

GENERAL INFORMATION

Director: Jamie Rudisill (Phone: 610-436-2127 Email: jrudisill@wcupa.edu)

Jamie Rudisill is the head men's and women's swimming coach and also the aquatics director at West Chester University. He has taught infants, children, teenagers and adults how to swim for more than 30 years. He personally trains all instructors in a self-developed technique that places an emphasis on efficient drown proofing and gradual integration of proper stroke technique.

ABOUT the PROGRAM

The philosophy of the WCU Swimming Lessons program is to aggressively and lovingly build confidence by helping the nonswimmer confront fear head-on. One major goal is for the nonswimmer to eventually be comfortable around and then to enjoy the water. Results will be the first priority. Instructors will consist of graduate and undergraduate personnel with the swimmer-to-instructor ratio an ideal 5/1. Classes will run 45-60 minutes, depending on how much progress is made each day. No waterwings will be used.

FACILITIES

The swimming lessons will be conducted at the Graham Natatorium located adjacent to John A. Farrell Football Stadium on WCU's South Campus.

DATES & TIMES

ALL LESSONS ARE MONDAY THRU FRIDAY, BETWEEN 45-60 MINUTES, AND RUN FOR TWO WEEKS

Spring I--March 31-April 11--4pm and 5:15
(NOTE: Wednesday, April 2 lessons will start at 5:00PM)

Spring II--April 14-25--4pm and 5:15
(NOTE: Wednesday, April 16 lessons will start at 5:00PM)

Spring III--May 5-16--1pm, 2pm, 4pm & 5pm

Spring IV--May 19-30--1pm, 2pm, 4pm, 5pm

Summer I--June 9-20-- 9am, 10am, 11am, 2:30, 3:30, 4:30, 5:30

Summer II--June 23-July 4-- 9am, 10am, 11am, 2:30, 3:30, 4:30, 5:30

Summer III--July 7-18--9am, 10am, 11am

Summer IV--July 21-August 1--9am, 10am, 11am

SKILL LEVELS

Beginner: This level is for **5 year olds and younger ONLY**, who cannot at this point get themselves, unaided by adult or flotation device, across the pool (approx. 40 feet). If your child is 6 or older, do not sign up for this level. What we do with the younger swimmers is not as effective on older beginners. A 6 or older child should be entered as an "Advanced Beginner". There will be a special sub-group in Advanced Beginner, specific to their needs. The goal in the Beginner level is to get your child to jump in, surface on the back, swim across the pool, and grab the opposite wall--all without being touched by the teacher. Most 4 and 5 year olds will achieve these skills in one, two-week session. Most 2 and 3 year olds, although many will get across the pool on their own, will benefit from two, two-week sessions. If in two, two-week sessions (in the same season) of at least 90% attendance your beginner has not made it across the pool on his/her own, we encourage you to speak to the program director about coming to additional sessions at no extra cost. Our average passing rate any given two weeks has been between 80% and 90% for the past twenty years. **Pre-requisite: All beginners must be at least 2 years old (2 1/2 preferred) and potty trained; and all 2 and 3 year olds must wear water diapers under their suits. No exceptions.**

Advanced Beginner: If your child cannot swim freestyle, breathing to the side for a distance of 40 feet or more, this is the level for you. We will evaluate all Advanced Beginners the first day to divide them into one of three categories (but you just choose Advanced Beginner at this point):

1) 5 and under--who are graduates out of our Beginner program, and swimming successfully on their backs. These children will have their back swimming skills reinforced--this is their safety position--while gradually teaching them to roll over onto their front and take freestyle arm strokes. This way a natural rolling motion, rather than the head out style encouraged by dog paddle and flotation devices, will be used for them to breathe. And they'll always have their back swimming skills for self rescue.

2) Novice--who are 6 and older, but are absolute beginners. By starting a little later than is ideal, there will be more resistance and fear at this level than in any other group. The going can be slow here (but will be slower every year that they are able to rationalize their fear), but hang in there; they need to be safe, too, and the going doesn't get easier, but harder the older they get.

3) High End--Kids of any age who can demonstrate some semblance of the arm-over-arm freestyle motion, but who do not yet incorporate **breathing to the side** without having to stop their arm stroke to get a breath. Breathing straight up out of the water, causing the legs to drop and the swimmer to work harder to move forward, is a result of early use of flotation devices and dog paddle, and needs to be "unlearned" at this point. **But to move on to Intermediate, rhythmic breathing to the side must be mastered at least the width of the pool** (approx. 40 feet).

