



Water Safety for Kids

Swimming is a lot of fun, but drowning is a real danger. Children need to learn to swim to be safe near water. Start by enrolling your child in swimming lessons. If a child is just learning to swim, many parents purchase a Coast Guard approved flotation device. Some water safety experts discourage this, since children may become dependent on the device. Parents need to weigh each situation and decide what's appropriate.

Children should enter water only when there is a lifeguard or adult present and be taught to swim with a buddy. Even kids who know how to swim can drown so it is important to know how to be safe in the water.

Here are some other good water safety tips for swimmers of all ages:

- Put on plenty of sunscreen before going outside. It's also a good idea to wear sunglasses and a hat to protect skin.
- Drink plenty of water and fluids when outside swimming and playing to prevent dehydration.
- When a storm approaches, stop swimming or boating immediately. Lightning is electricity, and



electricity and water are a dangerous combination.

- Swim only when it is light outside.
- Get out of the water immediately if you're shivering or start to feel muscles cramping up.
- Make sure not to swallow the water. Germs in the water can make a person sick with diarrhea or other illnesses.
- Stay in shallow water, and swim at a depth that is safe when learning to swim.

Teaching children water safety tips when they are young is an investment that will help keep them safe in the water all their lives.

Source: <http://kidshealth.org/kid/watch/out/swim.html#>.

What are Executive Functions?

The parts of the brain we use to manage attention, emotions, and behavior are called executive functions. Skills using these functions emerge during early childhood but don't fully mature until early adulthood. They are essential and have a strong bearing on school and lifelong success.

Executive functions enable us to control ourselves, to reflect deeply, and to consider things from multiple points of view. Skills include paying attention, remembering what we need to remember, thinking flexibly, and demonstrating self-control.

The critical factors in developing a strong foundation for these essential skills are children's relationships, the activities they engage in, and the places in which they live, learn, and play. How do parents and caregivers help children to build these skills?

Important adults in their lives:

- Support the child's efforts and model the skills;
- Provide enough space for creativity, exploration, and physical activity;
- Maintain a reliable presence that young children can trust;

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If you have concerns about your child's growth and development, please talk to your child's health care provider or call 1-866-693-GROW (4769), to talk to a professional and find out how you can get connected with various resources in Minnesota.

What are Executive Functions?

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- Create a home environment where children are safe and feel safe.

Look for opportunities to provide children with the relationships, environments, and skill-building activities that will enhance their executive function skills. Children benefit by developing the skills necessary for school and lifelong success.

Source: Mind in the Making: The Seven Essential Life Skills Every Child Needs by Ellen Galinsky and "Executive Function: Skills for Life and Learning," the Center on the Development Child at Harvard University.

Test your knowledge: Executive Functions

- T F Executive functions help children to focus on their goals so they can learn more easily.
- T F The development of executive functions requires expensive programs and elaborate equipment.
- T F It is never too late to help children learn these skills, no matter what their ages.

Answers: 1. T, 2. F, 3. T

Parent Aware

Parent Aware is a new online rating search tool for parents in Minnesota to find child care and early education providers committed to school readiness. The One-to-Four Star Rating is the result of a thorough, six-month-long process for providers, and it involves learning, coaching, and training.

Through Parent Aware, providers volunteer for an objective program assessment. The assessment looks at a number of proven quality-indicators and measures a number of kindergarten-readiness best practices like physical health and well-being, teaching and relationships, assessment of a child's progress, and teacher training and education.

The rating acts as a Consumer Reports-style symbol of quality and is posted on the Parent Aware website – www.parentawareratings.org. Parents can search the site to get information that is easy to understand and useful in making decisions about children's early learning experiences.

While participants are given a One-to-Four Star Rating, earning any rating signifies the effort and commitment the provider has to quality.

Tessa Caron-Enter, owner of Caron's Care in North Mankato, MN, has gone through the Rating process multiple times as she transitioned her career at a child care center to home child care. "Parent Aware is a resource for parents to check on places that have gone above and beyond to make their centers stand out," she said. "It lets parents know you are working hard to ensure that you have a quality learning environment for their child."



The opportunity to earn a Parent Aware Rating is available to any licensed family child care provider, child care center, Head Start program, or school-based program.

Source: <http://www.parentawareratings.org>.



Trusted parenting information, resources and activities to help your children grow, develop and learn from birth through high school at www.MNParentsKnow.info.

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