

YMCA OF THE VIRGINIA PENINSULAS



SWIM LESSONS HANDBOOK 2026
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WELCOME

DEAR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS,

Thank you for choosing the YMCA of the Virginia Peninsulas swim lessons program. We are honored to be a part of your child's aquatic journey and look forward to providing a fun, safe, and supportive experience for your family.

At the Y, one of our key priorities is ensuring Safety Around Water. Living in a region surrounded by nearly 1,000 square miles of water, it is essential that children and adults have the skills and confidence to swim safely. Our swim lesson program is designed to meet this need by serving all ages and ability levels.

Our program follows YMCA national standards and emphasizes critical water safety skills such as swim-float-swim and jump-push-turn-grab. These foundational skills help children respond effectively in emergency situations. As participants progress, we continue to build their confidence and abilities, preparing them for more advanced swimming, including opportunities in competitive swimming and lifeguarding. At the YMCA, we focus on developing the whole child.

In addition to swimming skills, we intentionally incorporate character development, safety awareness, and positive relationship-building into every lesson.

We celebrate each child's progress and strive to create a welcoming environment where every participant feels a sense of belonging. To support your child's growth, instructor will provide mid-session updates and achievement reports.

If your child has any medical needs, learning differences, or other considerations that may impact their participation, please let us know before the session begins. Our certified swim instructors are trained to work with diverse abilities and will make every effort to ensure a safe and successful experience for all participants.

We understand that you may have questions as you prepare for lessons. This handbook is designed to provide important information about our policies, procedures, and what to expect, including locker room guidelines and program expectations. We encourage you to review it thoroughly. If you have any additional questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Thank you again for trusting the YMCA of the Virginia Peninsulas to teach your child this essential life skill.

Sincerely,
YMCA OF THE VIRGINIA PENINSULAS
AQUATICS

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OBJECTIVES

- 1.To teach swimming skills for personal safety
- 2.To provide aquatic activities for the purpose of improvement in range of motion, endurance, muscular strength, gross motor skills, perceptual motor skills, and general physical fitness
- 3.To provide the basics for a lifetime sport
- 4.To provide character development and social and emotional skills needed to build self-confidence
- 5.To enhance your child's enjoyment of the water

LESSON PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Swim lessons run in 2-week, 4-week or 8-week sessions totaling 8 lessons. Stages are offered for all abilities.

SWIM STARTERS (PARENT & CHILD)

Parent/child swim lessons introduce infants aged 6 months to toddlers up to 36 months to the aquatic environment.

PRESCHOOL-AGE

There are four progressive stages for 3 to 5-year-olds (Water Acclimation, Water Movement, Water Stamina, and Stroke Introduction).

SCHOOL-AGE

There are six progressive stages for 6- to 12-year-olds (Water Acclimation, Water Movement, Water Stamina, Stroke Introduction, Stroke Development, and Stroke Mechanics).

The chart on the following page gives descriptions of each stage and the expected outcomes.

SWIM LESSONS PROGRAM



Program Overview

SWIM STARTERS

Parent* & child lessons



A Water Discovery
Introduces infants and toddlers to the aquatic environment



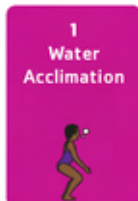
B Water Exploration
Focuses on exploring body positions, blowing bubbles, and fundamental safety and aquatic skills

Outcomes

Accompanied by a parent, infants and toddlers learn to be comfortable in the water and develop swim readiness skills through fun and confidence-building experiences, while parents learn about water safety, drowning prevention, and the importance of supervision.

SWIM BASICS (Safety Around Water)

Recommended skills for all to have around water



1 Water Acclimation
Increases comfort with underwater exploration and introduces basic self-rescue skills performed with assistance



2 Water Movement
Encourages forward movement in water and basic self-rescue skills performed independently



3 Water Stamina
Develops intermediate self-rescue skills performed at longer distances than in previous stages

Outcomes

Students learn personal water safety and achieve basic swimming competency by learning two benchmark skills:

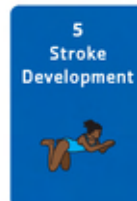
- Swim, float, swim—sequencing front glide, roll, back float, roll, front glide, and exit
- Jump, push, turn, grab

