

## Water Safety for Children and Young People

October 2007

During the school holidays, and in particular in hot weather, increasing numbers of children put themselves at risk of drowning. In 2005, 39 children aged between 0-14 accidentally drowned in the UK.

To keep yourself safe, when you are in, on or beside water, always follow the Water Safety Code.



### The Water Safety Code

#### Spot the dangers!

Water may look safe, but it can be dangerous. Learn to spot and keep away from dangers. You may swim well in a warm indoor pool, but that does not mean that you will be able to swim in cold water.

*The dangers of water include:*

- *Very cold temperatures*
- *It can be deep*
- *There may be hidden rubbish like shopping trolleys or broken glass*
- *No lifeguards*
- *Hidden currents*
- *It is difficult to estimate depth*
- *It can be difficult to get out (steep slimy banks)*
- *Water pollution may make you ill*

#### Take safety advice!

Special flags and notices may warn you of danger. Know what the signs mean and do what they tell you.

#### Go together!

Children should always go with an adult, not by themselves. An adult can point out dangers or help if somebody gets into trouble.

#### Learn how to help!

You may be able to help yourself and others if you know what to do in an emergency. If you see someone in difficulty, tell somebody, preferably a Lifeguard if there is one nearby, or go to the nearest telephone, dial **999**, ask for the **Police** at inland water sites and the **Coastguard** at the beach.

## Understanding Water Safety Signs and Symbols

At the seaside there is a flag system to let you know when and where it is safe to enter the water. If you follow these it means that a lifeguard can assist you if you get into difficulties while in the water. If you do not use the flags there may be no one around to help you.



Red and yellow flags mean Lifeguards are on patrol. You should only swim or boogie board in the area between the flags.



The red flag means it is dangerous to bathe or swim and you should not go into the water.



The quartered black and white flag indicates the area zoned for surf craft and Malibu boards. It is not safe for swimmers and bathers.

There are also national water safety signs that are commonly used around the country. These let the public know what is safe to do on a particular stretch of water and what the dangers are. They can warn of dangers that the public may not be able to see themselves. Using the same signs around the country means that everyone can understand the messages wherever they are. Some examples of national water safety signs are:



**No Swimming**



**DANGER  
Deep Water**



**DANGER  
Strong Currents**



**Lifejackets must  
be worn**

<http://www.rosipa.com/waterandleisuresafety/info/signs.pdf>

## How You Can Help

Dial 999.

Rescuing a drowning person is the last resort and you should do everything possible to avoid getting into a dangerous situation in the first place. If you have to make a rescue attempt, think of your own safety first and never put yourself in danger. If the rescue is too dangerous, wait until the emergency

### Get Help

The first thing you must do if you see someone in trouble in the water is to shout

# 999



### Reach

With a long stick, a scarf, clothes or anything else. Crouch or lie down to avoid being pulled in.

### Wade

Test the depth with a long stick before wading in and then use the stick to reach out. Hold on to someone else or the bank.



### Throw

A rope is best - you can then pull in the person. Otherwise throw something that will float - a ball, a plastic bottle, a lifebuoy; this will keep the person afloat until help comes.

### Row

Use a boat if there is one nearby and if you can use it safely. Do not try to pull the person on board in case they panic and capsize the boat.



### Once Rescued

Keep the casualty warm and make sure they get medical help.

## Further Information and Links

- <http://www.rospa.com/waterandleisuresafety/youngpeople/waterresources.htm>
- <http://www.rospa.com/waterandleisuresafety/factsheets/watersafety.htm>
- [http://www.rospa.com/waterandleisuresafety/wow\\_watersidesafetychallenge.htm](http://www.rospa.com/waterandleisuresafety/wow_watersidesafetychallenge.htm)
- <http://www.rnli.org.uk/>
- <http://www.rlss.org.uk/>
- [http://www.bbc.co.uk/health/first\\_aid\\_action/es\\_drown.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/health/first_aid_action/es_drown.shtml)