Intermediate: Here proper breathing will be reinforced, while slowly building endurance. More swimming in small groups, rather than strictly 1-1 turns with the instructor as in lower skill levels, will aid in this repetition to gain the endurance to swim 25 yards of freestyle, 25 yards of backstroke, and proper treading water--the skills necessary to move on to Advanced I or II. Diving will also be introduced at this level if adequate progress is being made on the skills above.

Advanced I: Backstroke and freestyle skills will be refined with a variety of drills designed to break the strokes down into smaller components to advance the whole stroke to a competitive level in both knowledge and execution.

Advanced II: This is the same as Advanced I, but working with breaststroke and butterfly. While Advanced I is not a pre-requisite for Advanced II, we do recommend a strong freestyle and backstroke before taking on these two more difficult strokes. Many youngsters who do not intend to ever swim competitively may find that additional freestyle and backstroke work is more beneficial. But if joining even an entry level summer swim team is likely, at least a working knowledge of these two strokes will be essential.

DIRECTIONS TO WCU

From Philadelphia & Delaware County: Take Rte. 3 West to Rte. 202 South. Follow 202 and exit at High St. Follow High St. to the second traffic light and make a left onto Rosedale Ave. Follow Rosedale to first light and make left onto New St. Follow New St. to Graham Natatorium on South Campus.

From Delaware & South: Take Rte. 202 North to Rte. 926 West. Turn left onto 926 and go approximately one mile to New St. (first road). Make a right and follow New St. North to the Graham Natatorium.

From Exton, Downingtown & Coatesville: Take Rte. 30 East to Rte. 100 South to Rte. 202 South. Follow 202 to the High St. exit. Follow High St. to the second light and make left onto Rosedale Ave. Follow Rosedale to first light and make left onto New St. Follow New St. to Graham Natatorium.

From Southern Chester County: Take Rte. 1 to Rte. 52 North toward West Chester. Make right onto Tighe Rd., which is located just past Birmingham Rd. Follow Tighe to New St. Turn left onto New St. and follow North to Graham Natatorium.

Directions to Graham Natatorium:

Graham Natatorium is located at the back of the Sturzebecker Health Sciences Center next to the football stadium. Two stories of glass mark the pool lobby/sign-up area.

WHAT'S NEW?

First of all: ON-LINE REGISTRATION.

This should make life easier for you, but communication from us to you in the case of an emergency situation MUCH easier, reducing human error in filling out and transcribing the hand written registrations of the past.

UV Disinfection.

We are very happy to announce that WCU is now one of very few pools in the state, much less Chester County that has installed an ultraviolet light purification system. Every eight hours 360 thousand gallons (the capacity of south pool) will not only pass through the filters, but also the UV system. UV is more and more widely acknowledged as the most effective continuous means of killing chlorine resistant parasites--like the cryptosporidium parasite that was so widespread in southeast Pennsylvania last summer. Connecticut and New York State are either in the process or have already mandated UV Disinfectant systems for public pools. Regular chlorine levels kill the neurovirus (the stomach flu) that was also going around last year, but take much longer to kill crypto. This addition, and the superchlorination schedule below, will not only mark WCU's aquatic facilities as the safest and cleanest in the area, but the best able to disinfect contaminants brought in from other pools or sources.

Superchlorination.

Five times before lessons are over in July, we will close the pool on a weekend, bring the chlorine up to 10 parts per million for 16 hours, and then back down to a safe swimming level before lessons resume on Monday. This is another sure way to kill anything in the pool that is resistant to normal operating chlorine levels.

Reduced Foot Traffic and Bathroom Break Adjustment.

All parents will be in the large spectator area adjacent the pool lobby--no longer on deck. This should help us keep the tile surfaces of the pool deck and walls better disinfected. This is a big change, but one dictated by our own internal administrative evaluation, and I'm sure we'll all adjust. Lesson personnel will be taking the youngest beginners to the bathroom if needed during the lessons. They'll have fresh changes of water diapers, but please be aware that in keeping with the Self-Disclosure of Health Status section you sign off on, if a lesson employee finds a diaper with diarrhea, that child will be returned to the parent, immediately, and the prorated refund policy will take effect. The lesson director will work with these individuals to find an opening to reregister after the prescribed waiting period. This would be a new, 2 week registration, as the partial refund took care of the aborted session.

Assigned Professional to Oversee Maintenance and Water Chemistry.

