

# Nervous Beginner Semi-Private Lessons

**The purpose** of semi-private lessons is to prepare children for start *Group* swim lessons in Lane 1. This short-term transitional class is ideal for children 3-6 years old who demonstrate *some* of the characteristics below:

- Do not like putting their face in the water.
- Normally use arm floaties or floatation devices
- Swimmers who tell a teacher, “I can’t, I won’t, or I’m scared.”
- Possibly had a previous negative experience in the water.
- Never been in an organized swim **lesson** *without* Mom or Dad.

**The goal** of **semis** is to filter out the beginners who need:

- Special attention
- A specially-trained teacher
- An environment that is quiet, controlled, and not crowded
- Need slower, gentle teaching techniques

Our goal is to have everyone’s head wet the first class and typically most swimmers will experience several submersions their first lesson. ***Trusting the teacher*** is the first step in the learn-to-swim process, so the progress can vary depending on maturity and trust. The first skill is to take them under water where they retrieve a ring, or treasure. We want to be 100% sure we have communicated the goal of Semi’s *is* to go under water. Please do not ask us to negotiate that principle as that is **THE GOAL** of Semi’s.

## **There are three issues we usually encounter:**

- 1) Children not wanting their face/head wet
- 2) Parent separation issues.
- 3) Behavior

For children that don’t like the under water feeling, our general advice is to take the kids swimming as much as possible so they can be exposed to the water ***before*** they begin their first semi private lesson. And, continue swimming for fun (without floatation devices when possible) as the more exposure, the quicker they will overcome their apprehensions. The children that have the most exposure to the water will generally advance the quickest, so families who SWIM for FUN will have the most rapid progress. We have a lot of success working with swimmers who are at least willing to ***try*** to overcome their swimming fears. Parents are often surprised how quickly we can get them to overcome, but the first step to progress is exposure and willingness to try.

The separation issue is a little harder to break at times, since some young swimmers have not had a lot of activities without a parent. Every family handles separation issues (crying, etc.) differently and every parent has a different comfort level when their child is stressed. If we encounter extreme separation problems (crying, etc.) and the swimmer is just 3 years old, we may suggest swimming on your own for a while, and try the semi-privates closer to 3 ½ or even 4 years old. Some swimmers have participated in our Baby n’ Me class and have underwater *lots* of times, but have not been in a class without Mom or Dad. Those swimmers are typically easier to transition because they are in an environment at Swim America which they trust.

Occasionally, we encounter a behavior situation when a swimmer simply refuses to cooperate. They *don’t* want to get in the pool, *don’t* want to listen and *refuse* to try or cooperate. At this point, we will have them talk with their parents for a little encouragement, but if they will not willingly get in the pool *and try*, there isn’t too much the teacher can do at this point as the situation is out of our control.

**Parent's Role:** Support, praise, and encourage your child to continue. Always communicate any concern to our office support staff who will communicate directly with the teacher. Parents will observe the lesson initially from the play room area (TV monitor) but will be invited into observe future lessons once the teacher feels it is appropriate. Once you *do* enter the pool area, we will encourage you **not to** interact with the swimmer until the lesson is over. The goal for the lesson is for the swimmer to continue to build trust with the teacher, and that flow can be interrupted with communication. And as mentioned above, please never mislead your swimmer we will *not* take them under water. That will completely undermine the trust. Most families come to Swim America because they know other families that have been through our program and trust we know how to handle these delicate situations.

***Also very importantly,*** please come to family swim (if possible) before and during the semi-private process. This will help your little swimmer get use to the water and make them more comfortable which in turn will help them greatly in lessons.

## **Who Can Enroll?**

- **Children between 3 and 6 years old.**
- **Potty trained**
- **Able to sit still for 30-minutes (safety issue).**

### **When:**

**A) School-year:** Primarily on *Saturdays between 11:15 and 1:00p.*

**B) Summer:** *Will vary depending on our Staffing. We try to offer an evening or lunch-hour time for working parents.*

**Cost:** The cost for the 30-minute lesson is \$20 each. There is no credit for short-notice cancellation less than 48 hours. It usually takes three sessions to complete and be ready for group; however this can vary per child. No refunds.

**Deposit:** \$20 non refundable deposit, which must be pre-paid along with a \$10 registration fee that is paid once a year. If you attend all semi's as scheduled and graduate to Group, your \$20 deposit will apply toward your group lessons.

- ***Total cost:*** \$90 (3 semis, \$20 deposit, and \$10 reg fee.)

**How to register:** Call and check availability. When we have openings, we will call you, and at that time, you can come down and register officially in person. At registration we will give you our appointment slip with scheduled days/times and the amount paid. Kathy Waropay is the instructor in charge of the program, but several other instructors also teach semis.

### **How many Semis should I schedule?**

We suggest starting with 3, but the number will vary depending on the child's previous experience with the water *and* separation experiences. While we do accept 3 year-olds, some children are often not ready, but everyone's maturity level and skills/behavior are different. If a child has just turned three, has not spent much time swimming for fun, does not like to get their face wet *and* has separation issues, it will usually take more than 3 semis, so starting closer to age 3 ½ or 4 might be more appropriate. If you've been enrolled in baby class, it may only take one semi, but we suggest everyone schedule 3 just to be safe. We don't want you to be disappointed if you only schedule 1, need more, and then have to wait 3 weeks to get another scheduled. We like to graduate the swimmers to Lane 1 in 3-4 semis. If it takes more than 4 semi's, the swimmer may just not be ready at this time, and would be better served to just 'swim for fun' to build breath control and confidence. During the lesson, our administrative staff person may talk with the parents to get more information regarding pre-school, day-care, recreational swimming and other items that play a part in your child's development and water skills. Whatever knowledge we can convey to the instructor, will expedite the progress, so communication is important.

**Should I register for group so I have a Time slot when we graduate from Semi's?**

Yes, planning ahead is best, and the RKSA administrative person will discuss the process with you on your first semi. We'll have a pretty good idea of their progress *after* their first lesson. However, some families are unsure of a child's readiness and want to "test the water" with semi's before even discussing "group." If you have group lessons scheduled and paid for, but you need to do another 1 or 2 semi's, we will charge you for additional semis but will credit you for your group lesson(s) you are missing if you've already paid for the group times.

**FYI:** Below is a list of the skills we test swimmers for Lane 1. If swimmers can pass this test, they should be ready for Lane 1. There is a 5-minute, *no cost, no obligation* test we schedule in advance. Call us for test times @ 828-7946.

**Lane 1 Evaluation**

1. Swimmer must walk into swimming pool to teacher *on their own* without parents carrying or leading them.
2. Teacher will take child *completely* under water to retrieve a ring/treasure 2 times. Swimmer will go under water (about 2 ft.).
3. Swimmer must do 5-10 comfortable bobs (bubbles) with head fully submerged.
4. Teacher will assist swimmer with their back float.
5. The swimmer will jump into the pool from the side *without* assistance. The teacher will assist them back to the side.