

AQUASQUIRTS PROGRAMMING GUIDE!



AquaSquirts

A PLAY-BASED WATER-ORIENTATION PROGRAM TO
DEVELOP SWIMMING SKILLS BY SYNCHRO CANADA



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Just Add Water!



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www.redcross.ca
1 (877) 356-3226



www.aquasquirts.ca
info@aquasquirts.ca



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Introduction

The AquaSquirts program has been developed to complement a child's progression through the Red Cross Swim Kids program. AquaSquirts is unique because it introduces swimming skills with a strong emphasis on fun and imagination. The AquaSquirts philosophy is built upon a play-based learning approach. Although this program was developed by Synchro Canada, the national governing body

for the sport of synchronized swimming, it is not a learn-to synchro program. It does, however, incorporate a variety of skills that are designed to increase a swimmer's comfort level with any water activity; as such it will enhance a child's continued participation in the Red Cross Swim Kids program, and in any of the aquatic sports he or she may wish to try.

AquaSquirts and Play-Based Learning

AquaSquirts has been designed to teach children a variety of swimming skills that are cleverly disguised as play. This teaching method is well-documented by child development researchers and maintains that play is not a random activity for children; it is purposeful and active and leads to a by-product of learning.

Source:

Child and Family Canada
(www.cfc-efc.ca)

Program Target Group

AquaSquirts seamlessly integrates with the Red Cross Swim Kids and Red Cross Swim Preschool Program and consists of two components:

- AquaSquirts, the original program and its teaching supplement called 'AquaSquirts for Little Squirts'
- AquaSquirts Too, the follow-up program to AquaSquirts

AquaSquirts is targeted to boys and girls aged 11 and under. It is suggested that swimmers be comfortable in chest deep water, be able to swim 2 metres or more and be able to float on their front and back (note: less experienced swimmers can use flotation devices for assistance if needed). A child is ready for AquaSquirts if he/she has participated in Red Cross Swim Kids 3 or the former Red Cross program called AquaQuest 4.

Preschoolers who have successfully completed the Whale level in Red Cross Swim Preschool would also be well-suited to AquaSquirts. See chart below

AquaSquirts has also been endorsed as an adaptive aquatics program. Simple modifications to the teaching style allow for customization of the program for children with disabilities and/or special needs. See page 4.

Teaching AquaSquirts

AquaSquirts can be taught by:

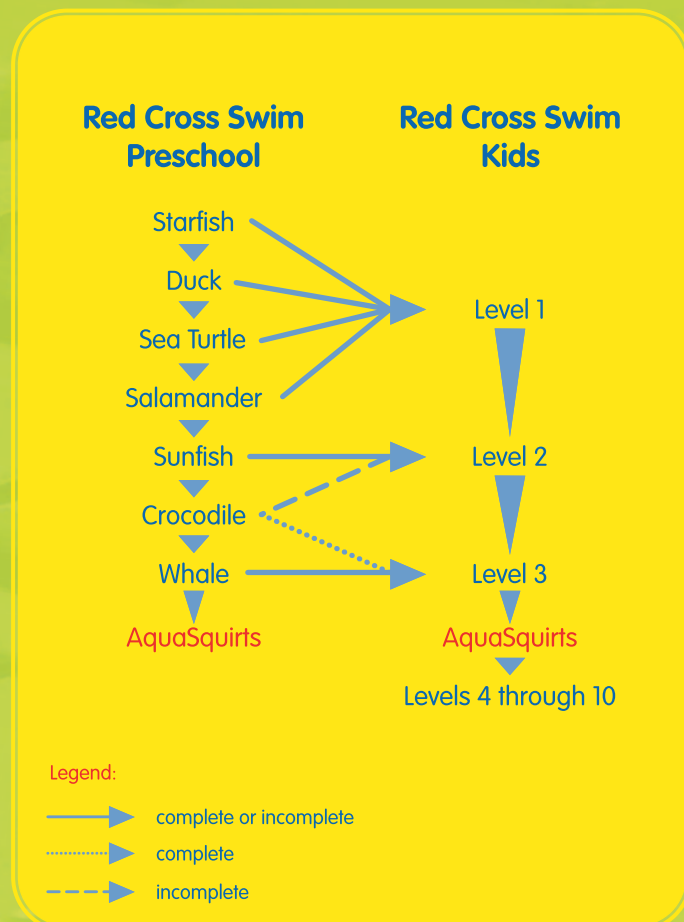
- Certified Red Cross Water Safety Instructors with AquaSquirts training (see below)
- Certified Synchro Canada instructors

AquaSquirts Instructor Training

The AquaSquirts Training workshop can be delivered by either a certified Red Cross Water Safety Instructor Trainer or certified Synchro Instructor Learning Facilitator. In cases where neither is available, a WSI who has already taken the workshop may also facilitate the workshop.

