

Bringing Life Vests to Life

A Fashion Show for Teens



Children's
Hospital & Regional Medical Center

Washington State Department of
Health

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
HRSA
Health Resources and Services Administration
Maternal and Child Health Bureau

Congratulations! You now have a copy of *A Life Vest Fashion Show for Teens*. Because, let's face it, life vests have changed a lot. They are no longer what one author described as, "these faded ratty life preservers, these great bloated reddish things that come up under your chin and feel like a strait jacket." (John Herman writing in Deep Waters) The script you are holding is a guide for you to use in its exact form **OR** in a version you create just for your community or school group. For instance, the script mentions specific life vest manufacturers and colors and sizes. Well, you may not find those exact life jackets available in your community for your fashion show. That's fine. What you want to find are similar life vests to make the important safety points shared in the show. Most of all, have fun with it!

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Purpose

Increase the use of life vests by adolescents and young adults.

Objectives

After viewing show, audience members will:

1. Be familiar with wide range of life vests available today
2. Know when it is recommended that everybody wear life vests:
 - a) whenever they are in boats, especially small boats such as rafts, canoes, kayaks, small motor boats; innertubes, even if they are good swimmers; and
 - b) when swimming in lakes or rivers that are deep, cold or have a current
3. Be able to state at least two key safety features to look for on life vests
4. Be able to assess if fit/size is correct for wearer
5. Know where to buy stylish life vests

Set-up

1. Check all vests ahead of time to make sure straps are untangled
2. Pair life vests with cards by matching numbers
3. Read through cards ahead of time
4. Set vests up in order you plan to demonstrate
5. Put cards in same order as vests
6. If you want ambiance, put on sunglasses, zinc oxide, visor, music, etc.
7. If you can recruit volunteers ahead of time, recruit diversity in size (height/weight), ethnicity, gender. You can either match volunteers with closest fitting life vests ahead of time OR have them choose which vests to model. If they choose, make sure you talk about fit as you go.

Implementation

1. Give brief introduction (see "Introduction" script), including demonstrating Orange Keyhole life vest (#1) on Emcee

IF YOU HAVE TO RECRUIT FROM THE AUDIENCE

2. Ask for 4 to 8 volunteers to demonstrate the life vests. (Use "demonstrate" and "volunteer" in the beginning, rather than "model" to encourage a wider range of kids to participate.)
3. If you can, recruit diversity in size (height/weight), ethnicity, and gender.
4. Have volunteers put on first four to eight life vests. (Don't worry about getting proper sizes on kids; assessing good fit is part of the demonstration.)

IF YOU HAVE RECRUITED VOLUNTEERS AHEAD OF TIME

2. If you can, recruit diversity in size (height/weight), ethnicity, and gender.
3. Match volunteers with closest-fitting life vests ahead of time.
4. Have volunteers put on first four to eight life vests.

IN EITHER CASE

5. Start with life vest # 2. Ask volunteer to step in front of stage or walk across stage while you describe. Have volunteer wait on stage until you are finished reading description, then check for fit:
 - vest should be snug around chest
 - eyeball size of model and note weight range on tag on vest. **DO NOT** make direct comments about weight but **DO** note if vest is too small or too large.
 - pick up life vest by shoulders. Model's chin and ears should **NOT** slip through vest.
6. Have model take life vest off and put it aside.
7. Check each model for fit each time.
8. After first set of life vests are demonstrated have volunteers put on next set.
9. When all life vests have been demonstrated, ask for a few of the volunteers to come back out for the "WHAT'S WRONG HERE?" activities.
 - Put a **LARGE** vest on a small kid
 - Put a **YOUTH** vest on a big kid
 - Buckle any vest incorrectly
10. Thank volunteers; ask for round of applause before they return to their seats.
11. Hand out "Stay on Top of It" flyers and/or your own information

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to Make Your Fashion Show a Success