SWIM STROKES

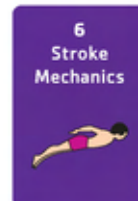
Skills to support a healthy lifestyle



4 Stroke Introduction
Introduces basic stroke technique in front crawl and back crawl and reinforces water safety through treading water and elementary backstroke



5 Stroke Development
Introduces breaststroke and butterfly and reinforces water safety through treading water and sidestroke



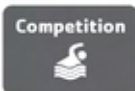
6 Stroke Mechanics
Refines stroke technique on all major competitive strokes and encourages swimming as part of a healthy lifestyle

Outcomes

Having mastered the fundamentals, students learn additional water safety skills and build stroke technique, developing skills that prevent chronic disease, increase social-emotional and cognitive well-being, and foster a lifetime of physical activity.

PATHWAYS

Specialized tracks



Outcomes

Students build confidence, cultivate their passion, and stay active through specialized tracks.

*We define parent broadly to include all adults with primary responsibility for raising children, including biological parents, adoptive parents, guardians, stepparents, grandparents, or any other type of parenting relationship.

CLASS RATIOS

Our preschool swim lesson ratio is 1 instructor to 5 participants, while youth swim lessons are set at a 1:6 ratio. Parent & Child classes allow for up to 12 participants per class. In some cases, classes may have smaller ratios if they do not reach full enrollment. A minimum of three registered participants is required for a class to run. If a class must be canceled due to low enrollment, we will make every effort to transfer your child to another available class. If a transfer cannot be accommodated, a full refund will be issued.

REGISTRATION

Our swim lessons are offered in seasonal sessions throughout the year. Registration opens earlier for members, followed by non-members.

WINTER SESSION

January and February

- Member Registration: December 1
- Non-Member Registration: December 15

SPRING SESSION 1

March and April

- Member Registration: February 1
- Non-Member Registration: February 15

SPRING SESSION 2

May and June

- Member Registration: April 1
- Non-Member Registration: April 15

SUMMER SESSION

July and August

- Member Registration: June 1
- Non-Member Registration: June 15

FALL SESSION 1

September and October

- Member Registration: August 1
- Non-Member Registration: August 15

FALL SESSION 2

November and December

- Member Registration: October 1
- Non-Member Registration: October 15

Class size is limited, so if a specific day and time are needed to fit your schedule, we strongly recommend that you register early on the first day of registration.

REGISTRATION

PROGRAM REFUND POLICY

PROGRAM SESSION CANCELLATION

If a program session is canceled by the YMCA, a full refund or credit (member's choice) will be offered. Credit will be given to participants who cancel their registration before the start date of the session or program. No credits can be given after the program begins.

MEDICAL CANCELLATION

If a participant withdraws from a program due to a medical reason, a refund or credit for the unused portion of the program will be offered.

BAD WEATHER POLICY

Classes canceled due to bad weather or unforeseen circumstances that will be made up if the schedule allows. If the session/lesson cannot be made up, a program credit will be given to be used for another class of choice.

HOLIDAY CLOSURES

The YMCA may close or operate under different hours on holidays. Please check with your local YMCA for more information on how this affects programs.

YMCA'S AGE POLICY

NO CHILD UNDER THE AGE OF 10 MAY ENTER THE POOL WITHOUT ADULT SUPERVISION. If your child is enrolled in a program, please make sure a responsible adult escorts them to and from the program. Please do not leave them unattended during their swim lessons.

NONDISCRIMINATION

Everyone is welcome at the Y. We provide membership and program services to everyone desiring to participate regardless of race, religion, gender, marital status, national origin, disability, or income. If you need financial assistance, please ask for an application and talk with a Member Services representative. Funds are provided for those in need within our available resources.

DRESS CODE

Since we are a family organization, we ask that everyone using a locker room or restroom cover up areas covered by a bathing suit when transitioning from the shower area or when moving around the locker room. Swimsuits should be worn only in aquatic areas and locker rooms. Shoes, shorts, or pants and tops are required in other areas of the facility.

EXTRA PRACTICE AND HOME PRACTICE

Bring your child to family swim (see our pool schedule for available times) to give them the opportunity to practice and show you what they are learning in class. The more opportunities children have to practice, the faster they will progress, frequency is a key factor in skill development. Family Swim is included with YMCA of the Virginia Peninsulas memberships.