AquaSquirts Training Workshop

The AquaSquirts training workshop is a 2-hr course offered by Red Cross where participants will receive the AquaSquirts Instructor Guide as part of the training. Upon completion of the workshop, instructors will receive an AquaSquirts Instructor card. This card is valid as long as the instructor has a current WSI certification. There is no special training for the AquaSquirts Too program as instructors who have taken the initial workshop should be able to transfer the learnings and apply them to AS Too. Instructors may also refer to the AquaSquirts Too Teaching Tips document (available on-line).



Swimmer Evaluation

AquaSquirts is participatory-based so all participants receive a certificate and sticker at the end of the program. Swimmers are provided with oral feedback from the instructor each lesson, but there is no formal written evaluation in AquaSquirts. This aspect of AquaSquirts may be particularly interesting for children with disabilities or special needs swimmers who may struggle with achieving certain performance criteria within a specified timeframe.

Instructors are encouraged to make recommendations to parents concerning next steps for their child. Swimmers may repeat AquaSquirts several times, move on to the follow-up program, AquaSquirts Too, or continue with their next Swim Kids level. Alternatively, a swimmer who shows strong **stroke** capabilities may consider a **speed swimming** program. A swimmer who shows talent with **diving** and **entries** may benefit from joining a **diving** program. For children who enjoy the **upside down**, **twisting** and **patterning** activities, **synchronized swimming** may be an option. AquaSquirts participants who show strong stroke capabilities may consider speed swimming.

Key Benefits of AquaSquirts

This program builds on the skills learned in the Red Cross Swim Preschool program and Red Cross Swim Kids program, providing instructors with an alternate method of introducing and developing fundamental skills. It's a fun approach to developing a 'feel' for the water and is recommended for:

- All children, as a means of developing their fundamental swimming skills.
- Children who love to play, and would enjoy rolling, twisting and hanging upside down in the water.
- A child who needs a break from "award-based" swimming lessons.
- A child who is stuck at one level and is feeling hesitant about repeating the level.
- A child who is quickly progressing through the levels (i.e. a child who races through the preschool program and is not old enough to move onto Swim Kids).
- A special needs child or child with a disability who requires a more relaxed and customized or flexible approach to swim instruction.

Program Structure

AquaSquirts consists of 9 themed-lessons. AquaSquirts Too is a ten-level, slightly more challenging program. Although the program has been structured for nine or ten lessons, pool programmers may make modifications in order to fit with the number of swim sessions typically offered.

Each class has a different theme that allows for skill development from week to week. Themes are designed to appeal to both boys and girls and younger and older children. Fundamental skills that are introduced in AquaSquirts include: propulsion, spatial orientation, breath control, coordination, and sequencing. However, technical terms are seldom used by the instructor. Instead, terminology that relates to the weekly theme is encouraged. For example, in Session 1 swimmers are asked to "feel" the difference between a rag doll float versus a tin soldier float (any analogy that helps swimmers feel the difference between strong and long and loose and floppy is encouraged.) In Session 3, swimmers learn to feel comfortable being upside down by trying handstands, somersaults and bat hangs!

AquaSquirts is Easy to Teach!

The Instructor's Guide is very comprehensive and includes a complete set of lesson plans, presentation ideas, diagrams and teaching tips. It is very easy for a WSI to immediately step into an AquaSquirts teaching role. If an instructor can teach swimming lessons, he or she can easily teach AquaSquirts. No previous background in synchronized swimming or any other aquatic specialty is necessary!

