Adult Swimming: A Beginner’s Guide
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About Simply Swim

Part of the Simply Group, Simply Swim is a key player in the online swimwear market. Since our inception in 2006 we have continued to offer a vast selection of swimwear for all ages, genders and abilities.

Customers can visit our store in Jubilee Way, Faversham, or alternatively, purchase items swiftly and easily via our website: www.simplyswim.com

Learning To Swim

Swimming is such a rewarding and challenging sport. If you’ve recently made the decision to start learning, we hope you come to realise why so many people love partaking in this activity.

After you’ve learnt a bit about the sport, bought some essential swimwear, and focused on your technique, you’ll be ready to dive straight in (literally) and practice.

So take a look at our beginner’s guide to swimming for adults.

Swimwear

Your first port of call is to make sure that you’ve got all of the essential swimwear and swimming items to be able to learn successfully.

Here’s a quick overview of what you need:

**Essential items**

**Swimwear**

Men can choose from aquashorts, briefs, jammers, or shorts. Swimming shorts will create more drag in the water and the other styles will make you more streamlined.
Women can choose to wear swimsuits, a tankini – tank style top with shorts, a two piece to compliment your figure, or a legsuit for more body coverage.

*(Ref *1)*

For both men and women it’s important to choose a style that you are comfortable wearing. As a result, it’s advised to try a particular style first before committing to buying.

You will want to feel comfortable wearing your swimwear from a personal point of view and also when in the water too. If your items aren’t comfortable then this means you will be focussing on what you are wearing, as opposed to your swimming style.

**Towel**

Make sure you have a swimming towel with you when you go for lessons or to practice your technique in the water. It’s quite an awkward and embarrassing situation if you come out of the sea or the pool soaking wet, only to discover that you’ve left your towel at home.

It might be best to have a few towels so that you can alternate between the two on a frequent basis. This will also be more hygienic, compared to using one towel over again.

**Swim cap**

To keep your hair protected from saturation and also from the damaging effects of chlorine, it’s worth buying a swim cap. This piece of swimwear will also keep the pool clean for other users and stop any filters getting clogged up.

In addition, you will also create a smoother profile in the water, reducing the amount of drag you create.

**Goggles**

Your sight is hugely important, so protect it from water debris and chlorine by purchasing a decent pair of goggles.

Find a pair that fit comfortably and that will allow you to see in the water when you are developing your technique.

As goggles come in a range of styles, including polarised, mirrored and clear lensed, personal preference will also play a part in choosing the best design for you.
Additional items

Nose clips

To stop water getting up your nose and to help those who suffer from sinus problems, nose clips are ideal.

They are designed to rest on the bridge of your nose and clasp the nostrils shut – allowing you to focus solely on your swimming style.

Ear plugs

Nobody wants to get water in their ears when swimming, so purchase a decent pair of ear plugs. These protective plugs are also great at preventing ear infections too and are designed to feel comfortable when placed in your ears. They are also light and affordable, but will make the world of difference when in the pool.

Pool footwear

Walking barefoot around the swimming pool can be dangerous as surfaces are wet and slippery. So give yourself additional support and grip and protect your feet from damage with some pool footwear.

With footwear, you want to make sure that you buy the correct size. If they are too small then they can cause damage to your feet, and if they are too big they are likely to fall off when walking to the water. The right fit will offer you the right amount of grip and support.

Additional Items

Besides those items mentioned above, you may also want to purchase some of the following items too:

- Water bottle – to remain hydrated
- A training bag – to store all of your swimwear, accessories and a change of clothes too
- Aqua gloves – a great training aid to build upper body strength and develop technique
- Kickboard – another training aid to build leg strength and create buoyancy in the water
• Hand paddles - build strength in your shoulders, arms and upper body to make your stroke length longer and stronger

As you start learning you will gain more of an understanding about which items you need. Your coach or instructor will also be able to give you advice on which items will be beneficial for you as you develop as a swimmer.

Remember that Simply Swim has a vast range of swimming training aids and equipment which can be purchased via our online store.

**Safety**

Learning to swim should be fun and rewarding, but you also need to consider your safety at all times too.

Having an injury around the pool or in the water, depending on the severity, can put a stop to your swimming adventure.

Safety becomes even more relevant when you master your technique and wish to move on to learning how to dive.

