PARENT AND CHILD AQUATICS LEVEL 1 SKILLS

Holding and Support Techniques

Face-to-Face Positions

Use these positions to introduce children to skills on their front.

**Hug position**

Use this position for water adjustment and for teaching and practicing kicking on the front.

1. The parent positions him- or herself so the water comes up to the shoulders and the upper part of the child’s chest.
2. The child rests his or her head on the parent’s shoulder and places the arms loosely around the parent’s neck or over the shoulders.
3. The child extends the legs while the parent supports the legs from underneath. The parent may manipulate the kick in this position.

**Chin support**

Use this position to practice kicking on the front and bubble blowing.

1. The parent positions him- or herself so the water comes up to the shoulders and the child’s chin.
2. The parent holds the child under the upper part of the chest and shoulders with his or her fingers and palms. Make sure the child’s chin rests on the heels of the parent’s palms so the child’s face does not accidentally submerge.

**Shoulder support on front**

Use this position for water adjustment, practicing kicking on the front, the front glide, bubble blowing, underwater exploration and rolling over.

1. The parent positions him- or herself so the water comes up to the shoulders and the child’s chin.
2. With arms nearly fully extended, the parent holds the child under the armpits. If the child is fearful, the parent should grasp the child underneath the arms and upper part of the chest with the thumbs up.

**Back-to-Chest Positions**

Use the back-to-chest holding positions to introduce children to skills on the back. Most children feel less confident on their backs, so introduce these positions gradually and parents should be sure to give firm support initially. Parents should not continue any holding position if a child becomes distressed. Letting the child keep the ears above the surface initially can help the child adjust to the position.
**Cuddle position**
Use this position for back float, back glide readiness, kicking on the back and rolling over.

1. The parent positions him- or herself so the water comes up to his or her neck and the child’s ears. The back of the child’s head rests on the parent’s shoulder, with the child’s cheek or side of the head touching or right next to the parent’s cheek.
2. The parent places one hand on the child’s lower back and the other on the chest. The child’s legs point away from the parent. The parent holds the child in a horizontal position by “sandwiching” the child between his or her hands.

**Side-to-Side Positions**
Use these positions for water adjustment, bubble blowing, kicking on the front, front glide, front float and passing skills.

**Hip straddle**
Use this position for water adjustment, bubble blowing, and entry and exit.

1. Have the child face the parent and straddle the parent’s hip. The parent supports the child’s back with his or her arm by reaching around to hold the child’s upper thigh. With the other hand, the parent may hold the child’s hand.
2. The parent positions him- or herself so the water level is appropriate for the child. If the child is cold or afraid of the water, have the parent begin by immersing the lower part of the child’s body. As the child becomes comfortable, the parent gradually immerses him- or herself and the child until the water reaches the child’s chest.

**Shoulder support on side**
Use this position for water adjustment, bubble blowing, kicking on the front, front glide, front float and passing.

1. The parent positions him- or herself comfortably so the water line is between his or her waist or shoulders and the child’s chin or neck. This position gives maximum mobility in a support position.
2. The parent and the child face the same direction. The parent holds the child at the armpits, keeping the child’s head up. The parent should be able to see the child’s face. The parent can gently rest an arm or elbow against the child’s buttocks and legs to keep them underwater.
3. For more support, the parent can use this same arm to encircle the child by placing his or her palm on the child’s chest. The parent’s other arm should support the child from the back near the armpit. As the child becomes more confident and skilled, the parent can hold the child with both hands on the waist.
- Maintain eye contact with the child to optimize communication and help reduce anxiety.
- Provide more support in the beginning and then slowly and gradually disengage from support if possible.

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**Cueing**

Cueing is used to prepare children for upcoming skills. Parents should use cue words such as “ready, set, go” or “1, 2, 3” as each skill is learned and repeat them each time the skill is practiced. Parents should teach children to enter the water only with permission from the parent and when cued to do so. Cue the child the same way each time.

1. Explain and/or demonstrate the expectation. Say, “We’re going to blow bubbles” or “Show me how you blow bubbles,” then blow bubbles.

2. Say the cue words. Say, “ready, set, go” or “1, 2, 3.” Be consistent with the cadence each time. If it is a breath-control skill, follow the cue words with an exaggerated breath to encourage the child to do the same.

3. Have the child perform the skill.

4. Always praise the child for even the slightest effort or accomplishment.