Practicing at home can also be very helpful, especially if your child is still getting comfortable putting their face or ears in the water. During bath time, try incorporating simple activities such as letting water gently run over their face, blowing bubbles, submerging their face, and lying back to get their ears wet. For many children, these sensations are unfamiliar and should be introduced gradually.

(continued on next page)

EXTRA PRACTICE AND HOME PRACTICE

Encourage your child to practice floating on their back. Start in shallow water and gradually increase depth as they grow more comfortable. This helps them become accustomed to water in their ears and buoyancy.

PLEASE REMEMBER: NEVER LEAVE A CHILD UNATTENDED IN THE BATHTUB OR NEAR ANY BODY OF WATER.

LOCKER ROOMS/LESSON PREPARATION

- Children 5 and under may enter the men's and women's locker room *WITH* a parent regardless of their gender.
- A child from ages 6-11 may enter the men's and women's locker room *WITH* a parent of the *SAME* gender.
- Children ages 12 and up may enter the men and women's locker room appropriate to their gender.
- If a child younger than 12 needs to use a locker room they will need to use our universal locker room area.
- If a parent has a child with them of the opposite gender ages 6 and up and would like to make sure they can use a locker room where they can keep an eye on the child, they will need to use the universal locker room.
- Please safeguard your belongings while on the YMCA premises. The Y is not responsible for lost or stolen items.
- Please keep valuables on your person or lock them in a locker. You must furnish your own lock, and please remember to remove it daily
- Please remove all Band-Aids before entering the pool. For the health and safety of all participants, swimmers with open sores are not permitted to swim.
- Chewing gum, food, and candy are not allowed in the pool area. Glass containers are strictly prohibited on pool decks.
- It is recommended that swimmers with shoulder-length or longer hair tie it back or wear a swim cap to keep hair out of their eyes and help maintain pool cleanliness.
- To ensure children do not miss the start of class, please allow sufficient time for changing, using the restroom and showering off beforehand.
- All participants must remain seated until the instructor invites them to class.

BATHROOM POLICY

Please ensure your child uses the restroom before class begins. If a child needs to use the restroom during class, a parent or guardian must accompany them. Swimmers ages 3 and older are not permitted to wear any type of diaper, including swim diapers. Children who are age 3 must be fully potty-trained to participate in progressive swim lessons.

SHOWER BEFORE CLASS

Showering before entering the pool is an important step in maintaining water quality. Rinsing off helps remove body oils, sweat, lotions, deodorants, and perfumes, allowing us to use fewer chemicals in the pool. Additionally, a cool shower helps lower body temperature, reducing the risk of shock when entering the water.

SHOES

Children may wear water shoes, flip-flops, or sandals in the locker room, shower area, and on the pool deck. However, water shoes are not permitted in the pool during swim lessons, as they add extra weight and can make it more difficult for swimmers to learn proper kicking techniques and maintain balance in the water.

CELL PHONE USE

We invite all parents/guardians to be Water Watchers during their children's swim lessons. Responding to a text, answering an email, listening to a podcast, or making a grocery list may seem like quick and harmless tasks but those few seconds of distraction can add up. We ask that parents/guardians actively watch children in and around the water and avoid distractions like talking on the phone during swim lessons.

PHOTOS AND VIDEOS

Out of respect for all children and parents/guardians and recognizing that many individuals do not wish to have their or their child's image shared on social media. Photography and video recording are limited to your own child only. If you capture images or videos that include other participants, our aquatics staff will ask you to stop and delete them.

SWIM LESSON ETIQUETTE

To ensure every child has the best possible experience, we ask that all swimmers come to their lessons with a positive attitude. Safety is our number one priority at the Y, and creating a fun, supportive learning environment depends on everyone following safe practices.

We also expect all swimmers to show respect toward their fellow participants, instructors, and our equipment. If a child is unable to follow safety rules or demonstrate respectful behavior, it may result in time out of the class or possible removal from the program.

Our goal is for every swimmer to succeed, and maintaining a safe and respectful environment is essential to making that happen for everyone.