As a result, make sure you follow these safety tips:

• If you are learning to swim in a pool, learn about the size, depth and diving board location so that you know which areas are best to swim in

• Speak to your doctor about how much exercise you should be doing and if swimming is appropriate for you

• Always ensure that a lifeguard is present who is trained in water safety and first aid

• Never run to, from, or around the pool – surfaces can be slippery and you don’t want to trip and fall on the ground or into the pool

• Only ever swim or dive at a level you are comfortable with – you must feel confident first before reaching the deep end or diving from a great height
- Avoid swimming on your own – if you can go with a friend then you will be able to keep an eye on each other
- Never swim if you are taking medication which alters your mental status
- Always check the water temperature before getting in – cold water can be strenuous on your body and make it difficult to swim
- Avoid swimming if you are feeling unwell – spread of infection is possible in the water and it’s not only your health that you need to look out for in a crowded pool
- Don’t jump or dive into shallow areas of the pool as this can lead to injury
- If you are practicing your dive, make sure that other pool users are out of the way first
- Never go swimming under the influence of alcohol
- If you spot somebody else in difficulty, call for the lifeguard straight away

*(Ref *2 and *3)*

Following the above advice will help reduce the risk of accident and injury and improve your own safety, as well as the safety of others in the water.

Your health is important so don’t take it for granted. Remember these safety tips whenever you are going swimming.

**Benefits of Swimming**

As a sport, swimming is one of the best for your health. Whilst at times it can be incredibly challenging when you’re learning, it’s also great for strengthening your muscles and improving your cardiovascular performance.

An hour of intense swimming can burn up to 650 calories, which is more than walking and biking within the same time period. (*4)

Learning to swim can also help to save your own life as well as others. In fact, it’s one of the only sports that can save your life. If you end up in a situation where you fall into water, without knowing how to swim you could be in great difficulty.

So, besides the calorie burner and the safety factor, what else does swimming offer?
Improve muscle and joint strength

Being submerged in water makes the body lighter. As a result, this means that it’s the ideal environment to work on stiff muscles and sore joints. With less pressure being applied to your body, you will be able to exercise in comfort and improve your core strength too.

Improve flexibility

Swimming puts the whole body through a range of different exercise routines from your feet, right up to your head. All of these individual motions help ligaments stay loose and flexible.

Great for the heart

As swimming is an aerobic exercise, it’s great for strengthening the heart. It does this by allowing for better blood flow through the body and makes the heart more efficient when it’s pumping. Even a small yet regular amount of exercise in the pool can make the world of difference.

Weight control

As mentioned, swimming is one of the best calorie burners and therefore it’s great for keeping your weight at a desired level.

The amount of calories you burn is dependent on your own body shape and the intensity of your exercise routine. However, for every ten minutes of swimming you will burn 60 calories with breast stroke and 150 with the butterfly style. (*5)

Improve asthma

As you will be exercising in a moist air environment, it’s the ideal sport to engage in for those suffering from asthma.

Exercising in the pool can help to reduce the threat of an asthma attack and in some cases, it will even improve the condition overall. (*6)
**Improve cholesterol**

Swimming is also great for achieving the right cholesterol balance due to the aerobic power it offers.

Studies have shown that for every one percent increase in good cholesterol, the risk of dying from heart disease reduces by 3.5 percent. (*7)

**Conclusion**

So there you have it, just a few of the many benefits swimming can offer you. As you learn to swim and work on your technique, the health advantages will also work in your favour too. It’s win-win when you learn to swim.

**Swimming – The Basics**

Before we look at some of the most common swimming styles and advice for getting each stroke right, here’s a list of what you can expect to learn as you develop your skills.

Regardless of whether you are learning from a professional instructor or a qualified coach, you will work on a number of the following areas:

- Individual stokes and styles
- Building body strength
- Breathing techniques
- Safety advice
- Safety training
- Warm up/warm down routines
- Stretching
- Diving

Your instructor will be able to work with you to focus on each individual area and ensure that you are ready to take to the water without their supervision.

If you are interested in a number of the above areas, it might be possible to do a number of swimming courses depending on your preferences.

For example, you could partake in two courses – one for swimming training and another dedicated solely to safety qualifications.
It’s all about getting the most out of the sport, so if there are individual aspects you wish to work on outside of each fixed course, don’t hesitate to ask your instructor.

**Top Swimming Styles**

The most common swimming styles include – front crawl/freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, and butterfly. Let’s look at these in more detail.