- Q.** If we can't borrow a kit, where do we get life vests to use in the show?
- A.** Great question. You probably have a small committee working on the arrangements for the fashion show. Start by brainstorming where in your community you might get life vests donated or loaned for your show. Make sure you include: marine supply stores, sports equipment stores, local Power Squadrons, Coast Guard, marinas, and boat owners in your community. Not every community will have all those resources, but the more you look for, the more you will find. When people hear what you're doing – a great water safety fashion show – they will want to be involved to help keep your community water safe.
- Q.** Okay, we have started locating life vests to use, but what were the key points we want to illustrate in our life vest choices?
- A.** Another great question. You definitely want to show your audience these different safety points:
- Bright color – so you are visible
 - Proper fit – life vests come in different sizes and activity specific styles
 - Labels that tell you if the life vest is Coast Guard approved
 - Types of vests – this helps you pick the right vest for the right activity, and Types include I, II, III, IV and V

Q. How can I get the audience involved in the show?

A. I think you mean how do I make this show interactive and get some audience participation? That's important, too. Take a look at the script, especially the section called, "What's Wrong Here?" You are demonstrating different life jackets and sharing a lot of information with your audience. Give them a chance to share information with you. Have your audience tell you what's wrong with several of the models you bring on to the runway.

Another great interactive approach is to get your audience to compare different life jackets you demonstrate. Look at the script for #4, the Mustang inflatable, yellow, adult life vest. Have members of the audience tell you what's different about the life vests designed for different water activities. That way, your audience will really watch and focus on the different life vest models you are sharing.

Q. Can we add life vests or other ideas about water safety?

A. Of course! There may be special information from your community that you want to share or special people you want to use. Maybe your school or community pool swim team wants to model for you. Maybe the PTA wants to stage the fashion show. You could involve one whole family in the show. You could use a dog or stuffed animal to demonstrate a life vest made for pets.

Kit Contents

- 13 life vests tagged with numbers and weight range
 1. Orange Keyhole life vest
 2. Mustang Recreational/Yellow/Small
 3. Mustang SeaRider/Medium
 4. Mustang Inflatable
 5. BARE neoprene CG Approved/Red or Green/Large
 6. Neoprene non-approved/various sizes, colors, manufacturers
 7. Connelly Women's/Lavender/Medium
 8. Jobe/Royal Blue/Youth Long
 9. HO Sports/Blue/Adult Ex-Small
 10. ExtraSport Kayak/Red/Small
 11. Mustang Youth/Yellow/Youth
 12. O'Brien Watersports/Red Pin-striped/Large
 13. Stearns/Dolphin/Infant
- Implementation Plan (that's this handout!) and Script
- Sample "blurbs" describing the event
- "Stay on Top of It" flyer masters

Extras you may want to provide for the Emcee to wear/general ambiance

- sunscreen
- sunglasses
- visor
- zinc oxide
- tape of beach music, portable tape player

Life Vest Sizes	Approximate Weight
Infant	less than 30 lbs.
Child	30-50 lbs.
Youth	50-90 lbs.
Adult Extra Small	90-110 lbs.
Adult Small	110-125 lbs.
Adult Medium	125-150 lbs.
Adult Large	150-175 lbs.
Adult Universal	90+ lbs.

Script for “Bringing Life Vests to Life, A Fashion Show for Teens”

#1 INTRO/ADULT UNIVERSAL ORANGE KEYHOLE STYLE

Welcome to **Stay on Top of It -- A Life Vest Fashion Show for Teens.**

When you think "life jacket" is this what comes to mind? (Hold up Orange Keyhole PFD and put it on)

Hey -- it works! And you'd be glad to have it on if your boat took a flip. It'll also keep your head out of the water and it's just as safe as a vest-style Coast Guard approved life jacket. They're also called life vests or PFDs, short for personal flotation device.

Now you're going to see the coolest collection of life vests around. Wear any one of these when you're out on the waves and get all the looks you want. These and other life vests use the latest technology and are designed with your age group in mind.

First, I'm going to need some volunteers to help me out. Any volunteers? --- Great!

(Get kids to put on life vests in order. You can either guide by size -- directing small youths to small vests, big kids to big vests, etc. -- or let them choose their own and comment on fit as you go.)

**#2 WATER RECREATION LIFE VEST
MUSTANG SURVIVAL (YELLOW)
SMALL**

This is a recreational boating life vest by Mustang Survival. You can use it sailing, fishing, or just cruising around -- any time you're out on the water. It's also a decent choice when you're swimming in a lake or river. It comes in extra small adult sizes to better fit teens and young adults. That bright yellow color lets everyone see you, along with rescue boats in case you DO go over.

