

TEACHING SWIMMING AND WATER SAFETY AT KEY STAGE 1 OR 2

WATER SAFETY
RESOURCE

WATER SAFETY RESOURCE



Developed by the Swim Group to support primary schools and swimming providers to deliver high quality swimming and water safety lessons at Key Stage 1 or 2.

This guide has been produced by Swim England on behalf of the Swim Group. The content has been developed by experts from a range of organisations involved in the provision of swimming and water safety lessons in primary schools.

This series of guides for primary schools, parents, pool operators and swimming teachers, is designed to ensure all children meet the requirements of the national curriculum PE programme of study by the time they leave primary school in Year 6.

It also aims to ensure the consistent delivery of swimming and water safety lessons across the country that fully support the teaching of the three outcomes.

For more information and support materials visit www.swimming.org/schools.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS ABOUT WATER SAFETY

By the time a child is ready to leave primary school (Key Stage 2) they should be able to swim, know how to get out of trouble if they fall into water, know the dangers of water and understand the water safety code.

This is part of the national curriculum for England, so local authority-maintained schools must provide swimming and water safety lessons as part of their school programme. Other types of schools, like academies and free schools, must provide a broad and balanced education – and that should include learning how to swim and teaching water safety.

People drown because they have little or no awareness of the dangers of water, misjudge their own swimming ability or unintentionally fall in.

Drowning is the third most common cause of accidental death in children¹, so it is vital that every child has the opportunity to learn survival and self-rescue skills.

Like swimming, water safety knowledge and the skills to survive and self-rescue don't come instinctively; they have to be taught.

Pupils should be taught about the dangers they may encounter around water in their home such as paddling pools and ponds, the swimming pool and at outdoor water locations. Pupils should be able to assess and apply the principles of water safety in these different water environments. They should also understand that swimming in open water is very different to swimming in heated pools and that even strong swimmers can get into difficulties when swimming in water that is cold, unpredictable and deep.

Different water environments:

- Paddling pools and garden ponds
- Swimming pools
- Beaches
- Rivers
- Canals
- Reservoirs
- Lakes

¹ <https://nationalwatersafety.wordpress.com/category/waid/>

THE WATER SAFETY CODE

The water safety code is a short, easy to remember guide to acting safely and responsibly around water.

Key safety messages:

Always swim in a safe place

Always swim with an adult

If you fall in: float, breathe, relax

If someone else is in trouble call 999 or 112

Staying safe around water

Stop and Think:

- Water is always moving
- The water is colder than you think
- Edges can be dangerous
- There may be dangers under water

Stay Together:

- Never swim alone - stay close to a friend or family member
- Find a safe place to go - only swim in the sea where there is a lifeguard
- Plan your activity - check weather, tide times, get local advice and wear the right clothing for your activity

Float:

- If you fall in, float until you feel calm
- Signal for help, raising one hand in the air and shouting for help
- If you can, swim to safety or hold on to something that floats
- Keep warm if you can't swim to safety, using the Heat Escape Lessening Position (HELP) or huddle position

Call 999 or 112:

- If you see someone else in trouble in the water call 999 or 112
- Never enter the water to save others
- Look for something you can throw to help them float like a life ring or even a football could help
- Keep watch until help arrives

Recognise the hazards

Swimming pools	Sea and coastal areas	Inland water sites
Slippery surfaces	Waves and tides	Speed of the water
Different depths	Sudden depth changes	Debris and pollution
Steps/hoists	Hidden hazards- rocks, stones, debris	Hidden hazards- weeds, rocks, debris
Trip hazards	Cold water	Dangerous banks
Other swimmers	Offshore winds	Canal locks, weirs

Additional considerations

It is important to consider the following when swimming outside:

- Always look for guidance and warning signs
- Swim parallel with the shore line and in standing depth of water
- Avoid drifting in the current
- Get out as soon as you start to feel cold
- Wash hands and face in fresh clean water and if possible, take a shower straight afterwards


