

# Good Habits from Hubbard Family Swim School to Home

By Kathy and Bob Hubbard

## Pool Safety = Good Habits

We work very hard at teaching good pool manners and lots of safe behavior here at Hubbard. Here are some of our most important lessons and hints on how you can reinforce them at home.

### Around the Pool

Children should learn never to enter the pool until an adult has given them the ok. This goes for all children regardless of their age or ability.

At home, we suggest teaching your children never to enter the pool without asking first. Go out to the pool area and take your time setting up the towels, rearranging chairs, applying sunscreen, and enjoying the view. In other words, stall a bit to practice patience. Make your child play and wait until you are finished getting ready before they enter the pool.

One of our favorite teachers is Judy Watts from Australia. She runs a small backyard-teaching program that has a worldwide reputation. All of her parents must be poolside 15 minutes before their lessons and sit in a chair while the youngsters explore the pool area. They learn not to enter the water or play close to the edge until they are asked to do so when their lesson starts.

Our youngest daughter, Maggie, spent days and hours with us at Phoenix Swim Club, a 10-acre facility with two enormous pools. We taught her where the edge of the pool was in lessons by having her fall in from the side before she could even stand. When she went in the pool without being asked, we allowed her to go underwater and made her come back up on her back or turn around and grab the wall. We watched Maggie carefully at all times and would often sit inside the office and watch her explore on her own. She never did go near the edge of the pool and was very aware of where that edge was.

### Entering the Pool

Toes on the edge! You will hear a lot of that around the swim school. Jump in, turn around and swim back to the wall. That's another favorite! Jump in grab the wall - not such a great idea! Here's why: years ago, a big Red Cross lesson was pencil jumps. Arms at your side, jump in like a soldier, turn and grab the wall.

22 years ago, our little daughter Katie was jumping and swimming and having a great time. We were much younger parents then, with a higher energy level, and allowed our kids to get wild and crazy! Katie jumped off the wall, turned in the air, and tried to grab the side. In the process, she knocked out her top two front baby teeth. We spent all day looking for those teeth, but the dentist found them for us: she had knocked the right back into her gums, on top of her two permanent teeth waiting to grow in.

We had one accident while running our lesson programs at PSC. A 6-year-old boy in a stroke class was asked to jump to his teacher who was standing 10 feet from the wall. He started to jump, changed his mind and tried to grab the wall. He put his bottom teeth through his chin below his lower lip.

What do we try to teach? Jump in and then turn around and go back to the wall. It is a two-step process. Jump to me, jump to me, now back to the wall.

Toes on the edge. When a child runs and jumps, sooner or later they will take off too far from the edge and land with their tailbone on the pool edge. Ouch! Toes on the edge is especially important for the younger ones who have very little ability to leap. Getting both feet off the ground is a major accomplishment - flying through the air comes as they get older.

Jump in or fall forward and land on your tummy. Belly flops are awesome! Teach your kids to always enter a new body of water feet first and then teach belly flops. What a good habit – hopefully they'll remember it when they're 16 and diving into Lake Powell with their friends. There's no need to go deep when you jump in! We guarantee there will be 5 backyard pools that are all 3 ½ feet deep, but somewhere they'll dive into one that's 3 feet and bonk their heads. Start good habits now!

Our fifth child, Patrick, idolized his older brother who was a gymnast. One afternoon we watched this little 5-year-old as he prepared to go swimming. He stood on the edge of the pool and suddenly threw himself up in the air and around. He attempted to enter the pool by throwing a back flip-just like his big brother. Patrick landed on his head on the deck and slid into the pool – his swimming ability was not a big help at that point. Patrick was a bit dazed but otherwise fine. Yet another reason to reinforce good habits around and in the pool at home.