

The 21-Day Splash-to-Swim Plan

A parent-led way to take your little one from clinging to the edge to confident in the water, ten minutes at a time

By the TibaToes team

Read this first (the part that actually matters)

This is a **confidence** plan, not a lifeguard and not a swim instructor. It works alongside real supervision and, when you can, real lessons. It does not replace either.

Three rules, every single session, no exceptions:

1. **You are within arm's reach the whole time.** Not on your phone, not on the lounge. Arm's reach.
2. **Warm, calm, shallow water your child can stand up in.** No deep end, no crowded pool, no rough day at the lake.
3. **Stop the second it stops being fun.** A scared session sets you back a week. A happy 4-minute session beats a tearful 10.

Kids can drown quickly and silently, even in a few inches of water, even when they've been "doing great." Nothing in this guide changes that. If your child isn't ready for a step, skip it and come back in a few days. There is no schedule you have to hit.

How to use the plan

- **Ten minutes a day, most days.** Twenty-one short, happy sessions beat five long ones.
- **One-on-one.** Just you and one child. Siblings take turns.
- **Get in with them.** This is why your kit has an adult pair of goggles. A parent in the water, at eye level, is the whole trick.
- **Celebrate the tiny win at the end of every session.** "You blew the biggest bubbles today!" The win is the point. The skill follows the confidence, not the other way round.

Your kit, and what each piece is for:

Piece	What you'll use it for
Kids' clip-on goggles (<i>you already have these</i>)	Seeing underwater without the sting, so going under stops being scary
Dive & Seek toys	Reaching under the surface for something fun, the gateway to going under
Snorkel set	Getting comfortable breathing with a face near the water
Kids' swim cap	The "I'm a real swimmer now" moment, and it keeps hair out of the way
Kickboard	Something to hold while the legs learn to do the work

Piece	What you'll use it for
Adult goggles	You, in the water, coaching at their level

Week 1 (Days 1–7): Make water fun again

Goal for the week: **a wet face is no big deal.** That's it. We are not swimming yet. We are making the water a place they want to be.

- **Day 1 — Just play.** Get in together, splash, pour water from cups, no agenda. End on a laugh.
- **Day 2 — Bubble mouths.** Both of you put mouths to the water and hum so it bubbles. Silliest bubble wins.
- **Day 3 — Rain on the head.** Pour a cup of water gently over your own head first, then offer theirs. Their call. Cheer either way.
- **Day 4 — Bubble noses.** Down to the nose now, blowing out through it. This is the real skill hiding inside a game: breathe *out* in the water, never in.
- **Day 5 — Goggles on, treasure on the step.** Kids' goggles on. Drop a Dive & Seek toy on the step in water they can stand in. They reach in and grab it.
- **Day 6 — Chin dips.** Little dips to the chin, then the mouth, blowing bubbles the whole way down.
- **Day 7 — Show week 1 off.** Repeat their favourite game from the week. Big celebration. First week done.

If a wet face is a hard no: stay on Days 1–3 as long as it takes. Never push a face under. Ever.

Week 2 (Days 8–14): Under the surface, and floating

Goal for the week: **eyes open under the water, and the body learns to float.** Floating is the single most important water-safety skill a small child can have, so we go slow and we go often.

- **Day 8 — Peek under.** Goggles on, both of you dip and open eyes underwater for one second. Wave at each other down there.
- **Day 9 — Seek the treasure.** Drop a Dive & Seek toy just under the surface in standing-depth water. They go under to grab it. This is a full submerge, disguised as a game.
- **Day 10 — Snorkel hello.** Introduce the snorkel on dry land first, then face-down in shallow water, breathing calmly through it. Some kids love it, some don't. No pressure.
- **Day 11 — Back float, fully supported.** Your hands under their back and head the whole time. "Look at the sky, ears in the water, big belly up." Five seconds is a triumph.
- **Day 12 — Front float, fully supported.** Hands under their tummy. Face in, blowing bubbles, arms and legs long like a starfish. Lift them up smiling.
- **Day 13 — Bobs.** Holding hands, gentle up-and-down bobs, bubbles out on the way down, breath in up top. Rhythm, not depth.
- **Day 14 — Float show-off.** Their best back float with the lightest support you can manage. Cap goes on today for the first time: "you look like a proper swimmer now."

