

# Aqua Tots Achievement Levels

(Only For Children Ages 2 1/2 & older)

The following system was initially designed with just one badge (The Fish). Students received this badge when they first swam across the pool independently. Children were SO motivated and excited to receive their fish badge that we decided to expand on the system. Over the years we have added to, and tweaked the different skill levels, and we even added a secondary set of “safety” levels. Today we have 22 different skill & safety levels. This system really motivates the children to learn and master their new skills. It is also a perfect way for parents & staff to monitor the progression of each student.

The goal of this system is to motivate our students and to instill, from a young age, the value of hard work. Working towards and eventually achieving these different levels gives our students a true sense of pride and accomplishment and actually motivates them to achieve even more! This also gives us the opportunity to teach our students how to deal with their frustration when they do NOT earn a badge. We believe that it is just as important for children to learn how to cope with disappointment, as it is for them to feel the pride & excitement of success! We want them to recognize that we are still proud of them even if they did not earn that next badge. We also want to teach them the importance of not “giving up” even if you’re not the “best”. If these concepts are introduced at a young age, when the reward is something as minor as a swim badge, our students will attain invaluable perseverance and coping skills

We have designed the levels with a child’s development in mind. There are fewer requirements for the initial levels and then skills are added, a few at a time, as students advance. Please remember that all children will progress at different rates. For some, the skills may come naturally, and for others it will be more challenging. It is just like walking and talking; children will attain these skills at different times and sometimes in different ways. For most children, “learning to swim” is a process that takes time, trust and PRACTICE.

Please note that once students achieve their SEAL level, strokes become more refined and technically challenging. Those levels will be harder to achieve and for some students can easily take a full year of practice to acquire. At these higher levels swimming now becomes a “sport”. Your child’s achievement level will be directly effected by his/her: level of attention, determination, time commitment, & natural ability.

Your children will have the opportunity to advance to the next achievement level once they are consistently doing the required skills. We place a lot of emphasis on consistency and we will not advance a child to the next level until they can perform the skills on a consistent basis. The levels will show you what skills your child are working on, but if you have any questions or concerns please; **email us at [enrolled@aquatots123.com](mailto:enrolled@aquatots123.com)**. It is impossible for us to talk before or after class so please email us and we will be happy to address any of your questions/concerns.

We have found that children under 2.5 years old do not fully understand the concept of these levels. Therefore, we do not use this system in the parent/child level.

# Placement / Skill Levels

These levels are awarded in sequential order.

To achieve the next level you must maintain the skills from the previous level

- Starfish** Students must be comfortable, with their face in the water, letting go for a count of 4. Students must also be able to use the “bubble” independently across the pool. They also need to be able to climb out of the pool independently.
- Hermit Crab** Students must be able to enter the water head/face first (sit down dive) and maintain a prone position out to the teacher who will be standing 10 feet away. Students also need to be able to swim to the wall with their face in the water from 10 feet away. They must be able to maintain a prone position with their “kickers” up. They also need to be able to swim across the pool with the “bubble” (back floatation device) while putting their face in and then picking it up to take breaths.
- Fish** Students must be able to swim the width of our pool unassisted by a teacher or any floatation device. They must be comfortable putting their face in the water at least twice while swimming across the pool.
- Clownfish** This badge indicates that students are ready to move to the Stroke Discovery level. Students must be able to swim across the pool confidently with the proper body, kick and head position. They must be able to kick with a kickboard and perform and maintain a “streamline” entry for 10 feet. They must also be comfortable swimming on their backs. Students MUST attain the lobster safety level before they can achieve a clownfish.
- Swordfish** Students must be able to swim ½ way across the pool with their head above water while maintaining an efficient flutter kick. Students must be able to demonstrate “4 big arms” in a row. They will also be required to demonstrate “ear & blow” (side breathing) with the kickboard. Students must have the correct arm and head movements. The instructor may provide some assistance with the “ear & blow skill”.
- Octopus** Students must be able to demonstrate “big arms” for the width of the pool. They must demonstrate “ear and blow” independently. They must also have the concept “2 big arms & ear” (freestyle). The instructor can support the student by his/her arm when breathing to the side, but the student must perform the freestyle arms and the turning of the head without assistance. Students must also be able to swim on their backs independently across the width of the pool.
- Otter** Students must be able to swim all the way across the pool with their head above water while maintaining an efficient flutter kick. Students must demonstrate “2 big arms and ear” (freestyle) with very limited support from the teacher under their arm. They must be able to maintain a side flutter kick, for the width of the pool, while using a small floatation support. They must also understand the concept of backstroke (arms need to come out of the water). They are expected to be able to tread water for at least one minute and be capable of floating in between treading sets.
- Seahorse** Students must be able to independently swim 1 lap of doggie paddle (they can float once if tired). They must be able to maintain a side flutter kick, for ½ the length of the pool while using a small floatation support. They must be able to demonstrate Freestyle (2 big arms & ear), with the correct breathing & form, for at least half the length of the pool. They must also be able to demonstrate backstroke with proper arm movement and body position for half the length of the pool.
- Seal** Students must be able to independently swim 1 lap of doggie paddle (NO floating allowed). Students must be able to independently maintain a side flutter kick, for ½ the length of the pool. Students must be able demonstrate both Freestyle & Backstroke with the correct form, rhythmic breathing, & timing for 1 lap.
- Stingray** Students must be able to swim 2 laps unassisted of doggie paddle. Students must be able to demonstrate Freestyle & Backstroke for 2 laps while maintaining their form. In addition, they must be able to swim 1 lap of “elementary backstroke”.
- Frog** Students must be able to demonstrate Freestyle, Backstroke, & Elementary Backstroke for 4 laps. Maintaining their form for all 4 laps is very important. They must also demonstrate the correct breaststroke kick for 1 lap.
- Dolphin** Students must demonstrate Freestyle, Backstroke, & Elementary Backstroke for 6 laps. Additionally they must have the correct racing pull (bent elbow when their arm enters the water, extend and pull back) for freestyle. They must now have the correct timing for backstroke (alternating arms). Their breaststroke kick must be strong enough to begin working on “full” breaststroke. Again form and consistency are very important.