**Front crawl**

First of all when it comes to front crawl your lower body shouldn’t be too low in the water as this will require you to work harder.

In contrast, having your lower body too high in the water is also a bad habit that you should avoid. The best position is to have your lower back just below the surface.

When working on your stroke your hands should enter flat, palm first, on each individual stroke. Keep your fingers closed to improve your speed and make sure that your palms are not pointing outwards. Your arms should move up to your side and over your head one at a time in a propelling motion.

Your head also needs to be at the correct level. In this instance, your face should be in the water, but the back of your head should be just out of the water.

Your legs need to execute a consistent flutter kick motion with your toes pointed. Breathing can be made to alternate sides after every three strokes by placing your cheek on the surface of the water.

Find out more about front crawl and view this style in action.

*(Ref *8)*
**Backstroke**

When lying on your back in the water and propelling your arms over your head, make sure that they aren’t too far away from your body. Instead, keep your arms close to your body as you work on your stroke.

When each arm rises out of the water, keep your thumbs pointed upwards, twist halfway and enter the water again before pushing down towards your hips to create power.

Your hands need to enter the water on edge as opposed to entering flat and your toes should remain pointed, applying a constant kicking motion.

Make sure that your chin is not resting on your chest. Instead, tilt your head back in the water as this will enable greater movement and will keep your body straight, preventing you from sinking. Your head should remain in a stable position whilst looking up at the ceiling. Breathing is easy to control as your head is out of the water.

Similar to front crawl, you need to make sure that your body is in the correct position. Your feet should stay beneath the water kicking right up to the surface and your lower body shouldn’t be too low or high in the water.

Watch the [backstroke in action](https://www.simplyswim.co.uk/).

*(Ref *9)*

**Breaststroke**

With breaststroke your body position should be as small and flat as possible so that you become more streamlined.

Legs and arms should be moving simultaneously as this will help to develop a strong and stable rhythm.

As your hands stretch out in front of you and then back towards your chest, your head should rise so that the chin rests on the surface of the water. If you rise too high this can lead to back pain and make it harder to move through the water. Keep your neck and shoulders relaxed too.

Combined with your kick, your legs should come up to your bottom with your feet turned out before kicking back down to propel you in a frog like motion. Make sure your ankles aren’t floppy and that your legs are working together at the same time too.

During each glide, keep your eyes down and looking forward. Breathing can be made after every outward sweep when your hands part and your head rises.
Take a look at how you can perfect your breaststroke.

*(Ref *10)*

**Butterfly**

Regarded as the most difficult stroke out of the main four styles, butterfly uses the most muscles in the body. (*11*)

Your body should be kept as close to the water surface as possible and during this stroke your hips will act as a pivot point – meaning that when the upper body is raised, the hips are slightly further down (illustrated on the right).

Your head should go down as your hips move up. When you need to breathe, push the chin forward whilst pulling back with your arms. Your head should enter the water again before your hands.

To propel in the butterfly position, you need strong upper body strength. As both arms enter the water and reach down to your thighs, lift them out and throw them back in again at the same time. This will take practice to get used to and master. Your palms should be face down during each simultaneous arm stroke.

Reach out in front of you with both arms, lining them up with your shoulders when entering the water. When you recover, your arms should catch, pull, push and recover.

Breathe after every other stroke, breathing too much and after every single stroke can lead to hyperventilation.

Your legs and feet need to dolphin kick with knees touching in a wave like motion. This will start with your upper body and continue to work down to your hips and through to your toes.

Watch the butterfly stroke in action.

*(Ref *12)*
Simply Swim Details

Best of luck for learning how to swim, we hope that this guide has been useful for you. Remember to be safe when in and out of the water and remember to also have fun as you are mastering your stroke and technique.

For all of your swimming essentials, don’t forget to visit the Simply Swim website or alternatively visit our store:

5 Jubilee Way,
Eurocentre,
Faversham,
ME13 8GD

Opening hours:

Monday – Friday: 9.00am to 6.00pm
Thursday: 09.00am - 8:30pm
Saturday: 9.00am - 5.00pm
Sunday: 10.00am - 4.00pm
Social Profiles

Follow the Simply Swim social profiles:

Twitter
Facebook
Pinterest
YouTube

References and Resources

1. YouTube, Simply Swim, Women’s Legsuit Swimwear Department: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vEfKT9bcZws
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