

# Water Safety

## Activity Suggestions for Kids

When planning your events, remember these three points: **start planning early**, make sure your activities **deliver an important safety message** and **have fun**.

Children learn by participating in activities that promote interaction, communication and hands-on experiences. The following activities will provide you with ideas to incorporate into your SAFE KIDS Week events.

### The Pledge

Children trace their hands, and inside the drawing, write their pledge to practice safe behavior whenever they are in and around water.

### Cry For Help

Participants will realize a drowning person cannot call for help. Choose a willing volunteer from the audience. Ask the audience how many of them have ever panicked in the water, where they have at least gasped for air. Then have the children imagine that they are drowning, fighting to survive, and they want someone to help them. But how can someone help them unless he or she knows what a person drowning looks like? State that the actions of a drowning person may surprise you.

Together, you and the volunteer simulate the “instinctive drowning response.” Extend your arms laterally or to the front, pushing down on the water. Put your head back, with your mouth wide open. Open your mouth as wide as possible (like you are going to swallow an apple!) and take in a big breath of air, while still flapping your arms laterally and holding your head back. At the same time shout “HELP.” If done properly, you and your volunteer will only register a weak call, barely audible to someone in the back of the audience.

Program Note: Usually, laughter breaks out and the entire audience tries to simulate drowning. If your audience is not provoked to try the simulation on their own, ask everyone to try it together.

Explain to the class that it is practically impossible for a true drowning victim to shout for help, because he or she does not have a sufficient air supply to do so. Mention that if they see someone drowning on TV or in the movies, actually that person not drowning, they are just acting.

Review the four signs of a drowning victim:

1. Head back
2. Mouth open
3. Arms moving up and down, slapping the water
4. No sound

This can be demonstrated by placing the “drowning victim” volunteer behind a vertically held blue tarp or sheet of plastic (representing water), with his or her body visible only from the neck up to the

audience. This program is better when combined with “Find a Float” or some type of activity that describes proper rescue techniques.

### **The Safety Cruise**

Welcome parents and children aboard the nautically themed SAFE KIDS Safety Cruise.

Appoint a volunteer to be captain of the safety cruise and host a variety of safety-related games and activities. Display personal floatation devices, a blue tarp to represent the water, rafts and blow-up boats. Teach safe behavior in and around water.

### **Find A Float**

The audience will be able to identify methods they can use to safely rescue someone. The audience will realize they should not enter the water to attempt to rescue a person unless they are certified lifeguards, properly trained and equipped.

Remind members of the audience that drowning is the second leading cause of unintentional injury-related death among children ages 1-14 and the leading cause among children ages 1 to 4. Inform them that a significant number of people drown within 10 feet of safety.

Establish a small area as a body of water and select a volunteer from the audience. Have him or her lie or sit down in the “body of water” and act like he or she is having problems and cannot make it back to shore.

Lay several potential rescue items on the floor near the “water.” Items could include a cooler, a boat paddle or oar, a towel, a water ski, a fishing rod, a tree branch and a type IV personal flotation device.

Have the children demonstrate how they could rescue the person by reaching the items out to the “victim.”

Next, have the volunteers demonstrate how they could rescue the victim by throwing an item to them. (Clarify that the item they use should float!)

The presenter should then discuss the next step: “Reach, throw, row” Ask or have a volunteer demonstrate how the victim could be safely rescued by rowing.

Reach, Throw, Row, Don’t Go! Explain why a person should never actually go in the water to rescue a person in trouble. Tell them that several double and triple drownings have occurred because someone entered the water to try and rescue a person. The best thing a person can do if he or she cannot reach or throw something to the person that is in trouble is get help. Explain that only trained rescuers should enter the water to try and save someone in trouble.

At the conclusion of the simulation, discuss the difference rescue techniques that were used. Emphasize that a person that is drowning could be rescued using ordinary items that are usually available at a picnic or beach setting. Once again, point out that they should never place themselves in danger, because they could become drowning victims if they enter the water to rescue someone.

Materials needed include a piece of carpet, paper or plastic representing water; a cooler or water jug; a paddle or oar; a fishing rod; a beach towel; a personal flotation device; a beach ball; a water ski; a tackle box; an inner tube; a plastic soda jug; and a tree branch.

### **PFD Fashion Show**

Create a PFD fashion show complete with a runway where kids can volunteer to model the latest and greatest in PFD “fashions.” Make sure you have all sizes and types of Coast Guard-approved PFDs on hand for the kids to wear. As the “models” show off their PFDs, point out how to properly fit a PFD and explain the different types and their proper use.

### **Rescue Techniques Toss**

In this game kids must toss a flotation device into a target zone to represent throwing an object to a victim in the water. There are many variations to this game. You can teach kids how to choose an appropriate rescue object by having them pick from a variety of items, some of which float and others that do not! You can also tie a float or a life ring to a rope and have the kids try to toss that into a target zone.



### **PFD Relay**

Have the children participate in a PFD relay race. The children will gain experience with putting on a PFD. During instructions for the race, be sure to point out the importance of wearing an PFD while boating and during other water-related activities.