I'm going to check each vest for good fit. First, it should be snug but comfortable. (Check and comment on whether it is snug, loose, or too tight.) The zipper and ties are easy to use, and help keep in body heat in cold water.

Then, I pull up on the vest's shoulders. Her/His chin and ears should NOT slip through. (Demonstrate.) You do NOT want to slip out of the life vest when you fall into the water. It wouldn't look too great in front of a beach full of buddies.

**#3 JET SKI LIFE VEST
MUSTANG SURVIVAL SEARIDER STYLE
MEDIUM**

Here's a sporty sea-rider vest by Mustang. It's perfect for riding on jet skis. The fleece-lined, fitted collar provides comfort and supports your head if you really wipe out. It has both a zipper and buckles for high-impact protection. There's even an inside storage pocket and ring for your keys! It uses special foam for comfort and flexibility. Check out boating and marine supply stores for vests like this.

**#4 INFLATABLE SUSPENDER OR POUCH STYLE
MUSTANG SURVIVAL
ADULT UNIVERSAL**

(Emcee to put on)

What's different about this life vest? (*Pause for answers -- look for "not as thick" or "flatter" or "skinnier".*) *If they guess, say "That's right!" If not, go right to "It's INFLATABLE!!* When everything's OK, it's sleek and flat against your body. (or in a pouch) So it's comfortable and allows total freedom of movement. But if an emergency comes up, pull this cord (point out) to inflate it automatically. If that doesn't work, you can also inflate it manually by blowing through this nozzle (point out and demonstrate blowing). That will bring your head above water in a matter of seconds.

This Mustang vest is only for older teens and adults -- you have to weigh over 90 pounds and be at least 16 years old to use it.

**#5 WATER SKI OR WAKE BOARD COAST GUARD APPROVED
LIFE VEST
BARE NEOPRENE
LARGE**

Any water-skiers or wake-boarders out there? This neoprene vest by BARE is just for you. It's designed to keep you warm, with a tight fit, yet comfortable. A close fit is real important-- you want the vest to stay on if you're knocked unconscious or hit the water hard. It's got both zipper and buckles to keep it on, and wide-cut armholes for maximum range of motion. You can buy a vest like this at any water ski or wakeboard store. (Keep volunteer on stage while next vest is demonstrated.)

**#6 WATER SKI OR WAKE BOARD NON COAST GUARD
APPROVED LIFE VEST
VARIOUS COLORS, SIZES, MANUFACTURERS**

You may look cool in this neoprene vest. But don't be fooled. It's not a true personal floatation device, it isn't Coast Guard approved, and it won't keep you afloat like an approved life vest will. Always look at the label inside before you buy a vest. Let's look at these two. (Have models remove vests.)

This one says, "THIS PRODUCT IS NOT A COAST GUARD APPROVED LIFE SAVING DEVICE."

And this reads, "US COAST GUARD APPROVED"

Every vest MUST have this label to tell you whether or not the Coast Guard approves it, whether it is a Type I, II, III, IV, or V, and the water conditions and type of activities it's specifically designed for.

Most vests also have a size listed here, like small or large and a chest size. Youth and child-size vests will also list weight.

**#7 WATER RECREATION LIFE VEST
CONNELLY WOMEN'S (LAVENDER)
MEDIUM**

Life jackets are unisex in design to fit both women and men. But this Connelly recreational vest is specially made to appeal to women and girls. It's got adjustable straps for that snug fit you want. Smaller buckles and no zipper tell you that it's best for boating, fishing and just playing around in the water. It's a Type III, which is best designed for recreational use when you're not too far from shore.

**#8 YOUTH SIZE RECREATION LIFE VEST
 JOB (ROYAL BLUE)**

Here's a youth size vest. This all-purpose vest is designed for older children who are comfortable in the water and playing near the shore. This vest is NOT designed for rough water. It's very easy to use, with three simple straps that adjust for that all-important comfy fit. (Demonstrate.)

**#9 WATER RECREATION LIFE VEST
 HO SPORTS (BLUE/TEAL/PURPLE)
 TEEN TALL/ADULT EXTRA SMALL**

This HO Sports model is another all-purpose vest designed to fit older children or teens. Wear it when you're out rafting, inner tubing or in any small boat. Try vests on before you buy to get one that fits you -- and to make sure it suits the activities you're planning. Take note of the Think Safe brochure that comes with any new life vest you buy. This is worth reading. It's got a lot of good info about proper use of life vests and how to stay safe in the water today so you can enjoy it tomorrow.