WHEN SHOULD I NOT BRING MY CHILD TO LESSONS?

For the health and safety of all participants, children with open wounds or contagious illnesses should not enter the pool until they are fully healed or well. At the YMCA of the Virginia Peninsulas, we follow strict regulations regarding bloodborne pathogens and other bodily fluids. Participants with open cuts, blisters, inflamed eyes, contagious skin conditions, or any communicable illness are not permitted in the pool.

Additionally, anyone who has experienced diarrhea within the past 48 hours should refrain from using the pool. These guidelines help us maintain a safe and healthy environment for all swimmers.

START OF CLASS

If children arrive early for class, they must wait on the pool deck until their lesson begins. An instructor will let them know when it is time to enter the water.

Parents or guardians should accompany their child into the pool area and ensure they are at the correct location for their lesson. It is highly recommended that you place your child's towel on the bench for easy access immediately after class.

DISMISSAL TIME

Please meet your children, especially younger swimmers, at the end of each class. Be sure to check that they have all their belongings, including goggles, towels, and any other personal items.

Our instructors are always happy to connect with parents and guardians and answer quick questions. If you need a more in-depth conversation, we encourage you to schedule a separate time by speaking with our Aquatics Director.

PARENT/GUARDIAN OBSERVATION

We ask that parents and guardians do not interrupt lessons in progress at any time.

If assistance is needed, our staff will signal you. Bleachers/benches are available for seating during lessons.

Please ensure that any siblings observing remain safe and respectful, running on the pool deck or going near the water is not permitted. This is an important safety policy.

Children who are disruptive or at risk of injury may be asked to leave the pool area. At the end of the session, please be sure to check in with your child's instructor to receive their Certificate of Achievement.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY CHILD IS CRYING?

It is common for first-time participants to feel overwhelmed by the lesson experience. Being in a new environment can be challenging, and some children may show signs of apprehension, cry, or express reluctance to attend during the first few weeks. They may even say they do not want to return or pretend to be ill. This is a normal part of the adjustment process, your persistence and encouragement will help them overcome their fears.

Our instructors are trained to support children through these moments. One of the most helpful things you can do is to confidently transition your child to the instructor and then leave the pool area. While it may feel like your child will be more comfortable with you nearby, staying on the pool deck can often make it harder for them to focus and may distract both your child and others in the class. Please trust our trained instructors to work with your child and create a positive, successful learning experience.

TESTING AND CERTIFICATES OF ACHIEVEMENT

Children are continuously evaluated on their progress throughout each class. On the first class each participant will be evaluated to see which level they are at. As mentioned earlier, we celebrate each child's achievements and will recognize their progress individually when they are ready. Readiness is an important part of learning, children will never be asked to perform skills beyond their current ability.

During the session, you will receive both a Mid-Session Report and an Achievement Report. These updates are designed to help you track your child's progress and identify any skills that may need additional practice. The Achievement Report will also indicate the appropriate level for your child's next session.

INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

Every child progresses at their own pace in all activities, including swimming. Through our progressive swim stages, we focus on celebrating each child's achievements, both big and small. Our trained instructors have the knowledge and experience to tailor instruction to each child's individual needs, and we do not compare one child's progress to another.

Please do not feel discouraged if your child's progress looks different from others. There are many factors that can influence a child's pace of learning, including:

- Fear of the water
- Taking longer to become comfortable in the water
- Difficulty focusing during lessons
- Exposure to or discussion of a friend or family member's (especially an adult's) fear of the water

With patience, encouragement, and consistent practice, all children can build confidence and develop their swimming skills.

VOLUNTEERS

The YMCA of the Virginia Peninsulas is always looking for volunteers. If you have any free time during the day and would enjoy volunteering in our swim program, please contact the Aquatics Director.

