 kick, then glide. Gradually increase the number of strokes. Always ensure there is a glide before the next pull starts. Do not allow swimmers to practise widths of incorrect Breast Stroke.

# Aberdeen Learn-to-Swim Syllabus

## Level 5

**Aim:** To develop front crawl, back crawl, butterfly and breaststroke technique  
To develop body awareness in the water

To introduce diving

## Entry/Exit

Sitting dive starting with 1 hand on top of the other, thumb curled round and ears squeezed. Use words like smooth, pour, silent. Head kept down and body remains in streamlined position until surfaces.

Develop the sitting dive by lifting hips off the deck and thrusting feet back towards the side

Further develop diving by introducing crouch dives, ensuring toes curled over edge

## Body Awareness

Streamlining off the wall on front into a forward roll with no breathing

Streamlining off the wall on front and back, rotating through 180 degrees

Star float into pencil float, then rolling through 180 degrees very slowly

## Sculling

Sculling on back, feet first, fingers pointing down, no rowing

## Front Crawl

Front crawl kick on front, holding onto side of float, head up

Front crawl kick in streamlined position, no breathing

Front crawl full stroke, with unilateral breathing, slow arms and fast, continuous kick. Water line on the forehead. Head must be still apart from when breathing.

## Back Stroke

Backstroke kick, streamlined

Backstroke kick as 6 kicks on 1 side, then roll and repeat

Single arm backstroke with roll of hip and shoulder as pinkie enters, maintaining still head and no hesitation at thigh.

Full stroke with continuous kick to the surface, continuous arm action, ensuring very little splashing as hand enters. Hand must not extend below body when pulling. Head back and still.

## Butterfly

Butterfly wiggles on back, front and side

Butterfly arm action on poolside. Thumbs enter at shoulder width apart, move out to catch just beyond shoulder width, pull directly under the body and exit pinkie first at the thigh.

Arm action standing in shallow water and leaning over

Attempt full stroke, no breathing for very short distances

## Breaststroke

Simultaneous breaststroke kick with float

Pull, kick, glide drill to develop timing, head still

Full stroke, head still. Use a noodle if pull goes too far back.

# Aberdeen Learn-to-Swim Syllabus

## Level 6

**Aim:** To develop stroke technique in all 4 strokes

To develop endurance on single lengths

To introduce competitive turns

To develop diving

## Exit/Entry

Shallow dive from the side into deep water

## Body Awareness

Forward roll with no breathing on the wall

Streamlining off the wall on front and back and rotating through 180 degrees on 2 axis

Star float into pencil float, then rolling through 180 degrees very slowly

Stroke count from the flags in BC

## Sculling

Sculling on back, feet first, arms by side, fingers pointing down, no rowing

Sculling on back, head first

Sculling while turning through 360 degrees on the vertical axis

## Front Crawl

Front crawl kick with float and streamlined with no float

Front Crawl drills:

Single arm, breathing to the resting and to the pulling side

Stroke count

High elbow

Full stroke ensuring fast continuous kick, continuous arm action, silent hand entry

## Back Stroke

Backstroke kick, streamlined

Backstroke Drills:

6 kicks then roll, head still

Single arm

Double arm

Full stroke with continuous kick, and continuous arm action, ensuring very little splash as hand enters. Ensure hand does not extend below body when pulling. Head back and still.

## Butterfly

Butterfly wiggles on back, front and side

Butterfly Drills:

Arm action on poolside and standing/walking in the water

Full stroke over very short distances with no breathing

## Breaststroke

Simultaneous breaststroke kick with float

Breaststroke Drills:

Pull/kick/stretch

Full stroke ensuring head still, hands always at the surface, fast sculling action under the body

# Aberdeen Learn-to-Swim Syllabus

## Level 7

- Aim:**
- To develop stroke technique on all 4 strokes
  - To develop endurance over increasing distances
  - To develop body awareness in the water
  - To introduce the grab start off the blocks
  - To introduce timed swims

## Body Awareness

- Forward roll with no breathing on the wall
- Streamlining off the wall on front and back and rotating through 180 degrees on 2 axis
- Star float into pencil float, then rolling through 180 degrees very slowly

## Diving

- Standing dive off the side with streamlined entry, one hand directly above the other
- Jumping off the block, looking straight ahead
- Diving off the block, starting with arms behind and throwing them forward to pull body off the block
- Grab start, with head down between legs, looking backwards, hips high and hands holding under the block
- Backstroke start from the blocks

## Sculling

- Sculling on back, head first, hands by side
- Sculling on back, feet first, hands by side
- Sculling on back, head first, arms extended above head
- Sculling on back, feet first, arms extended above head
  
- Sculling on front, head first, hands by side
- Sculling on front, feet first, hands by side
- Sculling on front, head first, arms extended above head
- Sculling on front, feet first, arms extended above head

## Front Crawl

- Front crawl kick on front, with float
- Front crawl kick in streamlined position
- Front Crawl Drills:
  - Swim, no breathing, head still
  - Single arm, breathing to stroking side
  - Single arm, breathing to resting side
  - Stroke count
  - Polo over short distances
- Front crawl full stroke, with bilateral breathing, slow arms and fast, continuous kick. Water line on the forehead. Head must be still apart from when breathing.

## Back Stroke

- Backstroke kick, streamlined
- Backstroke Drills:
  - 6 kick roll
  - Single arm
  - Double arm

Full stroke with continuous kick to surface and continuous arm action, ensuring very little splash as pinkie enters. Ensure hand does not extend below body when pulling. Head back and still.

## **Butterfly**

Butterfly kick on back, front and side, arms by side and extended, with and without fins

Butterfly Drills:

Single arm, resting arm by side, ensuring correct timing of arms to legs and breathing every 2 pulls

Full stroke, no breathing for short distances

Full stroke with fins for 25m, ensuring straight arm recovery

## **Breaststroke**

Breaststroke kick with float

Breaststroke kick with hands below hips over short distances

Breaststroke kick on back, keeping knees narrow and below the surface.

Breaststroke Drills:

Pull/kick/stretch

2 kicks/1pull

Full stroke ensuring head still, hands always at the surface, fast sculling action under the chest

## **Timed Swims**

Timed swims over 25m, starting with a dive off the blocks for FC, Brs and Fly