

## SL-16: Learn To Swim Stroke Performance Charts

The American Red Cross Learn to Swim Stroke Performance Charts provides a common framework for swim instructors, parents and students to gauge progress through swim lessons. The information is provided here as a reference.

Level	Stroke	Body Position	Arms	Legs	Breathing/Timing
Level 1 Introduction to Water Skills	Swim on Front (Combined Stroke Using Any Type of Arm or Leg Action)	N/A	Alternating or simultaneous propulsive and recovery actions from a supported position	Alternating or simultaneous kicking motion from a supported or bracketed position	N/A
	Swim on Back (Combined Stroke Using Any Type of Arm or Leg Action)	N/A	Alternating or simultaneous propulsive and recovery actions from a supported position	Alternating or simultaneous kicking motion from a supported or bracketed position	N/A
Level 2 Fundamental Aquatic Skills	Swim on Front (Combined Stroke Using Any Type of Arm or Leg Action)	Trunk and legs may be horizontal to 45° from surface; face in water	Arms Alternating: Alternate propulsive and recovery action; downward or slightly outward motion acceptable; underwater arm recovery acceptable. Arms Simultaneous: Simultaneous propulsive and recovery actions; downward and outward motion acceptable; underwater arm recovery acceptable.	Legs Alternating: Alternate kicking motion; rudimentary flutter or bicycle action. Legs Simultaneous: Simultaneous kicking motion -- dolphin-like or breaststroke-like action	N/A
	Swim on Back (Combined Stroke Using Any Type of Arm or Leg Action)	Trunk and legs may be horizontal to 45° from surface	Arms alternating: Alternate propulsive and recovery action; underwater arm recovery acceptable; hand moving downward with minimal backward action acceptable. Arms Simultaneous: Simultaneous propulsive and recovery actions; underwater arm recovery.	Legs Alternating: Alternate kicking motion; rudimentary flutter or bicycling action. Legs Simultaneous: Simultaneous kicking motion -- dolphin-like or elementary backstroke- like action	N/A
	Swim on Side	Trunk and legs may be horizontal to 45° from surface; body may lie on either left or right side	N/A	Legs Alternating: Alternate kicking motion from a supported position; rudimentary flutter or bicycling action Legs Simultaneous: Simultaneous kicking motion from a supported position— dolphin-like, breaststroke-like or scissor-like action	N/A
Level 3 Stroke Development	Front Crawl	Trunk horizontal to 30° from surface; rudimentary body roll; some side-to-side motion of trunk and legs acceptable	Above-water arm recovery—underwater recovery or arm straight at elbow acceptable; hand enters at or above the level of the head; arm straight at the elbow during power phase acceptable; power phase finishing at hip level acceptable	Continuous kicking; occasional bicycling action acceptable; legs bent at the hips or knees during down beat acceptable; feet may break surface of water	Face in water and breathes consistently to the side— occasional head lift acceptable; arms and legs show general alternating pattern
	Back Crawl	Trunk horizontal to 30° from surface; ears may be out of water, chin on chest; hips may be bent; rudimentary body roll; slight side-to-side motion between shoulders and hips acceptable	Above-water arm recovery—elbows below surface acceptable; hands may enter at or above shoulder level; arm straight at elbow during power phase acceptable	Continuous kicking; occasional bicycling action acceptable; legs bent at knee acceptable; feet may break surface of water	Occasional breath holding acceptable; arms in opposition—hesitation at finish acceptable
	Butterfly	Body moves forward in a dolphin-like motion	N/A	Simultaneous leg action	N/A
Level 4 Stroke Improvement	Front Crawl	Body horizontal to 15° from surface; performs body roll; occasional side-to-side motion of trunk and legs acceptable	Above-water recovery with arm bent at elbow—arm straight at elbow acceptable; hands enter above the level of the head, finger tips first shoulder width apart; arm extends fully after entry with slight outward sweeping action; arm bent at elbow during power phase; power phase finishes beyond hip	Continuous kicking that starts from the hips; ankles and knees extended but not rigid; feet remain below the surface— moderate splash acceptable	Face in water; breathing to the side; exhale underwater on each breath; arms alternate— slight hesitation during breathing acceptable
	Back Crawl	Body horizontal to 15° from surface; head back with ears submerged; rudimentary body roll; trunk and legs should be aligned	Above-water recovery—arm may be partially bent at elbow; hands exit thumb-side or little finger first; hands enter little finger first about shoulder width apart; arm partially bent at elbow during power phase; hand and forearm finish beyond hip	Continuous kicking that starts from the hips; legs slightly bent at the knee during upward kick and straight at knee with toes pointed during the downward kick; feet remain below the surface— moderate splashing acceptable	Relaxed rhythmic breathing pattern; arms in opposition— slight hesitation at finish acceptable
	Breaststroke	Trunk horizontal to 30° from surface during glide	Hands may begin outward scull (catch) wider than shoulder width— arms may be partially bent at elbow; arm bend at elbow increases as hand moves toward waist— hands may be level or slightly deeper than elbows; hands may sweep beyond the	Legs bend at the knees bringing heels toward buttocks; knees may be wider than hips and ankles; heels may break surface of water; ankles may bend throughout power phase; occasional scissors kick acceptable; legs may be partially bent at the	Rudimentary form of pull, breathe, kick, glide sequence; minimal glide with some forward motion acceptable