YMCA SWIM LESSONS

STAGES OF LEARNING BREAKDOWN

Stages of Learning

↑ Infant & Toddler
6 mos.–3 yrs.
Stages A–B

↑ Preschool
3–5 yrs.
Stages 1–4

↑ School Age
5–12 yrs.
Stages 1–6

↑ Teen & Adult
12+ yrs.
Stages 1–6

SWIM STARTERS

Parent & child lessons

SWIM BASICS

Recommended skills for all to have around water

SWIM STROKES

Skills to support a healthy lifestyle

PATHWAYS

Specialized tracks

A Water Discovery

Blow bubbles
on surface,
assisted

Front tow
chin in water,
assisted

Water exit
parent & child
together

Water entry
parent & child
together

Back float
assisted, head on
shoulder

Roll
assisted

Front float
chin in water,
assisted

Back tow
assisted, head on
shoulder

Wall grab
assisted

B Water Exploration

Blow bubbles
mouth & nose
submerged,
assisted

Front tow
blow bubbles,
assisted

Water exit
assisted

Water entry
assisted

Back float
assisted, head
on chest

Roll
assisted

Front float
blow bubbles,
assisted

Back tow
assisted, head
on chest

Monkey crawl
assisted, on edge,
5 ft.

1 Water Acclimation

Submerge
bob independently

Front glide
assisted, to wall,
5 ft.

Water exit
independently

**Jump, push,
turn, grab**
assisted

Back float
assisted,
10 secs., recover
independently

Roll
assisted

Front float
assisted,
10 secs., recover
independently

Back glide
assisted, at wall,
5 ft.

**Swim, float,
swim**
assisted, 10 ft.

2 Water Movement

Submerge
look at object on
bottom

Front glide
10 ft. (5 ft.
preschool)

Water exit
independently

**Jump, push,
turn, grab**

Back float
20 secs. (10 secs.
preschool)

Roll

Front float
20 secs. (10 secs.
preschool)

Back glide
10 ft. (5 ft.
preschool)

Tread water
10 secs., near
wall, & exit

Swim, float, swim
5 yd.

3 Water Stamina

Submerge
retrieve object in
chest-deep water

Swim on front
15 yd. (10 yd.
preschool)

Water exit
independently

**Jump, swim,
turn, swim, grab**
10 yd.

Swim on back
15 yd. (10 yd.
preschool)

Roll

Tread water
1 min. & exit
(30 secs.
preschool)

**Swim, float,
swim**
25 yd. (15 yd.
preschool)

4 Stroke Introduction

Endurance
any stroke or
combination of
strokes, 25 yd.

Front crawl
rotary breathing,
15 yd.

Back crawl
15 yd.

Dive
sitting

Resting stroke
elementary
backstroke,
15 yd.

Tread water
scissor & whip
kick, 1 min.

Breaststroke
kick, 15 yd.

Butterfly
kick, 15 yd.

5 Stroke Development

Endurance
any stroke or
combination of
strokes, 50 yd.

Front crawl
bent-arm
recovery,
25 yd.

Back crawl
pull, 25 yd.

Dive
kneeling

Resting stroke
sidestroke,
25 yd.

Tread water
scissor & whip
kick, 2 mins.

Breaststroke
25 yd.

Butterfly
simultaneous arm
action & kick,
15 yd.

6 Stroke Mechanics

Endurance
any stroke or
combination of
strokes, 150 yd.

Front crawl
flip turn,
50 yd.

Back crawl
pull & flip turn,
50 yd.

Dive
standing

Resting stroke
elementary
backstroke or
sidestroke,
50 yd.

Tread water
retrieve object
off bottom,
tread 1 min.

Breaststroke
open turn,
50 yd.

Butterfly
25 yd.

Competition

Leadership

Recreation

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YMCA Swim Lessons | V6

INFANT AND TODDLER/PRESCHOOL SKILL CONTINUUM

This continuum outlines the skills taught at each age for infants, toddlers, and preschool-age children. Though school-age children, teens, and adults also learn the skills listed in stages 1-4, they achieve distinct milestones compared to preschool-age children. As a result, their skills are presented in a separate skill continuum.



