



Water Safety for Teens and Young Adults

Know the water. Know your limits. Wear a life jacket.

To have a good time around the water, plan ahead and use good judgment. To be safe, you need to think about the water conditions, your own limits and the use of safety gear such as life jackets.

Know the water.

Cold water can kill. Many lakes and rivers are cold enough to cause hypothermia, even in summer. Calm rivers can hide swift currents, rocks, and tree branches. High running rivers in the spring are most dangerous. The ocean has riptides strong enough to pull a good swimmer out to sea.

- ❑ Avoid swimming or boating in high running water. Check water conditions with a rafting company, boating store, local park staff or sheriff marine patrol before setting out.
- ❑ Try to swim in a designated swim area or an area with a lifeguard. If you're not a strong swimmer, stay where you can touch the bottom.
- ❑ Check how cold or fast the water is running before you jump in.
- ❑ Respond quickly if someone calls for help. Your friend may really be in trouble.
- ❑ Never dive or jump into unfamiliar or shallow water. Make sure the water is at least 9 feet deep.

Know your limits.

Drowning often happens when someone swims and gets too tired to make it back to shore. In many cases, friends are not able to help.

- ❑ If you don't know how to swim well, find someone to teach you. Learn to float and tread water for at least 10 minutes. Call your local pool and ask if they have classes for young adults.
- ❑ If you are tired rest, and stay out of the water.
- ❑ Never use alcohol or drugs while you're swimming, diving or in a boat.
- ❑ Learn what to do when someone stops breathing. Learn CPR.

Wear a life jacket.

No matter how good a swimmer you are, the water can overpower your skills. Weather and water conditions change quickly. Once you get tired or fall in, it may be too hard to put on a life jacket.

- ❑ Wear a life jacket when you're in a boat, innertubing or rafting. Boat owners are required by law to carry life jackets that fit each person in the boat. Wear one even if you can swim.
- ❑ Try wearing a life jacket when you are swimming in a lake or river where there are no lifeguards. Life jackets make it easy to stay afloat and could be the difference between life and death.
- ❑ Take a boating safety course if you plan to drive a boat. Call 1-800-336-2628 for details.

For more information, check out www.seattlechildrens.org/dp/