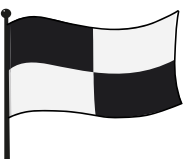
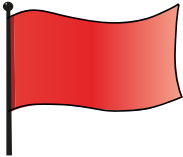
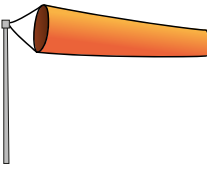
Beaches

When at the beach, children should adhere to the following water safety guidance:

- Only swim at lifeguarded beaches
- Learn the meaning of different coloured beach flags
- Read safety signs
- Check tide times to avoid being cut off by incoming tides

Beach flags

The beach flags are displayed by the lifeguards in patrolled areas to provide guidance on the water and wind conditions. The flags also inform beach users where the swimming and water sports zones are. When travelling outside of the UK you should check the meaning of flags locally as there is no international standard.

Flag Colour	What it means
	<p>Red and Yellow Flag</p> <p>Lifeguards patrol between these flags. It is the safest area to swim, body board and use inflatables.</p>
	<p>Black and White Chequered Flag</p> <p>This shows it is a 'Hard craft zone area' for water sports such as surfing. This means it is unsafe for swimming and you should not swim there.</p>
	<p>Red Flag</p> <p>Never go into the water when the red flag is flying. This could be for a range of reasons and may change from day-to-day.</p>
	<p>Wind Sock</p> <p>This shows the direction and force of the wind. Very strong winds can be hazardous for swimmers so if it is full, do not take inflatables into the water in the water.</p>

COLD WATER SHOCK

Falling into or swimming in cold water makes it more difficult to swim, breathe and stay alert

The first reactions are:

- Gasp for breath
- Heart rate will increase and become very fast

Followed by:

- The muscles in the arms and legs start to get cold
- Lose coordination of the arms and legs
- Lose the ability to swim

What to do:

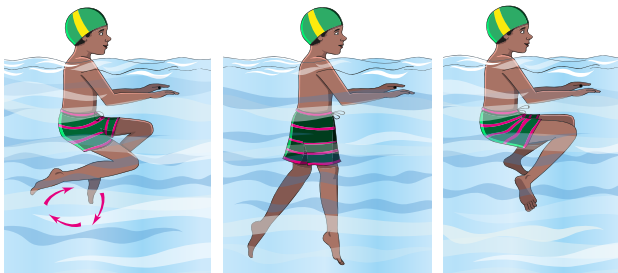
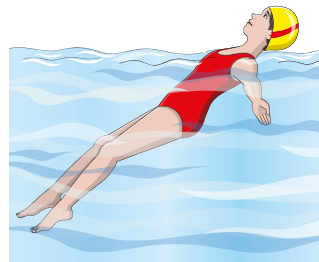
- Keep calm
- Float on your back
- Gain control of your breathing by taking slow, deep breaths
- Float, scull or tread water and signal for help
- If possible swim to safety or something that floats
- It is important to keep warm and retain your body heat by taking up the Heat Escape Lessening Position (HELP) or huddle position (see below)

SURVIVAL AND SELF-RESCUE SKILLS

Flotation

Floating uses the natural buoyancy of the body to hold a stationary or near stationary position, whilst maintaining a clear airway and minimising energy loss.

If a child unintentionally falls into the water or finds themselves in difficulty, they should float on their back until they catch their breath and decide what to do next. Shouting, waving, signalling, treading water and swimming are all options that should be considered.



Treading water

Treading water is used to maintain a clear airway. This allows time to consider options, look around, and then signal or shout to attract the attention of potential rescuers.

Signal for help

If a person is in trouble in the water, once they have calmed down and assessed the situation they should consider signalling for help. To do this they should raise one hand in the air while treading water and shout "HELP!" It is important only one hand is raised in the air as it uses a large amount of energy to do so, especially if clothed. In wavy conditions care should be taken not to inhale water while shouting, the arm should be lowered if it makes it difficult to maintain an airway and priority given to remaining at the surface of the water.

Heat Escape Lessening Position (HELP)

Using the Heat Escape Lessening Position (HELP) reduces heat loss in cold water. Wearing a buoyancy aid or holding a buoyant object such as a float, the swimmer should draw their knees up to their chest, hugging them close to their body with both arms. The head should stay clear of the water and legs should stay together to retain heat.