Programming at a Glance*

Fitness & Health Activities

- Kicking
- Speed Development
- Coordination
- Stretching & Flexibility
- Psychological Benefits (relaxation, fun, confidence, & self-esteem)

Other Skills & Activities

- Sequencing
- Patterns
- Partner Activities

Fundamental Aquatic Skills

- Breath Control
- Floats
- Dives / Entries
- Spatial Orientation
- Water Safety

Pool Requirements

AquaSquirts classes are designed to fit within a 30-45 minute time slot over the 9 or 10-week period.

Use of a stereo system and music is optional, but is a great addition to the program.

Access to both shallow and chest deep – to deep water is required. Where deep water is unavailable, activities may be modified.

Recommended ratios are 8 to 1.

Equipment & Rewards

- Hula hoops
- Kick boards
- Floating mats
- Noodles
- Pull buoys

Reward swimmers with AquaSquirts certificates and stickers at the end of the session.

* Programming requirements are the same for both AquaSquirts & AquaSquirts Too. In the case where AquaSquirts is offered for younger or less skilled swimmers, the use of floatation devices (where applicable) is suggested. If AquaSquirts is being used as an adaptive aquatics program for swimmers with disabilities and/or special needs swimmers, additional modifications may be necessary. Refer to the **AquaSquirts for Little Squirts** booklet for more information and ideas on program modifications for younger or less-skilled swimmers.

AquaSquirts Programming Ideas

- Offer AquaSquirts as a summer camp program. All nine/ten lessons can be combined into a week-long camp format with an AquaSquirts theme or take an existing camp program and use the time typically assigned for 'free swim' and incorporate the AquaSquirts programming.
- Have an AquaSquirts day. Use one lesson from a Red Cross Swim Kids class and make it AquaSquirts day where the instructor teaches a portion of the AquaSquirts course content.
- Host a special event or 'see it, try it' session. Use a free swim time slot to host a special session where swimmers can come to the pool to try new things. Set-up circuits staffed with instructors where AquaSquirts-type activities are offered.
- School professional development (PD) days or teacher in-service days can be the perfect opportunity for this type of event.
- To recruit participants, consider targeting parents whose child fits into one of the categories described on page 3 under Key Benefits of AquaSquirts.
- Distribute AquaSquirt pamphlets or the AquaSquirts Talent ID card with swimmer progress card.
- Put together a colourful AquaSquirts display on your pool bulletin board or on registration day to generate interest.
- Offer AquaSquirts as an Adapted Aquatics program.

For more marketing or recruitment ideas, visit www.aquasquirts.ca.

Support Tools & Resources

The following materials are available free of charge on-line at www.aquasquirts.ca or www.redcross.ca/apnet:

- AquaSquirts and AquaSquirts Too Instructor Worksheets
- AquaSquirts for Little Squirts Booklet
- AquaSquirts Too Teaching Tips
- AquaSquirts Poster*
- AquaSquirts brochure*
- AquaSquirts Talent ID card*
- AquaSquirts AquaSquirts artwork and leisure guide inserts
- AquaSquirts Slide Show*
- AquaSquirts Promotional Video* — Just Add Water!
- AquaSquirts Summer Programming Ideas
- AquaSquirts Parent News

* also available in hard copy

AquaSquirts & Adaptive Aquatics

AquaSquirts is an ideal adapted aquatics program. In this situation, the suggested guidelines for age and skill level do not necessarily apply. There are no required changes to the lesson format or teaching methods, however, AquaSquirts instructors may customize the weekly lessons to suit the individual needs of each participant. For example, instructors may introduce floatation equipment such as life jackets, noodles or flutterboards to assist with floats or instructors may eliminate some of the more complicated activities and replace them with simpler concepts. Complete suggestions and tips on how to do this can be found in the booklet entitled:

**AquaSquirts for Little Squirts:
Adapting AquaSquirts for Younger or
Less-Skilled Swimmers.**

The following materials can be ordered from Red Cross (fees may apply):

- AquaSquirts Instructor's Guide — a comprehensive step-by-step teaching manual (this guide is included in the course fee paid by instructors who take the 2-hr AquaSquirts workshop offered by Red Cross)
- AquaSquirts Too Instructor's Guide — a comprehensive step-by-step teaching manual.
- A Guide for Training AquaSquirts Instructors — for instructor trainers
- AquaSquirts Certificate & Sticker & AquaSquirts Too Certificate & Sticker — a bilingual participation recognition item for AquaSquirts participants