**Whale** Students must demonstrate Freestyle, Backstroke, & Elementary Backstroke for 8 laps. In addition students must be able to demonstrate the full breaststroke with the correct timing (pull, breathe, kick, glide) for 1 lap. They must also be able to demonstrate 1 lap of the correct butterfly kick.

**Great White Shark:**

Students must demonstrate Freestyle, Backstroke, Elementary Backstroke, & Breaststroke for 10 laps. In addition they now are able to demonstrate the entire butterfly stroke for 1 lap (it must have the correct timing and kick). They must also know all of their racing turns.

**THE BADGES LISTED BELOW ARE “SAFETY” LEVELS**

(These levels can only be awarded to students during one of the assigned “safety weeks”)

**Lobster** Student must be able to do a dive, from a sitting position, off the wall to an instructor (head must enter the water first). Students must be able to jump into the pool, swim back to the wall, & climb out of the pool. The teacher may assist with the jump but cannot help the child get back to the wall or climb out. Student must also be able to recover from a prone position to a vertical position with a bubble on

**Lobster is the only “safety level” that can be awarded outside the assigned “safety weeks”**

**Eel** Students must be able to tread water for 30 seconds OR swim across the pool with their head above the water. They must be able to look down for the count of 4, roll onto their back for a breath and look down for 4 again. (Students must have a clown fish badge)

**Jellyfish** Students must be able to tread water for 1 minute. They must also be able to jump into the pool without goggles and swim to the wall unassisted. They must be able to get onto their backs independently and float or “scull” for at least 30 seconds. Finally they must be able to touch the floor of the shallow end with their feet (with assistance from the teacher) and return to the surface. (Pop Up)

**Turtle** Students must be able to tread water for 2 minutes. They must be able to float independently for an extended period of time. They must be able to retrieve an object from the floor of the shallow end of the pool and return to the surface with assistance from the instructors. Students must be able to swim 1 lap unassisted of doggie paddle (they can float once if tired).

**Narwhal** Students must be able to tread water for 3 minutes. They must be able to retrieve an object from the bottom of the pool (3 to 4 feet) without assistance. They should also be able to swim across the pool under water. Students must be able to swim 2 laps unassisted of doggie paddle. At this level every student will have participated in an instructor lead conversation about how to respond in an emergency situation.

**Manatee** Students must be able to tread water for 4 minutes. They have to retrieve 5 rings from the bottom of the pool. Students must also be able to do a feet first surface dive and perform an under water flip.

**Alligator** Students must be able to tread water for 5 minutes. They must be able to retrieve 3 rings from the floor of the pool in deep water (about 5 feet). They also need to demonstrate a stride jump and be able to perform a throwing & reaching assist.

**Walrus** Students must be able to tread water for 1 minute while holding a weight and for 1 minute without using their hands. They must be able to swim ½ a lap under water without coming up for a breath. They must also be able to swim the length of the pool while holding a weighted object. Finally, the student must be able to demonstrate “escapes”.