**#10 KAYAK/CANOE LIFE VEST
 EXTRASPORT (RED W/POCKETS)
 SMALL**

You can tell this is designed for something different. This ExtraSport vest is great for kayaking and canoeing. It's high waisted, so it won't pull up when you are sitting, has no buckles to get in the way of your paddling, and has easy one-strap adjustments on the sides. Isn't this a fresh idea -- big mesh pockets for your gear, and a place to hook a whistle or fishing knife. Check out canoe, kayaking and recreational equipment stores for these.

**#11 YOUTH SIZE WATER RECREATION LIFE VEST
 MUSTANG SURVIVAL (YELLOW)**

This Mustang youth-sized vest has some different style elements. It's got a neck collar, to help support the head; a loop on the collar, to help pull you out (much better than yanking on hair), and a between-the-leg strap to make sure that vest stays on. Remember to wear a life vest any time you're out on a boat, even a little rowboat or a raft.

**12 WATER SKI LIFE VEST
O'BRIEN WATERSPORTS (RED PIN-STRIPED)
LARGE**

Here we have an O'Brien water-ski vest. Note the large armholes for extended range of motion, fat buckles designed to withstand impact up to 50 miles per hour, and snaps to hold the straps in line. Those armholes also make it easier to use if you're swimming across a small lake or river. Currents, deep or cold water -- no matter how hot of a swimmer you are -- can be bad news if you get tired. The life vest'll keep you floating -- all the way across. And the pin-stripes let you start a new trend.

**#13 INFANT RECREATION LIFE VEST
STEARNS (DOLPHIN PRINT)**

Any little brothers and sisters tagging along? Keep them afloat, too, with this cute dolphin vest by Stearns. It features the neck collar, grab loop, and strap between the legs. It's comfortable, too.

WHAT'S WRONG HERE?

Could I have a few of our models back out? (Conduct the following preparations:

- Put any LARGE on a small kid
- Put any YOUTH on a big kid
- Buckle any vest incorrectly)

Now we'd like you to tell us what's wrong with these life vests. All too often, life vests are not used properly, which can be dangerous.

First we have ... (have model say name in microphone). Now, what is wrong with her/his life vest?

1. Life vest way too big! -- Could slip out of vest

Next we have ...

2. Life vest way too small -- May not keep you afloat

Next we have...

3. Life vest not buckled correctly -- may come undone

These are just some examples of great-looking life vests. No matter what your size or what water sport you like, there's a life vest to fit you. Go to any water sports or recreation store to find one that's Coast Guard approved and that fits you and your summer plans.

HOW TO STAY ON TOP OF IT

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

1

Wear a Coast Guard-approved life jacket that fits you when you are in a boat, especially any small boat. There are good-looking life jackets available for every size and for every water sport -- sailing, canoeing, kayaking, skiing, wakeboarding, innertubing, rafting, swimming. If you are driving a boat, make sure all your passengers wear life vests, too.

2

Swim in lifeguarded or designated areas. Many teens drown trying to swim across a lake or river, or swimming to a float or other "destination." Wear a life jacket if you swim across a river or lake, or ask someone to go with you in a boat. No matter how good a swimmer you are, being in cold, deep or moving water is dangerous. Even in the summer, many rivers are cold enough to cool your body within minutes, making it impossible for you to swim (hypothermia). Remember, you do have limits.

3

Feet first, first time. Walk in the water the first time you swim somewhere, even if you swam there safely last week. Check for rocks, logs or anything else you might hit. Make sure it is at least 10 to 12 feet deep before you dive. Look out for sudden drop-offs and strong currents, too.

4

Learn how to swim if you don't know how. Ask if your local swimming pool has teen-only classes. If you already can swim, do some laps now to get strong for summer.

5

Never use alcohol or other drugs while you're swimming, diving or in a boat. It's just like drinking and driving, but the effects of alcohol are even worse when you are on or in the water. Being drunk even alters your sense of direction. Someone who is drunk may swim towards the bottom when a boat capsizes.

6

Act quickly and seriously if someone calls for help. Teens have died from drowning because their friends thought they were joking around.

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Washington State Drowning Prevention Project

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