Infant & Toddler / Preschool Skill Continuum

	A Water Discovery	B Water Exploration	1 Water Acclimation	2 Water Movement	3 Water Stamina	4 Stroke Introduction
Breath control	Blow bubbles on surface, assisted	Blow bubbles mouth & nose submerged, assisted	Submerge bob independently	Submerge look at object on bottom	Submerge retrieve object in chest-deep water	
Swim on front	Front tow chin in water, assisted Front float chin in water, assisted	Front tow blow bubbles, assisted Front float blow bubbles, assisted	Front glide assisted, to wall, 5 ft. Front float assisted, 10 secs., recover independently	Front glide 5 ft. Front float 10 secs.	Swim on front 10 yd.	Front crawl rotary breathing, 15 yd. Breaststroke kick, 15 yd. Butterfly kick, 15 yd.
Swim on back	Back float assisted, head on shoulder Back tow assisted, head on shoulder	Back float assisted, head on chest Back tow assisted, head on chest	Back float assisted, 10 secs., recover independently Back glide assisted, at wall, 5 ft.	Back float 10 secs. Back glide 5 ft.	Swim on back 10 yd.	Back crawl 15 yd.
Water safety	Roll assisted, back to front & front to back Wall grab assisted	Roll assisted, back to front & front to back Monkey crawl assisted, on edge, 5 ft.	Water exit independently Roll assisted, back to front & front to back	Water exit independently Roll back to front & front to back Tread water 10 secs., near wall, & exit	Water exit independently Roll back to front & front to back Tread water 30 secs. & exit	Dive sitting Resting stroke elementary backstroke, 15 yd. Tread water scissor & whip kick, 1 min.
Benchmark	Water exit parent & child together Water entry parent & child together	Water exit assisted Water entry assisted	Jump, push, turn, grab assisted Swim, float, swim assisted, 10 ft.	Jump, push, turn, grab Swim, float, swim 5 yd.	Jump, swim, turn, swim, grab 10 yd. Swim, float, swim 15 yd.	Endurance any stroke or combination of strokes, 25 yd.

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SCHOOL-AGE/TEEN AND ADULT SKILL CONTINUUM

This continuum outlines the skills taught at each age for school-age children, teens, and adults. Though preschool-age children, teens, and adults also learn the skills listed in stages 1-4, they achieve distinct milestones compared to school-age children, teens, and adults. As a result, their skills are presented in a separate skill continuum.



School-Age / Teen & Adult Skill Continuum

Preschool, teen, and adult skills are presented in a separate skill continuum.

	1 Water Acclimation	2 Water Movement	3 Water Stamina	4 Stroke Introduction	5 Stroke Development	6 Stroke Mechanics
Breath control	Submerge bob independently	Submerge look at object on bottom	Submerge retrieve object in chest-deep water			
Swim on front	Front glide assisted, to wall, 5 ft. Front float assisted, 10 secs., recover independently	Front glide 10 ft. Front float 20 secs.	Swim on front 15 yd.	Front crawl rotary breathing, 15 yd. Breaststroke kick, 15 yd. Butterfly kick, 15 yd.	Front crawl bent-arm recovery, 25 yd. Breaststroke 25 yd. Butterfly simultaneous arm action & kick, 15 yd.	Front crawl flip turn, 50 yd. Breaststroke open turn, 50 yd. Butterfly 25 yd.
Swim on back	Back float assisted, 10 secs., recover independently Back glide assisted, at wall, 5 ft.	Back float 20 secs. Back glide 10 ft.	Swim on back 15 yd.	Back crawl 15 yd.	Back crawl pull, 25 yd.	Back crawl pull & flip turn, 50 yd.
Water safety	Water exit independently Roll assisted, back to front & front to back	Water exit independently Roll back to front & front to back Tread water 10 secs., near wall, & exit	Water exit independently Roll back to front & front to back Tread water 1 min. & exit	Dive sitting Resting stroke elementary backstroke, 15 yd. Tread water scissor & whip kick, 1 min.	Dive kneeling Resting stroke sidestroke, 25 yd. Tread water scissor & whip kick, 2 mins.	Dive standing Resting stroke elementary backstroke or sidestroke, 50 yd. Tread water retrieve object off bottom, tread 1 min.
Benchmark	Jump, push, turn, grab assisted Swim, float, swim assisted, 10 ft.	Jump, push, turn, grab Swim, float, swim 5 yd.	Jump, swim, turn, swim, grab 10 yd. Swim, float, swim 25 yd.	Endurance any stroke or combination of strokes, 25 yd.	Endurance any stroke or combination of strokes, 50 yd.	Endurance any stroke or combination of strokes, 150 yd.

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YMCA OF THE VIRGINIA PENINSULAS