			shoulder, but not beyond waist	knees at the end of the power phase; occasional flutter kick during glide position acceptable	
	Elementary Backstroke	Trunk horizontal to 30° from surface; hips may be bent; chin tucked; ears may be out of the water	Hands may break water surface during recovery; arms extending above or below shoulder level acceptable; power phase finishing at waist level acceptable	Knees may break the surface of the water during recovery; knees may be wider than hips and ankles; ankles may be bent throughout power phase; occasional scissors kick acceptable; legs may be partially bent at knee at the end of the power phase; legs apart with occasional flutter kick during glide acceptable	Occasional breath holding acceptable; arms and legs move simultaneously; minimal glide with some forward motion acceptable; little or no hesitation before beginning recovery
	Sidestroke	Body in side-lying Position	Bottom arm extended overhead; top arm against side	Perform a rudimentary scissors kick on side with support	Any type of breathing pattern with occasional breath holding acceptable
	Butterfly	Trunk may be horizontal to 30° from the surface; face in water	Above-water arm recovery—arms may contact the water; hands may enter wider than shoulders; arms may be straight at elbow during recovery and catch actions; palms may face backwards (no sculling motion) throughout entire pull; power phase finishing at waist acceptable; arms may be bent at elbow during finish	Legs may be partially extended at the knee during the down beat; minimal movement of the hip during the down beat acceptable; legs may bend at the knees during up beat—feet may break the surface; some flutter action acceptable	Arms pull and recover with minimal leg kick; arms may hesitate at side before recovery
Level 5 Stroke Refinement	Front Crawl	Body is nearly horizontal to the surface in a streamlined position; body roll is a fluid motion—head, trunk and legs are aligned	Above-water recovery with arm bent at elbow; arm relaxed as hand moves toward the head; arm extends fully in coordination with body roll; hand and forearm make a downward and outward then inward and upward sweeping action during the power phase; palm presses toward feet until arm reaches full extension during finish	Continuous kicking that starts from the hips and propels swimmer forward using a 2, 4 or 6 beat kick; feet remain below surface	Exhale underwater before the next breath during the power phase; head remains in line with the long axis of the body—minimal head movement; alternate side breathing preferred
	Back Crawl	Body is nearly horizontal to surface in a streamlined position; head is still and aligned with body; face toward ceiling, no sideto-side movement; body roll is a fluid motion—head, trunk and legs are aligned	Above-water recovery—arm straight at elbow; hand enters in line with shoulder in coordination with body roll; hand enters little finger first with downward and outward sweeping action with elbow pointing to bottom; hand presses upward to about the chest, then presses downward toward the feet during the power phase—arm fully extended at elbow for the finish	Continuous kicking that starts from the hips and propels swimmer forward using a 2, 4 or 6 beat kick; feet remain below the surface	Rhythmic breathing pattern with inhalation as one arm recovers and exhalation as the other arm recovers; arms in continuous opposition—no hesitation at finish
	Breaststroke	Trunk horizontal to 15° from surface during glide; body incline should become more level following kick	Hands begin outward scull at or narrower than shoulder width—arms slightly bent; sweep the hands downward and outward; bend at elbow increases as hands move toward waist—hands deeper than elbows by end of pull; hands should not sweep beyond the upper chest area; sweep hands back together so that hands travel along the midline underneath the body to a streamlined position	Legs bend at the knees bringing heels toward buttocks—legs bending slightly at hips; knees and hips should be aligned—knees do not separate beyond hip width; ankles bend and rotate outward with toes wider than the heel of foot; knees and ankles extend at the end of the power phase—legs partially bent at the knees and ankles acceptable	Pull, breathe, kick, glide sequence; rhythmic breathing with each cycle; glide after recovery with arms extended; slight hesitation before recovery acceptable
	Elementary Backstroke	Body horizontal to 15° from surface; trunk and legs are aligned; slight chin tuck, ears near or below the surface	Hands remain under the surface and recover near or at the side of the body; arms may extend at or above shoulder level; arms nearly straight at elbow at beginning of catch; arms partially bent at elbow during extension—wrists may be bent; power phase ends at the level of the hips	Knees remain below surface of the water; knees and hips aligned; knees may be wider than ankles; heels drop by bending knees; ankles rotate outward with toes wider than the heel of foot; lower legs move symmetrically in a circular pattern as knees return to a fully extended position; legs together, toes pointed with minimal movement	Relaxed rhythmic breathing pattern; arms and legs begin recovery at same time; some glide occurs at end of power phase
	Sidestroke	Trunk horizontal to 30° from surface; hips may roll away from midline; bottom ear may be out of water with head raised	Lead arm: hand may break surface of the water; elbow may be straight during catch action; hand may continue past upper chest Trail arm: hand may break surface of the water; elbow may remain close to body; hand may pass by thigh; hand may recover past shoulder of leading arm; arm may be partially bent at elbow	Elements of breaststroke or flutter kick acceptable; legs may separate slightly as knees bend in recovery; any type of foot and ankle position acceptable; legs may bend at the knees and held loosely together during glide	Any type of breathing pattern with minimal breath holding; arms and legs may move simultaneously; arm action may be continuous; some glide occurs at end of power phase
	Butterfly	Trunk horizontal to 15° from the surface; head, trunk and legs are aligned with minimal movement to the left or right of the midline	Above-water arm recovery—straight elbow, occasional arm contact with the water acceptable; hands should enter at shoulder width, with palms facing down and slightly outward; arms partially bent at elbows; hands follow a rudimentary “keyhole” pattern (outward and inward sweep); hands press back toward the feet past the hips	Legs may separate slightly at knees during kick with minimal flutter action; single kick action acceptable; hips flex and knees extended; toes pointed; knees slightly bent; hips raise as legs extend	Face forward head lift begins at start of catch; head re-enters the water after taking breath and hands pull toward waist; one leg kick paired with each arm cycle at minimum; arms should recover directly from the finish—minimal delay before recovery acceptable
	Level 6 Swimming and Skill Proficiency	Front Crawl	Same as Level 5	Same as Level 5	Same as Level 5
Back Crawl		Same as Level 5	Same as Level 5	Same as Level 5	Same as Level 5
Breaststroke		Body is nearly horizontal to the surface and streamlined during the glide position	Hands sweep outward and downward from a glide position (arms extended narrower than shoulder width); bend at elbows increase as hands move toward chest;	Heels drawn toward buttocks; heels remain under water; ankles rotate outward with toes wider than heels; knees and ankles fully extend at end	No delay from finish in to recovery; face and head submerge during arm recovery, kick and glide; exhale

