



# Teaching Inland Waterway safety at the pool

A program for schools and swim schools



**Royal Life Saving**  
THE ROYAL LIFE SAVING SOCIETY WESTERN AUSTRALIA INC



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## Overview:

Inland waterways such as rivers, lakes and streams are dynamic environments that can change within days and hours. Unfortunately because of this, inland waterways continue to be a leading location for drowning incidents across Australia. This highlights the need for swim schools to teach water safety skills and knowledge that have relevance beyond the confines of a pool.

## Aims:

This program is targeted towards Swim School coordinators and teachers in both regional and metropolitan areas of Western Australia.

- Increase participant confidence in all waterways
- Increase understanding of the many hazards that underlie inland waterways
- Facilitate a program that is both fun, educational and has application to real world, dynamic environments

## Structure:

This program is designed to be tailored by instructors/coordinators to suit the skill level, confidence and knowledge of their own students. For this reason it can be tailored to suit all ages.

The activities described serve merely as a guide for a potential program. This program can be delivered as one entire session or incorporated into your regular swimming program.

## Equipment:

The following equipment is needed for the program:

Lifejackets, blow up boat, rope, towels, stick, esky lid, beach ball

## How to get involved:

To be involved in the program, please let the program coordinator know, by emailing [respecttheriver@royallifesavingwa.com.au](mailto:respecttheriver@royallifesavingwa.com.au) with your planned program date and participant's ages and group size.

You will then be sent a variety of supporting and additional resources for both yourself and students to keep. We encourage you to take photos of your students participating in the program and send these to us!



## Activity 1: Inland Waterway Safety

- Duration: 15 minutes
- Aim: To get participants thinking about how to stay safe in inland waterways

Discuss/ask questions about the following topics:

- What are inland waterways?
- How are they different to beaches and pools?
- What makes them dangerous? I.e. currents, tides, weather, animals, other users
- What can you do to stay safe in an inland waterway? I.e. wear a lifejacket, never swim alone
- What would you do if you were in danger in an inland waterway?

## Activity 2: Goodbye Goggles

- Duration: 10 minutes
- Aim: To increase student confidence in swimming without goggles.
- Application: When swimming in inland waterways, it is not uncommon to be doing so without goggles. Likewise, the water can often be murky and dark making it hard to see beneath the surface.

Have students remove their goggles and engage in the following activities:

- Submerge without goggles & open eyes underwater (can do in pairs)
- Swim 25m in a straight line without goggles.
- Swim to the bottom of the pool, feeling for a toy or object below.

## Activity 3: River Rescues

- Duration: 15 minutes
- Aim: To increase student confidence in rescuing a person in difficulty with a wide range of objects
- Application: Often when swimming in inland waterways, there may be different or limited materials for affecting a rescue, as compared to a pool.

Have students break into pairs/groups and practice the following activities.

- (1) Types of swimmers



First, discuss with participants the different types of swimmers and how this affects the order of rescues:

1. Non swimmer: Climbs ‘the ladder’, vertical in water, panicked
2. Weak swimmer: Able to use arms and legs for support
3. Injured swimmer: Grasping onto injured part of body
4. Unconscious: May be at any level of the pool, not responding

(2) Types of rescues

Now, discuss with participants the types of rescues, their order and when to use each rescue as well as what aids can be used to assist in a rescue.

Talk	The person in trouble is conscious capable of responding to instructions and is close enough to hear the voice and see the gestures of the rescuer.	“Put your feet to the floor” “Float on your back” “Swim to me”
Reach	The person in difficult is near the edge, for example, having fallen into the water.	Holding out a noodle, stick, esky lid etc. for the person to grab onto.
Throw	The person in difficulty is too far away to carry out a reach rescue. The purpose of throwing a buoyant aid is to provide the swimmer in difficulty with support until removal from the danger area is possible.	Throwing a rope, buoyant aid etc.
Wade	Attempts to reach and throw have been unsuccessful and the depth, current and temperature of the water permit a safe entry. The technique brings the rescuer nearer to the person in difficulty and may enable a reach or throw rescue to be attempted.	Wading into the water to assist a person in difficulty
Row	It is not possible to perform reach or throw rescues and a wade rescue is not possible because of the depth of the water. This is an effective and safe technique because the rescuer remains clear of the water and the person in difficulty can be made secure quickly and safely.	Use of craft such as body board, paddle craft etc.
Swim	Rescuers should use a swimming rescue only when all land-based rescues have either failed or are not appropriate	Swimming out to person in difficulty and passing them an aid
Tow	Non-contact tows should be prioritized over contact tows	Swimming out to person and having them hold onto an object

