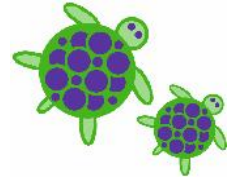


# Hubbard Family Swim School

## Teaching a Child to Snorkel



Sharing the wonders of the ocean with a child can be one of the most rewarding experiences known to mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles, or big brothers and sisters. As a child navigates the waters for the first time, they are awed by creatures and plant life they have never seen – sea turtles, colorful fish, coral reefs and large shells. The experience opens their eyes, broadens their minds and creates in them a sense of adventure - a love for nature's splendor.

To maximize a child's first snorkeling experience, we would like to share the following tips for getting him/her ready:

### Step 1

Begin your snorkel lessons in the bathtub before your trip. Kids love this! While in the tub, let your child play with the snorkel and get the hang of breathing through it. Reveal to them that they shouldn't put their nose underwater without pinching their nose. Most likely they will inhale a little water in the learning process...let them know that a little water up the nose never hurt anyone!

### Step 2

Introduce the mask (without the snorkel). First have the child position it on his/her face without putting the strap around his/her head. This will give them the idea of where it should sit and won't overwhelm them. If they are in the bathtub for this step, you can splash their face with water to show them how it will keep the water out of their eyes. Make sure that the mask fits well against their face because most children can't stand when water leaks in! Have the child inhale through the nose – the mask should stick to his/her face as result.

### Step 3

Smooth the child's hair back, keeping all strands of hair out of the mask. This will help the mask seal tight and stop water from seeping in. Then, pull the strap section of the mask over your child's head and into position. Explain to the child that at first it may seem a little weird but that they will adjust. If the mask is exceedingly uncomfortable, ask them if it is too tight and adjust the straps if needed.



#### **Step 4**

While in the bathtub, let the child play with the mask securely fastened. Work with them on holding their breath and enjoying the view under water.

#### **Step 5**

Once the child is comfortable with the mask, introduce the snorkel to the equation. Remind them how to breathe through the snorkel and then allow them to take a few breaths. If the child appears frustrated or flustered, stop and try again some other time. Make sure that you don't force them to keep trying – forcing the adventure may deter them for years to come.

#### **Step 6**

After the child masters the snorkel and mask in the bathtub, you can move them to a pool. Make sure that you are nearby to offer help if they become nervous or uncomfortable. You may want to have them wear inflatable armbands or a float suit so that they can practice with ease.

#### **Step 7**

Let them add fins if they have a pair. Teach the child how to correctly use them and encourage to him/her to find an even deeper comfort with their snorkel and mask.

#### **Step 8**

Once they master the pool, they are ready for a calm area (like a lagoon) in the sea. Before you set out on your adventure, look online or in a snorkeling/diving book with the child to give them a preview of what they might see. This will help you keep an eye out for all of the amazing creatures you may see and help the child become familiar with the terrain.

#### **Step 9**

Finding the right snorkeling spot is very important. Make sure that there is very little wave action in the area, as it can unnerve a child and deter them from snorkeling. If the child seems overwhelmed or fearful, let them wear inflatable armbands, float suit, or bring an inflatable kickboard along. This will allow for them to conserve energy and get use to their surroundings easier. Let the child know the dangers of touching unknown objects. Also, teach them about coral – it is both precious and dangerous. If touched, it is both easily damaged and can instantly scrape or cut their skin.

#### **Step 10**

Snorkeling adventure! Once the child gets comfortable in the water, both you and the child will fully understand the benefits of learning to snorkel, as you are in for the experience of a lifetime. Keep your eyes open for underwater plant life, creatures that you have only read about, and enjoy the way the light from the sun dances below. You may even want to show him/her how to swim upside down so that they can get a glimpse of the world from beneath the waters.

#### **Step 11**

After your snorkeling adventure, write down what you have seen and research in books, on the Internet or other various sources to learn their scientific names, the importance they play within their ecosystem and other interesting info. You will be amazed at what you find!