			elbows remain high throughout the pull; hands come together at the midline under the chin; arms extend forward to a glide position.	of power phase	underwater
Elementary Backstroke	Body is nearly horizontal to the surface with arms at side during glide; chin up, ears in the water	Arms extend at or slightly above shoulder level with hands no further than top of head; fingers lead arm extension; palms face toward feet; elbows extend as palms whip backward and inward, stopping at the hips.	Heels drop by bending knees; ankles bend to 90° and rotate outward with toes wider than heels of the feet; knees and ankles fully extending at the end of the power phase		Rhythmic breathing pattern with inhalation during arm and leg recovery and exhalation during arm and leg power phase; arm recovery begins slightly before leg recovery; arm and leg power phase begins simultaneously; extended glide after power phase
Sidestroke	Body is nearly horizontal to the surface and streamlined during the glide position; hips and shoulders aligned; bottom ear and lower face in water	Lead arm: hand remains below the surface; forearm remains horizontal to the surface of the water throughout pull; pull ends at upper chest; hand sculls toward upper chest with palm facing inward and slightly downward; arm extends toward head with palm facing downward and outward; fingers lead arm extension movement as the hand passes the ear; arm is parallel to and about 6 to 8 inches below the surface and in line with head, trunk and legs trail arm: hand remains below the surface of the water; palm faces downward and slightly backward at beginning of catch movement; palm faces backwards throughout the entire pull; forearm travels along the midline close to the body during the recovery.	Scissors kick on both sides; knees and hips bend, pulling heel toward buttocks; legs remain close together as knees bend; ankle of top leg begins the power phase in a bent position and extends as the leg returns to the glide position; ankle of the bottom leg remains extended with the toes pointed throughout the power phase		Regular rhythmic breathing pattern with inhalation during leg recovery and exhalation during power phase of the kicking action; arms alternate; recovery phase of kick occurs during lead arm pull and trail arm recovery; extended glide after power phase
Butterfly	Body is nearly horizontal to the surface in a streamlined position	Above-water arm recovery flat or low recovery with slight lift of the elbows about midway through the recovery phase; hands enter thumb side first with pronounced outward sweep at beginning of catch movement; arms extend at elbow at finish of power phase.	Legs can separate slightly at knees during kick—no flutter kick motion; two-beat dolphin kick (big kick, little kick); knees extend, ankles relaxed and pointed downward; ankles flex along with minimal knee flexion		Forward rhythmic breathing pattern on stroke each cycle; inhalation during face lift and arm recovery and exhalation during underwater arm pull; undulating body action paired with arm action and two-beat dolphin kick; face exits water before the arms and reenters the water before the arms