

MY SWIMMING GUIDE

Learn to Swim

A calm, step-by-step guide for nervous adult beginners — from scared of the water to your first strokes, in six gentle weeks.



The free beginner's guide from myswimmingguide.com · Print it, or keep it on your phone.

You can absolutely learn this

If you're an adult who can't swim, you are in very good company — and it is never too late. Learning as an adult has one big advantage: you can go at your own calm, sensible pace.

This guide breaks swimming into small, un-scary steps. Each one builds on the last, so you're never asked to do something before you're ready. The goal for the next six weeks isn't to swim laps — it's to feel *calm and in control* in the water. The strokes come naturally after that.

The one rule that changes everything

Almost every beginner struggle — panic, gasping, sinking — comes from one habit: **holding your breath underwater**. The fix is to breathe **out**, slowly, whenever your face is in the water. Master that and the rest gets dramatically easier. You'll practise it from day one.

READ THIS FIRST — SAFETY

Only practise in water you can comfortably stand up in, with a lifeguard on duty or a capable swimmer with you. Never swim alone while you're learning. Stand up and rest whenever you want to. This guide is general educational information, not a substitute for in-person lessons or medical advice.

THE PLAN

Your 6-week map

Aim for **2–3 short sessions a week**, about 20–40 minutes each. Frequent and calm beats long and exhausting. If a week feels hard, repeat it — there are no prizes for rushing.

Weeks 1–2 · **Getting comfortable + breathing**

Face in, blow bubbles, get used to water on your face. Practise the breathe-out rhythm where you can stand.

Week 3 · **Floating**

Back float first (breathing is easy face-up), then front float — using the wall or a friend for confidence.

Week 4 · **Gliding**

Push off the wall into a long, flat streamline glide. This is the shape all swimming is built on.

Week 5 · **Kicking + treading**

Add a gentle flutter kick to your glide (a kickboard helps). Practise treading water in the shallow end.

Week 6 · **Your first strokes**

Blend glide + kick + breathing into a few strokes of freestyle or breaststroke. Rest calmly, then repeat.

HOW TO USE EACH SESSION

Pick ONE focus per visit. Warm up for a few easy minutes, work on that one skill, and rest at the wall as often as you like. Finish while you still feel good — that's what makes you want to come back.

1. Getting comfortable & breathing

Everything starts here. Stand in shallow water (chest-deep or less) where you feel secure.

Get used to the water

- Splash water gently on your face and neck until it stops feeling like a shock.
- Lower your mouth, then your nose, then your whole face into the water for a second, and lift back up. Repeat until it feels ordinary.

The breathe-out habit (the most important skill in this guide)

1. Take a normal breath through your mouth.
2. Put your face in the water and breathe **out** slowly through your nose and mouth — a steady stream of bubbles.
3. Lift your face and breathe in. Repeat, calm and unhurried.

Blowing bubbles out steadily does two magic things: it keeps water out of your nose, and it means your lungs are ready for a fresh breath the instant your mouth clears the surface. No more gasping.

IF YOU FEEL PANIC

Stand up, put your feet down, and breathe. That option is always there, and knowing it is what lets you relax. Fear fades with repetition, not force.

2. Floating

Floating teaches your body that the water will hold you up — the belief that removes most fear. Start on your back, where breathing is never a problem.

Back float

- In shallow water, hold the wall or a friend's hands. Slowly lean back and lift your feet.
- Rest your head back so your ears are in the water and your chest rises. Look straight up.
- Spread your arms and legs like a starfish. Breathe normally and relax — tension sinks you, calm floats you.

Front float

- Take a breath, put your face in, and lean forward into the water, letting your feet lift behind you.
- Hang relaxed like a jellyfish for a few seconds, breathing out slowly.
- To stand: press your hands down, tuck your knees under you, and put your feet on the bottom.

WHY PEOPLE SINK

Usually it's lifting the head, tensing the legs, or emptying the lungs. Keep a little air in, stay loose, and let your hips rise. Everyone floats differently — some need a gentle kick, and that's fine.

3. Gliding & kicking

The streamline glide

The glide is the single most useful shape in swimming — long, straight, and narrow, so you slip through the water.

- Stand with your back to the wall, one foot up on it behind you.
- Stretch both arms overhead, one hand stacked on the other, biceps squeezing your ears.
- Take a breath, put your face in, and push off gently — hold that tight, flat shape and glide until you slow, then stand.

Add a flutter kick

- Kick from the **hips**, not the knees, with long legs and loose, pointed feet.
- Keep it small and steady — feet just breaking the surface, not big splashy kicks.
- A kickboard (most pools lend them) lets you practise the kick while breathing easily.

Treading water

In water just over your standing depth (near the wall), move your hands in flat, sweeping circles and do a gentle scissor or "egg-beater" kick to keep your head up. It's a vital safety skill — practise in short bursts.

4. Your first strokes

Now you blend it together. You already have the pieces: breathing, floating, gliding, and kicking.

Freestyle (front crawl)

- Push into a glide with a steady flutter kick, face down, breathing out slowly.
- Pull one arm back along your body, then the other — a smooth, alternating windmill.
- To breathe, **rotate** your head to the side (don't lift it) until your mouth clears the water, sneak a breath, and turn back down.

Breaststroke (often easier to start)

- From a glide, sweep both hands out and scoop them back toward your chest in a small heart shape as your head rises to breathe.
- Do a "frog" kick — heels up, feet out, whip together — as your arms shoot forward again.
- Finish each stroke with a glide. The rhythm is **pull, breathe, kick, glide**.

DON'T RUSH THE GLIDE

The most common beginner mistake is skipping the glide and thrashing. Let each glide finish before the next stroke — smooth is faster and far less tiring.

Staying safe & what's next

Water-safety rules to keep for life

- Only swim where it's supervised, and never alone while you're learning.
- Know your depth — stay where you can stand until your skills are solid.
- If you ever feel in trouble: **don't fight it — flip onto your back and float** to catch your breath, then call for help or swim to the side.
- Respect open water (lakes, sea): colder, no walls, and currents. Build your confidence in a pool first.

Your first-week checklist

- ☐ Comfortable swimsuit and a pair of goggles that seal without leaking
- ☐ Found a pool with a shallow end and lifeguard hours
- ☐ Practised blowing bubbles (breathing out) with your face in the water
- ☐ Held the wall and floated on your back for 5 seconds
- ☐ Booked your next session — consistency is the whole secret

FREE NEXT STEPS AT [MYSWIMMINGGUIDE.COM](https://myswimmingguide.com)

Step-by-step guides for every skill in this booklet — overcoming fear of water, breathing, floating, and each stroke — plus a swimming calorie calculator and a lesson-cost estimator. All free, no sign-up.

You don't have to become a fast swimmer. You just have to become a calm one. Two or three gentle sessions a week, and the nervous beginner turns into a confident swimmer — one small step at a time. You've got this.