### (3) Practice

Once all of the above has been discussed and understood by participants, have participants break into pairs and practice each of the entries:

- Talk: Have one participant in difficulty and another talking to them, helping them to return to safety.
- Reach: Practice reach rescues with a variety of aids, including those that may be specific to inland waterways; i.e. esky lids, towels, sticks, etc.
- Throw: Practice throws rescues with ropes, tie downs etc.
- Wade:
- Row: Practice rescues using body boards or an inflatable boat if appropriate
- Swimming Rescues:
- Tows: practice non contact tows, with aids such as noodles, kick boards etc. and then go through the different types of contact tows; head, cross chest, wrist etc. All tows must keep the persons head above the water and allow freedom for the rescuers movements.

This can also be conducted as relays, where for example, participants break into groups and must use a throw rescue with a rope to rescue each person in the group whilst competing with another group. To make it difficult, a throw rescue is only deemed successful if the rope lands directly next to the person in difficulty.

Another example may be with the use of rescue tubes, having participants swim to the person in difficulty, place the tube around them and swim them back before rotating in their groups.

### Activity 4: Survival swimming

- Duration: 60 minutes
- Aim: To increase student confidence in remaining calm and safe in survival situations

Activities:

#### (1) Eggbeater kick/Treading water

Have participants individually practice treading water, ensuring that all participants can competently tread water.

Gradually increase difficulty:

- Participants tread water
- Participants lie on back and scull
- Participants tread water without hands
- Participants place one hand in air
- Participants place both hands in air
- Participants lie on back with ball between themselves and another participant (at feet) and try and remain in one spot.
- Participants form a circle and all tread water passing beach ball between them for 5 minutes (ball must not hit water).

### (2) Floating

When immersed in cold water, a natural instinct is to fight the cold by moving. However, to avoid hypothermia it is best to instead remain still and float to conserve energy.

Have participants floating on their back and occasionally rotate onto their front for water familiarization.

### (3) Lifejackets

Have participants correctly fit a lifejacket on dry land, then throw/place the lifejacket in the water at a designated point, swim out to the lifejacket, put the lifejacket on in the water, swim a length with the lifejacket on, before signalling for help, removing the lifejacket and finally, swimming to shore. This can be completed in a 'relay style'.

Ensure you discuss:

- How to correctly fit a lifejacket (in water and on land)
- How to correctly care for a lifejacket when not in use
- How to tell if a lifejacket is too big
- How to tell if a lifejacket is not safe to wear

### (4) Survival swimming

If required, teach participants the different swimming AND survival swimming strokes, before having them demonstrate each stroke over a marked distance (dependent on the pool this may be 15m or as large as 50m).

To make this more interesting, this can also be done as a relay in teams.



- Freestyle
- Backstroke
- Breaststroke
- Survival Backstroke
- Sidestroke

Participants must also combine these strokes in a distance swim where they must not stop moving for a period of time, i.e. 5 minutes or 10 minutes for an advanced group.

After/before this, if appropriate, have participants don full length clothing (pants and shirts) and conduct a distance swim of different strokes, before taking the clothes off in the water.

#### (5) Head above water

In some scenarios keeping your head above the water can be a key to keeping safe. I.e. it may be appropriate to keep an eye on a reference point on land, or maintain contact with another person in the water.

Divide participants into teams, each team receives a folded piece of paper. The aim is for this piece of paper to remain as dry as possible throughout the activities:

Suggested challenges include:

- Having all participants tread water, passing the paper between them
- Having participants put on a lifejacket one by one in the water
- Having participants complete a relay swim
- Having participants complete duck dives one by one

At the end of all challenges, the team whose piece of paper is the driest wins.

#### (6) HELP Position

The HELP position is an important survival skill to teach.

Divide participants into teams and have those wearing lifejackets, assume the HELP position for a specified time period.

You can also stimulate a real life scenario and nominate a leader to do a head count and ensure everyone is doing okay and is not unwell.





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## Activity 5: Staying Afloat

Duration: 30 minutes

Aim: To practice real life scenarios and have students build confidence in acting fast and remaining calm

Scenarios may include:

- With an inflatable boat, if available, have participants in the boat wearing lifejackets testing the stability of the boat before falling out of the boat and practicing a real life survival scenario by putting to practice all that they have learnt.
- A person is in difficulty and participants only have a lifejacket and an esky lid to rescue them. Working in groups they must get the person to safety.



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