

POOLSIDE HELPERS - MINOR POOL

Why do we need poolside helpers?

- The role of a poolside helper is to assist with swimming lessons under the supervision of a coach.
- In our club, we can make good use of poolside helpers especially for our 'Turtles' groups.

Who can be a poolside helper?

- Parents of children currently in the club are welcome to volunteer.
- No qualifications are necessary, all you need is enthusiasm for helping our swimmers to progress and a good manner in working with young children.
- Basic knowledge of swimming is helpful but can be developed 'on the job'.
- You do **not** need to be a good swimmer to be a good poolside helper!
- Poolside helpers will be required to have Access NI checks.

What will being a poolside helper involve?

Before the lesson:

- Assisting in setting up for the session - setting out floats, pool buoys, woggles and play equipment.
- Helping to ensure that the children are ready for their lesson - reminding children to stand in their groups and wait until they are told to enter the water.
- Making sure the swimmers have their goggles on and properly adjusted and long hair tied back or in a swimming cap.

During the lesson:

- Be aware of the children's safety at all times.
- Help keep the equipment on the poolside tidy to avoid the area becoming cluttered.
- Giving out/collecting equipment to the children.
- Assist the coach in the delivery of the swimming lesson:
- As the coach explains various tasks, you will hear them emphasising particular teaching points, eg "blow bubbles while swimming" or "use small fast kicks" or "turn your head to the side to breathe". Be prepared to repeat these key points to individual children as they begin the exercise.
- The coach may explain the exercise and then ask you to 'start the swimmers off'. This simply means waiting until there is a suitable space and telling them to go. This is really helpful as the coach is then free to move across the pool with each swimmer, observing them and talking to them.
- Sometimes the coach will explain an activity and then split the class in half to do it. For example the activity may be to do a star float. You would be asked to observe some children while the coach observes the others. The coach will have explained what the children have to do.
- Different activities may be repeated several times in succession to help progress. During this time, move between the swimmers and remind them of the key teaching points.

Helping with beginners

- This is where we need most of our helpers. (Turtles group). Some groups will consist of complete non-swimmers, some will be improvers and others may be mixed. Your role will vary depending on their ability.
- With the non-swimmers, much time will be spent on water confidence. These groups are usually smaller.
- Remember, some of these children will maybe never have been in a pool without armbands, a rubber ring, floatation jacket and a parent holding them! Therefore, at the start, the pace will be slow and it's all about fun and helping them to be happy in the pool and keen to return the following week.
- The coach may ask you to be with one or two children for the warm up - this involves things like sitting on the steps showing them how to use their hands to splash water on them, getting wet with a watering can, blowing bubbles at the step, holding the wall and kicking, bobbing up and down in the water, sliding along the steps across the pool, playing games like 'simon says' or 'ring o roses'.
- With the non-swimmers at the shallow end of the pool, the coach will in all likelihood be standing in the water for some of the lesson. It would be brilliant if poolside helpers were prepared to do this also when necessary, ie wear shorts or something you can roll up and bring dry clothes. This is simply to keep close to the non-swimmers and move across the pool beside them.
- Woggles - these are the long tube floating aids that we use a lot with beginners as they are very supportive and easy for the children to hold. When the children are swimming with a woggle, the coach or helper can hold it and walk with the swimmer giving extra support and confidence.
- Frog floats - big floats that the child can use in different ways depending on stage - from whole body on the float to just holding it with hands. Again, you can hold their hands on the float to offer more support if needed.
- Regardless of what float is being used, the aim is always to try and get the child horizontal in the water, both on their front and back.
- As with all groups, repeat key teaching points that the coach has delivered as you move across the pool with the swimmer, for beginners, these will be things like "keep kicking" , "keep your toes up", " Keep your head straight", "blow bubbles as you swim" (on front), "lay back and look up to the roof" (on back).
- Face in water - this is a stumbling block for some beginners but in time everyone manages it. The best way is gentle encouragement, reminders to try and patience! The language we use is important - for the reluctant child say things like "dip your nose in the water", "wet your goggles", "look down at the floor", "lean your face to the side and wet your cheeks". This is a bit less forceful and off putting than "put your face under the water."

- Praise - Give lots of praise and encouragement for trying activities and for performing them well.

After the lesson

- Assist with tidying up equipment and making sure it is easily accessible for the next class.
- Most of the time the sessions end with 5 minutes playtime. For the Dolphins and Sharks this is free play with the big mats and body board floats.
- For the turtles who are still beginners it is really important that they stay at the shallow end of the pool and that we are watching closely.
- Sometimes the turtles have a more structured playtime with equipment such as the sinkers (toys that sink and they have to look for them) or the hoops (stand upright in the water for them to practice ducking under). They can have a turn with the big mat too as long as they are well supervised.

If you think you could give 30 minutes of your time to help while your child is swimming it would be greatly appreciated. Your child will be delighted to see you helping on the poolside. This is especially true as they progress through the club and are taking part in galas. Remember, the club is entirely run by volunteers, parents like yourself and everyone can help in some way.