

Swimming Safety

These are general guidelines for simple swimming situations. These guidelines don't cover all possible water safety considerations. Activities such as river crossings, boating of any kind, scuba diving, surfing, canyoneering, and caving may require additional training and guidelines. Note that many outdoor programs do not allow swimming except in designated lifeguarded swimming areas. Outside of these areas, these programs may only allow wading in shallow still water.

Preparation

Assess each participant's swimming ability. This information can be obtained as a question on a participant's medical form (see forms section in appendix for example of this). You could also consider having a formal swimming ability test before heading out into the field.

Actions that minimize risk

- Designate clear swim areas
- Establish safety rules immediately. Several rules to consider:
 - No diving or headfirst entry
 - No jumping into water from a height greater than 6 feet
 - Wear footwear (such as sandals) at all times when in the water.
 - Wear a PFD, especially for swimming areas with any significant current.
 - Limit non-swimmers and/or those with limited abilities to shallow wading or wearing a PFD.
- Directly supervise swimmers at all times.

Important considerations when setting up a swimming area:

- Ensure easy access in and out of the water
- Pay attention to depth and water visibility
- Stay clear of drop-offs, submerged obstacles, weeds, logs, deep mud, etc.
- Avoid swimming in strong currents or tides
- Be aware of water temperature and weather conditions. Limit swimming time to minimize potential for hypothermia