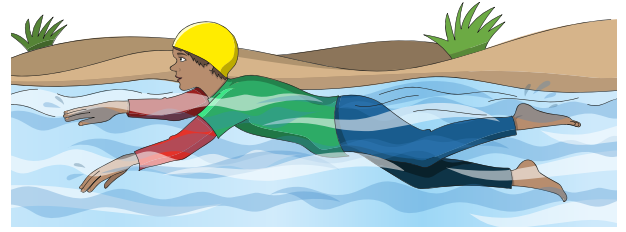
Huddle Position

If a group of people are together in the water they can huddle together to conserve body heat, support each other and provide a larger target for rescuers. Using floating objects (noodles or floats) swimmers should make a tight circle and hold the floating object. Heads should be clear of the water and one swimmer should raise an arm and shout for help.



Conserving energy

Personal survival stroke is an important skill to preserve energy and body heat while moving efficiently to safety or a buoyancy aid. It is important the arms remain underneath the water, especially if clothed, as this is easier than being above the water and will help to save energy.



WHAT TO DO IF OTHERS GET INTO DIFFICULTIES

- Raise the alarm. Dial 999 or 112. The caller will be asked to give their location and explain what has happened.
- Shout and signal to attract others to help and let the person in the water know they have been seen.
- Try throwing something that floats and they can hold onto while they wait for help.
- Give clear instruction e.g. 'kick your legs' and 'swim towards me'.
- Use hand signals and a loud voice to help guide the person to safety.
- Keep watching and calling to encourage them to swim to safety.

WATER SAFETY: BEYOND KEY STAGE 2

A child can drown in less than 5cm of water. Schools must do all they can to educate pupils and young people to understand the very real dangers present in and around water and give them the skills to swim, survive, self-rescue and help others in difficulty.

This learning should not end at Key Stage 2. Water safety messages should continue to be given to young people and they should have regular opportunities to extend their water safety knowledge. This includes practical experience of swimming and using self-rescue skills in outdoor swimming environments, such as the sea, rivers and other safe inland water venues.

The current national curriculum for PE for Key Stages 3 and 4 provides opportunities for this to happen. In particular, through the requirement for young people to take part in a broad range of physical activities including outdoor and adventurous activity challenges². Other subjects like geography and PSHE, should support water safety messages and extend young people's understanding of the dangers of different water environments.

Swim Group comment:

"It is important to remember that meeting the minimum national curriculum requirements for swimming and water safety does not guarantee the safety of a child when in, on, or near water.

Education and professional learning should be on-going, and all those responsible for young people should take every opportunity to explain the dangers of water and provide on-going opportunities to develop and improve swimming, survival and self-rescue skills.

Although not in the national curriculum for Key Stages 3, 4 or 5, the recommendation from the Swim Group is that by Key Stage 5, every young person should be able to swim 400m competently. They should also know, and understand, the individual peculiarities and characteristics of inland and coastal water so they can make informed decisions about enjoying the water safely and responsibly."

² www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-primary-curriculum

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Water Safety organisations

The following organisations provide a wide range of water safety and drowning prevention resources for primary schools:

- **Canal and River Trust**
www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/explorers/water-safety
- **Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI)**
www.rnli.org/youth-education/education-resources
- **Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS)**
www.rlss.org.uk/water-safety/water-safety-resources/
- **Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA)**
www.rospa.com/leisure-safety/water/advice/children-young-people/

National water safety campaigns

Drowning Prevention Week	Led by RLSS UK the campaign promotes water safety awareness in an attempt to cut down the number of preventable drowning incidents which occur every year.
Swim Safe	<p>In conjunction with Swim England and the RNLI, Swim Safe provides resources to help children stay safe whilst swimming outdoors.</p> <p>During the summer months Swim Safe offers the opportunity for children to put their swimming and water safety skills into practise in open water.</p>
Respect the Water	Respect the Water is the RNLI's national drowning prevention campaign. It highlights the risks, helps people to avoid them and gives advice to keep water users safe.
Drowning prevention and water safety campaign	Led by the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA)