

WATER SAFETY

INTRODUCTION, 14-1

SAFE SWIM DEFENSE, 14-1

SWIMMING POOL SAFETY, 14-3

Home Swimming Pool Safety, 14-3

Public Swimming Pool Safety, 14-3

SAFETY AFLOAT (BOATING SAFETY), 14-3

WATER RESCUE, 14-5

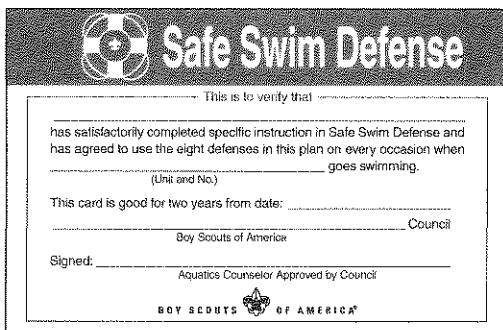
INTRODUCTION

Water activities can make good den or pack activities, but safety rules are very important any time a pack is holding an event around water. Some of the boys are probably nonswimmers, and it is likely that some who think of themselves as swimmers can't swim very far or safely in deep water.

To ensure safe aquatics activities, the Boy Scouts of America has developed the Safe Swim Defense and Safety Afloat plans. These plans establish standards and procedures to minimize inherent risks. You should be trained in these plans before conducting aquatics activities.

Safe Swim Defense and Safety Afloat training can be given by any person authorized by the council, including a BSA Aquatics resource person, a unit leader with aquatics skill, or any other person with aquatics knowledge or experience whom the local council has approved. Safe Swim Defense and Safety Afloat training can also be completed on the Internet via your council Web site.

SAFE SWIM DEFENSE



Safe Swim Defense

This is to verify that _____

has satisfactorily completed specific instruction in Safe Swim Defense and has agreed to use the eight defenses in this plan on every occasion when _____ goes swimming.

(Unit and No.) _____

This card is good for two years from date: _____

_____ Council

Boy Scouts of America

Signed: _____

Aquatics Counselor Approved by Council

BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

Before a BSA group may engage in any aquatics activity, a minimum of one adult leader must complete Safe Swim Defense training, have a commitment card (No. 34243) with him or her, and agree to use the eight defenses in this plan.

Safe Swim Defense

1. Qualified Supervision
2. Physical Fitness
3. Safe Area
4. Lifeguards on Duty
5. Lookout
6. Ability Groups
7. Buddy System
8. Discipline

1. Qualified Supervision. All swimming activity must be supervised by a mature and conscientious adult age 21 or older who understands and knowingly accepts responsibility for the well-being and safety of the youth members in his or her care, who is experienced in the water and confident of his or her ability to respond in the event of an emergency, and who is trained in and committed to compliance with the eight points of BSA Safe Swim Defense.

It is strongly recommended that all units have at least one adult or older youth member currently trained as a BSA Lifeguard to assist in the planning and conduct of all swimming activity.

2. Physical Fitness. Evidence of fitness for swimming activity is required, with a complete health history from a physician, parent, or legal guardian. The adult supervisor should adjust all supervision, discipline, and protection to anticipate any potential risks associated with individual health conditions. In the event of any significant health conditions, the unit leader should require proof of an examination by a physician.

Those with physical disabilities can enjoy and benefit from aquatics if the disabilities are known and necessary precautions are taken.

- 3. Safe Area.** When swimming in areas not regularly maintained and used for swimming activity, have lifeguards and swimmers systematically examine the bottom of the swimming area to determine varying depths, deep holes, rocks, and stumps.

Mark off the area for three groups (see "Ability Groups" on this page): not more than 3½ feet deep for *nonswimmers*; from shallow water to just over the head for *beginners*; and deep water not more than 12 feet for *swimmers*. A participant should not be permitted to swim in an area where he cannot readily recover and maintain his footing, or cannot maintain his position on the water, because of swimming ability or water flow.

When setting up a safe swimming area in natural waters, use poles stuck in the bottom, or plastic bottles, balloons, or sticks attached to rock anchors with twine for boundary markers. Enclose nonswimmer and beginner areas with buoy lines (twine and floats) between markers. Mark the outer bounds of the swimmer area with floats. Be sure that clear-water depth is at least 7 feet before allowing anyone to dive into the water.

Diving is prohibited from any height more than 40 inches above the water surface; feet-first entry is prohibited from more than 60 inches above the water. For any entry from more than 18 inches above the water surface, clear-water depth must be 10 to 12 feet.

Only surface swimming is permitted in turbid water. Swimming is not permitted in water more than 12 feet deep, in turbid water where poor visibility and depth would interfere with emergency recognition or prompt rescue, or in whitewater, unless all participants wear appropriate personal flotation devices and the supervisor determines that swimming with personal flotation equipment is safe under the circumstances.

- 4. Lifeguards on Duty.** Swim only where lifeguards are on duty. For unit swims in areas where lifeguards are not provided by others, the supervisor should designate two capable swimmers as lifeguards. Station them ashore, equipped with a lifeline (a 100-foot length of ¾-inch nylon cord). In an emergency, one carries out the line; the other feeds it out from shore and then pulls in his partner and the person being helped. In addition, if a boat is available, have two people, preferably capable swimmers, take it out—one rowing and the other equipped with a 10-foot pole or extra oar.

Provide one guard for every 10 people in the water, and adjust the number and positioning of guards as needed to protect the particular area and activity.

- 5. Lookout.** Station a lookout on the shore where it is possible to see and hear everything in all areas. The lookout may be the adult in charge of the swim and may give the buddy signals.

- 6. Ability Groups.** Divide into three ability groups: nonswimmers, beginners, and swimmers. Keep each group in its own area.

- *Nonswimmers* have not passed a swimming test.
- *Beginners* must pass this test: Jump feet-first into water over the head in depth, level off, and swim 25 feet on the surface. Stop, turn sharply, resume swimming as before, and return to the starting place.
- *Swimmers* pass this test: Jump feet-first into water over the head in depth. Level off and swim 75 yards in a strong manner using one or more of the following strokes: sidestroke, breaststroke, trudgen, or crawl; then swim 25 yards using an easy, resting backstroke. The 100 yards must be completed in one swim without stops and must include at least one sharp turn. After completing the swim, rest by floating.

These classification tests should be renewed annually, preferably at the beginning of the season.

- 7. Buddy System.** Pair every youth with another in the same ability group. Buddies check in and out of the swimming area together. Emphasize that each buddy lifeguards his buddy.

Check everyone in the water about every 10 minutes, or as needed to keep the buddies together. The adult in charge signals for a buddy check with a single blast of a whistle or a ring of a bell, and a call of "Buddies!" The adult counts slowly to 10 while buddies join and raise hands and remain still and silent. Guards check all areas, count the pairs, and compare the total with the number known to be in the water. Signal two blasts or bells to resume swimming. Signal three blasts or bells for checkout.

- 8. Discipline.** Be sure that everyone understands and agrees that swimming is allowed only with proper supervision and use of all eight points of Safe Swim Defense. The applicable rules should be presented and learned before the outing and should be reviewed for all participants at the water's edge just before the swimming activity begins. Cub Scouts should respect and follow all directions and rules of the adult supervisor. When people know the reasons for rules and procedures, they are more likely to follow them. Be strict and fair, showing no favoritism.

SWIMMING POOL SAFETY

Safe Swim Defense applies to swimming at beaches, private or public pools, lakes, or anywhere Scouts swim. Here are some additional points for swimming pools.

Home Swimming Pool Safety

A certified lifeguard, highly recommended, is not required. A qualified supervisor must be present. It is critical that the swimming activity be supervised by a conscientious adult who knowingly accepts the responsibility for the youth members involved in the swimming activity.

Along with the Safe Swim Defense standards, families and leaders should follow additional guidelines:

- A responsible adult must be in charge and must know and use the Safe Swim Defense plan. *Adult supervision must be continuous while the pool is in use.*
- Be aware of any physical limitations of any boy. *Secure an approval slip from each boy's family with information about his physical condition.* If there is any question, don't let him swim.
- Be sure of everyone's swimming ability. *Remember that the buddy system is always in use.* Explain the buddy system before swimming, and have buddy checks every 10-minutes.
- *Do not allow diving into an above-ground pool.* Diving from the edge of any pool requires water at least 7 feet deep. Use of a diving board requires clear water below the board with a depth of 9 to 12 feet. There should be no other surface or underwater activity or obstruction for at least 15 feet on either side of the board and 25 feet in front of the board. Some home swimming pools may be too small to allow for the safe use of a diving board. All diving activities must be strictly supervised and controlled.
- Access to unattended pools should be controlled by fences with self-latching gates, locking pool covers, and removal of means of entrance to above-ground pools. *Pool owners have a moral and legal responsibility for pool accidents that occur, even if they have not given permission for the pool's use.*

Qualified Supervision

All swimming activity must be supervised by a mature and conscientious adult age 21 or older who understands and knowingly accepts responsibility for the well-being and safety of youth members in his or her care, who is experienced in the water and confident of his or her ability to respond in the event of an emergency, and who is trained in and committed to compliance with the eight points of BSA Safe Swim Defense. It is strongly recommended that all units have at least one adult or older youth member currently trained as a BSA Lifeguard to assist in planning and conducting all swimming activity.

Public Swimming Pool Safety

If the swimming activity is in a public facility where others are using the pool at the same time, and the pool operator generally provides a certified lifeguard, you still need to provide a qualified supervisor for the swimming activity.

The buddy system is critically important, however, even in a public pool. *Remember:* Even in a crowd, you are alone without protection if no one is paying attention to your circumstances.

The rule that people swim only in water suited to their ability and with others of similar ability applies in any pool environment. Most public pools divide shallow and deep water, and this may be sufficient for defining appropriate swimming areas. If not, the supervisor should clearly indicate to the participating Scouts the appropriate areas of the public facility. Although such procedures add a margin of safety, their use may not always be practical when the swim activity is conducted at a public facility where non-Scouts are present. A responsible adult supervisor, who understands his or her responsibility and the elements of safety, can exercise discretion regarding certain procedures while maintaining safety.

SAFETY AFLOAT (BOATING SAFETY)

Safety Afloat, a standard that the BSA adopted in 1981, is related to using watercraft in the same way that the Safe Swim Defense plan applies to swimming.

Before a BSA group may engage in any watercraft activity, adult leaders for such activity must complete Safety Afloat Training (No. 34159A), have a commitment card (No. 34242A), and be dedicated to full compliance with all nine points of Safety Afloat. Through enforcement of these nine measures, most watercraft accidents can be prevented.

Safety Afloat

1. Qualified Supervision
2. Physical Fitness
3. Swimming Ability
4. Personal Flotation Equipment
5. Buddy System
6. Skill Proficiency
7. Planning
8. Equipment
9. Discipline

1. Qualified Supervision. All activity afloat must be supervised by a mature and conscientious adult age 21 or older who understands and knowingly accepts responsibility for the well-being and safety of the youth members in his or her care, who is experienced and qualified in the particular watercraft skills and equipment involved in the activity, and who is committed to compliance with the nine points of BSA Safety Afloat.

One such supervisor is required for each 10 people, with a minimum of two adults for any one group. At least one supervisor must be age 21 or older, and the remaining supervisors must be age 18 or older. All supervisors must complete BSA Safety Afloat and Safe Swim Defense training as well as rescue training for the type of watercraft to be used in the activity; at least one must be trained in CPR.

It is strongly recommended that all units have at least one adult or older youth member currently trained as a BSA Lifeguard to help plan and conduct of all activity afloat.

For Cub Scouts:

The ratio of adult supervisors to participants is one to five.

2. Physical Fitness. All people must present evidence of fitness assured by a complete health history from physician, parent, or legal guardian. The adult supervisor should adjust all supervision, discipline, and protection to anticipate any potential risks associated with individual health conditions. In the event of any significant health conditions, the adult leader should require proof of an examination by a physician.

Those with physical disabilities can enjoy and benefit from aquatics if the disabilities are known and necessary precautions taken.

3. Swimming Ability. A person who has not been classified as a swimmer may ride as a passenger in a rowboat or motorboat with an adult swimmer or in a canoe, raft, or sailboat with an adult certified as a lifeguard or a lifesaver by a recognized agency. In all other circumstances, the person must be a swimmer to participate in an activity afloat.

- *Swimmers* must pass this test: Jump feet-first into water over the head in depth, level off, and begin swimming. Swim 75 yards in a strong manner using one or more of the following strokes: sidestroke, breaststroke, trudgen, or crawl; then swim 25 yards using an easy, resting backstroke. The 100 yards must be completed in one swim without stops and must include at least one sharp turn. After completing the swim, rest by floating. This qualification test should be renewed annually.

4. Personal Flotation Equipment. Properly fitted U.S. Coast Guard–approved personal flotation devices (PFDs) must be worn by all people engaged in activity on the open water (rowing, canoeing, sailing, boardsailing, motorboating, water-skiing, rafting, tubing, kayaking, and surfboarding). Type II and III PFDs are recommended.

5. Buddy System. All activity afloat must adhere to the principles of the buddy system. The buddy system assures that for every person involved in an aquatics activity, at least one other person is always aware of his or her situation and prepared to lend assistance immediately when needed. Not only does every individual have a buddy, but every craft should have a “buddy boat” when on the water.

6. Skill Proficiency. All participants in activity afloat must be trained and experienced in watercraft handling skills, safety, and emergency procedures.

- For unit activity on whitewater, all participants must complete special training by a BSA Aquatics Instructor or qualified whitewater specialist.
- Powerboat operators must be able to meet requirements for the Motorboating merit badge or equivalent.
- Except for whitewater and powerboat operation as noted above, either a minimum of three hours of training and supervised practice or meeting requirements for “basic handling tests” is required for all float trips or open-water excursions using unpowered craft.

For Cub Scouts:

Canoeing, rowboating, and rafting for Cub Scouts (including Webelos Scouts) are to be limited to council/district events on flat water ponds or controlled lake areas free of powerboats and sailboats. Before recreational canoeing, Cub Scouts are to be instructed in basic handling skills and safety practices.

7. Planning.

- **Float Plan.** Know exactly where the unit will put in, where the unit will pull out, and precisely what course will be followed. Determine all stopover points in advance. Estimate travel time with ample margins to avoid traveling under time pressures. Obtain accurate and current maps and information on the waterway to be traveled, and discuss the course with others who have made the trip under similar seasonal conditions. (Preferably, an adult member of the group should run the course before a unit trip.)
- **Local Rules.** Determine which state and local laws or regulations are applicable. If private property is to be used or crossed, obtain written permission from the owners. All such rules must be strictly observed.
- **Notification.** The float plan must be filed with the parents of participants and a member of the unit committee. For any activity using canoes on running water, the float plan must be filed with the local council service center. Notify appropriate authorities, such as the U.S. Coast Guard, state police, or park personnel, when their jurisdiction is involved. When the unit returns from this activity, people given the float plans should be so advised.
- **Weather.** Check the weather forecast just before setting out, know and understand the seasonal weather pattern for the region, and keep an alert "weather eye." Imminent rough weather should bring all ashore immediately.
- **Contingencies.** Planning must anticipate possible emergencies or other circumstances that could force a change in the original plan. Identify and consider all such circumstances in advance so that appropriate contingency plans can be developed.

For Cub Scouts:

Cub Scout canoeing, rowboating, and rafting do not include "trips" or "expeditions" and are not to be conducted on running water (i.e., rivers or streams); therefore, some procedures are inapplicable. Suitable weather requires clear skies, no appreciable wind, and warm air and water.

8. **Equipment.** All equipment must be suited to the craft, to the water conditions, and to the individual; must be in good repair; and must satisfy all state and U.S. Coast Guard requirements. To the extent possible, carry spare equipment. On long trips or when spare equipment is not available, carry repair materials. Have appropriate rescue equipment available for immediate use.
9. **Discipline.** All participants should know, understand, and respect the rules and procedures for safe unit activity afloat. The applicable rules should be presented and learned before the outing and should be reviewed for all participants at the water's edge just before the activity begins. When Scouts know and understand the reasons for rules, they will observe them. When fairly and impartially applied, rules do not interfere with the fun. Rules for safety, plus common sense and good judgment, keep the fun from being interrupted by tragedy.

WATER RESCUE

In the BSA's Lifesaving literature, an "order of rescues" has been determined to help boys learn safe, effective water rescues. The rescue methods are taught in order of use: (1) reach, (2) throw, (3) row, and (4) go with support. All Scouts participating in aquatic activities need to be aware of these rescue techniques. Cub Scouts should learn the correct order of rescues so that as they grow older, they will already know the right information.

The first two effective rescue methods are the easiest and safest techniques because they do not require any swimming. Even the most experienced lifesaver will never try a swimming rescue when assistance can be given more safely and easily.

1. Reach

Reaching rescues are safe, simple, and highly effective. If the person in trouble is close to you, lie down, extend a hand, and try to grab the victim's wrist. Nothing could be simpler. If he or she is beyond your reach, then use any available object to extend your reach, such as a pole, paddle, stick, or towel.

2. Throw

If a person needing assistance is beyond any possible reach, try a throwing rescue. PFDs, picnic coolers, wooden benches, deck chairs, spare tires, or any other item that can float can give support. These objects can be thrown, heaved, or shoved to a victim, but a floating object with a line attached is the best approach. Either the line or the object could be used alone.

3. Row

If you are unable to reach the victim or throw an object to the victim, then you need to get help. This help could be a boat that can get you or someone else close enough to reach or throw something to the victim. You should make a rowing rescue only if you are a swimmer and know how to handle the boat. First be sure to put on a PFD, and then row to within reaching or throwing distance of the victim. When you are firmly braced in the boat, extend a paddle or oar or throw a floatation device to the victim.

4. Go (With Support)

Only in rare situations will a swimming rescue be the only choice. It can be quite dangerous to be in the water

with a panicky or unconscious victim, so only people trained in swimming and lifesaving should attempt a swimming rescue. Even when a swimming rescue is tried, the rescuer should always take something with him or her that can be used for floatation.

Cub Scouts need to be reminded that getting entangled with a drowning victim is a sure way of getting into trouble. They should never put themselves at risk when doing any water rescue. If reaching and throwing don't work, GET HELP!