We are adding a pool manager to work with the Maintenance Department and the Aquatics Director to make sure that we are always in a safe range of chlorine and other water issues. He will work with the lifeguards to take hourly (when in use) water tests, will be a Licensed Pool Operator who will also ensure that surface disinfection is also maintained consistently, and will have the authority to shut the pool down if critical adjustments need to be made.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Is this where they throw the kids in the first day?

NOBODY DOES THAT. If you heard that, it was from someone who hasn't been in the program. However, we also are not here to put floats on the kids and play games. We don't want to get the kids more likely to jump in when you're not looking, but unable to save themselves if they do. And they won't control the pace of the lessons. We have a set of steps and techniques that must follow a certain progression for us to get the youngsters across the pool on their own in two weeks, and we'll keep moving. Your time, money, and most importantly your child's safety is too important for us to do otherwise.

Do I get in the water?

No, you'll be in the large grandstand or the lobby next to it. We would actually get less done, especially with the very young ones if you were more present than that. However, if you get your youngster in the water somewhere else during the two week period, that would be great. BUT DON'T PUSH--we'll do that here; you just let them have fun and reinforce that aspect of swimming.

How many sessions do you recommend for beginners?

Especially for the 2 and 3 year olds, if you have the time and resources to pull it off, we recommend 2 sessions in the same season. Usually two weeks gets them across the pool (but they may still not be liking it). Another two weeks, and they settle into the environment and expectations of the lessons a little more--making them more likely to use the skills they're learning if they were pushed in or fell in unexpectedly.

What if my child is upset?

If you have a beginner--any age, but especially 5 and under--there will be resistance. The younger they are the more they depend on fussing to get their point across. We'll work with that. They'll fuss about being away from you, being with a stranger, or just about not wanting to do what they're being told, even before the natural fear level kicks in. For most of them this is when they'll learn that you do some things even if you don't want to. But they'll come out of it stronger, more self-confident, and most importantly safer than when they began.

What if my child doesn't want to come back?

Drowning is the leading cause of death for 5 and unders in this country. That may sound melodramatic, but it's true--it is a very real threat that we're looking to minimize by getting the youngsters safer in the water. A normal kid--a normal adult--is not going to face and conquer fear. We'll work with that; you work on being resolute at home that lessons will continue until your youngster is safe. Positively reinforce what we've been doing for three decades successfully, and come in for a pep talk if you need it. It is absolutely normal for this to be harder on a Mom or Dad than the little ones that we're empowering. But know this: it won't be easier next year--every year older without getting safe in the water increases the resistance and fear level. Stick with it--you'll be glad you did, while possibly preventing an unspeakable loss.

Do I really have to put a water diaper on my 2-3 year old, potty trained child?

YES, YES, YES. No exceptions, and no make-ups if you come without the water diaper. All swimmers must be potty trained, and all 2 and 3 year old potty trained youngsters must have the water diapers.

How young do you take them?

We advertise two and a half as our minimum. But if they're around water a lot--like a backyard pool--and especially if they have older siblings that they might follow into the pool, we'll take them at 2 years old. For these swimmers our goal will be to get them to right themselves on their backs, not necessarily navigate across the pool. We do not go younger than 2. For that you want a parent/child class often taught by the YMCAs.

Can I request a specific teacher?

No. But I do tell the teachers--especially of the beginners--that if they see a youngster they've recently taught, they are welcome to take them into their class the first day IF there's an appropriate skill level fit.

Can my two kids be in the same class?

Same hour, yes. Same class of 5, not likely. We will evaluate the youngsters the first day according to skill level, and sometimes even age and size, and then put them in groups of like individuals. But if you have two of your own in the same class and don't think that will work well (you know that better than we), talk to the program director or supervisory staff, and we'll evaluate more closely.

I can't make my registered time this Wednesday. Can I come to a different time that day?

No. Sorry, the only time we'll do a make-up is if for some reason the pool is closed on a particular day. Once the classes are set, that's it. We won't put strays into your child's small class, and we won't do that the other way around. Get to the pool as many times as possible in the two weeks, and we'll get as much accomplished--and often more--than any other lesson program in the greater Philadelphia area.

If my child has a cold and can't make it for a day, can I make that class up?

No, Sorry. See above.

What about the \$40 credit coupon I got for missing the last two days of Summer III last season?

Register normally, and pay in full. Then bring the coupon in to the office and present to Coach Rudisill. If you paid by card, he will be able to credit your account the \$40 quickly. If you paid by e-check, he will process a refund request that will take a little longer. Either way, you'll be reimbursed.