If floating panics them: go back to full support and shorten it to two seconds. A relaxed body floats; a stiff, scared one sinks. Calm first, always.

Week 3 (Days 15–21): Kick, glide, and the first solo seconds

Goal for the week: **move through the water on purpose.** By the end of the week many kids will glide a few feet to you on their own. Some won't yet, and that is completely fine, they've still built three weeks of confidence.

- **Day 15 — Kickboard kicks.** They hold the kickboard, you tow them, “long legs, splash from the ankles, no bending the knees.” Make a big wake.
- **Day 16 — Kick with a face-in breath.** Same kick, now with bubbles: face down and blowing for a beat, then up for air. The kickboard makes this safe to try.
- **Day 17 — Wall push-off glide.** Feet on the wall, push off into a front float toward your hands, a foot away. Catch them. Move back an inch each go.
- **Day 18 — Glide plus kick.** The push-off glide, now add a few kicks before you catch them. This is swimming, in miniature.
- **Day 19 — Reach for the treasure, swimming.** Hold a Dive & Seek toy an arm's length away at the surface. They push off and kick to reach it. Motivation does the coaching.
- **Day 20 — Shrink the help.** Everything from the week, with you a hair further away and your hands a hair lighter. Let them feel it's *them* doing it.
- **Day 21 — Their swim.** Push-off, a few kicks, a glide to you, all their own, even if it's three seconds and two feet. That's a swimmer being born. Make it the best celebration of the three weeks.

If they're not gliding solo by Day 21: they are not behind. Keep repeating Week 3 a few minutes a day through the summer. Confidence compounds. And this is exactly the point where real lessons pay off fastest, because your child now *likes* the water.

Quick fixes

- **“I don't want my face in.”** Back to bubbles and pouring games. Never force it. It always comes.
 - **“I won't let go of you.”** Good, don't make them. Shrink your support by inches over days, not all at once.
 - **They swallow water and get upset.** Normal. Calm cuddle, remind them “we blow *out* in the water,” end the session on an easy win.
 - **Goggles leak or pinch.** Adjust the strap above the ears and seal them dry before getting in. A comfy fit changes everything.
 - **They're just not into it today.** Then today is a splash-and-play day. Confidence is the only deadline, and there isn't one.
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The one-page Poolside Water-Safety Card

Print this. Stick it where you'll see it.

Supervision - A child in or near water always has one adult whose only job is watching them. Name that adult out loud at gatherings, "you're on watch," then swap every 15 minutes. - Reach or throw, don't go: keep something to reach or throw within grabbing distance. - Empty and flip paddling pools and buckets the moment you're done. A few inches is enough to drown a toddler.

Barriers - Four-sided fencing with a self-closing, self-latching gate around home pools. Doors and gates to water areas locked and alarmed if you can.

Gear is not a life-saver - Floaties, floatsuits, and puddle jumpers are toys and confidence aids, not safety devices. A child wearing one still needs the same arm's-reach supervision. Coast Guard-approved life jackets are the real thing for open water and boats.

In an emergency - Get them out. Shout for help. If they're not breathing, start CPR and have someone call your local emergency number immediately. **Learn infant and child CPR before you need it, every parent should.**

Sun and water - Reapply sunscreen every two hours and after every swim. Hats and shade for the little ones. Hydrate, water tires kids out fast.

This plan is general guidance for building water confidence and is not medical, safety, or professional swim-instruction advice. It does not replace constant adult supervision, barriers, life jackets where required, or qualified swim lessons. Every child is different; go at theirs. Questions about your kit? hello@tibatoes.com.