



# Guide to Safe Scouting

## II - Aquatics Safety

### Who Can Instruct Safe Swim Defense and Safety Afloat Training?

Safe Swim Defense and Safety Afloat training can be given by any person authorized by the council, including a BSA Aquatics resource person, a unit leader with aquatics skill, or any other person with aquatics knowledge or experience whom the local council has approved.

### Safe Swim Defense

Before a BSA group may engage in swimming activities of any kind, a minimum of one adult leader must complete Safe Swim Defense training, have a commitment card (No. 34243) with them, and agree to use the eight defenses in this plan.

One of the best opportunities for Safe Swim Defense training is in summer camp. The eight defenses are:

#### 1. Qualified Supervision

**All swimming activity must be supervised by a mature and conscientious adult age 21 or older who understands and knowingly accepts responsibility for the well-being and safety of youth members in his or her care, who is experienced in the water and confident of his or her ability to respond in the event of an emergency, and who is trained in and committed to compliance with the eight points of BSA Safe Swim Defense. (It is strongly recommended that all units have at least one adult or older youth member currently trained as a BSA Lifeguard to assist in the planning and conduct of all swimming activity.)**

#### 2. Physical Fitness

**Require evidence of fitness for swimming activity with a complete health history from physician, parent, or legal guardian.** The adult supervisor should adjust all supervision, discipline, and protection to anticipate any potential risks associated with individual health conditions. In the event of any significant health conditions, the unit leader should require proof of an examination by a physician.

Those with physical disabilities can enjoy and benefit from aquatics if the disabilities are known and necessary precautions are taken.

#### 3. Safe Area

When swimming in areas not regularly maintained and used for swimming activity, have

lifeguards and swimmers systematically examine the bottom of the swimming area to determine varying depths, deep holes, rocks, and stumps. **Mark off the area for three groups: not more than 3 1/2 feet deep for nonswimmers; from shallow water to just over the head for beginners; deep water not more than 12 feet for swimmers.** A participant should not be permitted to swim in an area where he cannot readily recover and maintain his footing, or cannot maintain his position on the water, because of swimming ability or water flow. When setting up a safe swimming area in natural waters, use poles stuck in the bottom, or plastic bottles, balloons, or sticks attached to rock anchors with twine for boundary markers. Enclose nonswimmer and beginner areas with buoy lines (twine and floats) between markers. Mark the outer bounds of the swimmer area with floats. Be sure that clear-water depth is at least 7 feet before allowing anyone to dive into the water. Diving is prohibited from any height more than 40 inches above the water surface; feet-first entry is prohibited from more than 60 inches above the water. For any entry from more than 18 inches above the water surface, clear-water depth must be 10 to 12 feet. Only surface swimming is permitted in turbid water. Swimming is not permitted in water over 12 feet deep, in turbid water where poor visibility and depth would interfere with emergency recognition or prompt rescue, or in whitewater, unless all participants wear appropriate personal flotation devices and the supervisor determines that swimming with personal flotation equipment is safe under the circumstances.

#### 4. Lifeguards on Duty

**Swim only where there are lifeguards on duty. For unit swims in areas where lifeguards are not provided by others, the supervisor should designate two capable swimmers as lifeguards.** Station them ashore, equipped with a lifeline (a 100-foot length of 3/8-inch nylon cord). In an emergency, one carries out the line; the other feeds it out from shore, then pulls in his partner and the person being helped. In addition, if a boat is available, have two people, preferably capable swimmers, take it out - one rowing and the other equipped with a 10-foot pole or extra oar. Provide one guard for every 10 people in the water, and adjust the number and positioning of guards as needed to protect the particular area and activity.

#### 5. Lookout

Station a lookout on the shore where it is possible to see and hear everything in all areas. The lookout may be the adult in charge of the swim and may give the buddy signals.

#### 6. Ability Groups

Divide into three ability groups: Nonswimmers, beginners, and swimmers. Keep each group in its own area. Nonswimmers have not passed a swimming test. Beginners must pass this test: jump feetfirst into water over the head in depth, level off, swim 25 feet on the surface. Stop, turn sharply, resume swimming as before and return to the starting place. Swimmers pass this test: jump feet-first into water over the head in depth. Level off and swim 75 yards in a strong manner using one or more of the following strokes: sidestroke, breaststroke, trudgen, or crawl; then swim 25 yards using an easy resting backstroke. The 100 yards must be completed in one swim without stops and must include at least one sharp turn. After completing the swim, rest by floating. **These classification tests should be renewed annually, preferably at the beginning**

## of the season.

### 7. Buddy System

**Pair every youth with another in the same ability group.** Buddies check in and out of the swimming area together. Emphasize that each buddy lifeguards his buddy. Check everyone in the water about every 10 minutes, or as needed to keep the buddies together. The adult in charge signals for a buddy check with a single blast of a whistle or ring of a bell and a call of "Buddies!" The adult counts slowly to 10 while buddies join and raise hands and remain still and silent. Guards check all areas, count the pairs, and compare the total with the number known to be in the water. Signal two blasts or bells to resume swimming. Signal three blasts or bells for checkout.

### 8. Discipline

Be sure everyone understands and agrees that **swimming is allowed only with proper supervision and use of the complete Safe Swim Defense.** The applicable rules should be presented and learned prior to the outing, and should be reviewed for all participants at the water's edge just before the swimming activity begins. Scouts should respect and follow all directions and rules of the adult supervisor. When people know the reason for rules and procedures they are more likely to follow them. Be strict and fair, showing no favoritism.

## Classification of Swimming Ability

### Swimmer Test

The swimmer test demonstrates the minimum level of swimming ability required for safe deep-water swimming. The various components of the test evaluate the several skills essential to this minimum level of swimming ability:

**Jump feetfirst into water over the head in depth, level off, and begin swimming. Swim 75 yards in a strong manner using one or more of the following strokes: sidestroke, breaststroke, trudgen, or crawl; then swim 25 yards using an easy, resting backstroke. The 100 yards must be completed in one swim without stops and must include at least one sharp turn. After completing the swim, rest by floating.**

The test administrator must objectively evaluate the individual performance of the test, and in so doing should keep in mind the purpose of each test element.

1. "Jump feetfirst into water over the head in depth, level off, and begin swimming. . . ."

The swimmer must be able to make an abrupt entry into deep water and begin swimming without any aids. Walking in from shallow water, easing in from the edge or down a ladder, pushing off from side or bottom, or gaining forward momentum by diving do not satisfy this requirement.

2. ". . . Swim 75 yards in a strong manner using one or more of the following strokes: sidestroke, breaststroke, trudgen, or crawl; . . ."

The swimmer must be able to cover distance with a strong, confident stroke. The 75 yards must not be the outer limit of the swimmer's ability; completion of the distance should

give evidence of sufficient stamina to avoid undue risks. Dog-paddling and strokes repeatedly interrupted and restarted are not sufficient; underwater swimming is not permitted. The itemized strokes are inclusive. Any strong side or breaststroke or any strong overarm stroke (including the back crawl) is acceptable.

3. "... swim 25 yards using an easy, resting backstroke ..."

The swimmer must indicate the ability to execute a restful, free-breathing backstroke that can be used to avoid exhaustion during swimming activity. This element of the test necessarily follows the more strenuous swimming activity to show that the swimmer is, in fact, able to use the backstroke as a relief from exertion. The change of stroke must be accomplished in deep water without any push-off or other aid. Any variation of the elementary may suffice if it clearly provides opportunity for the swimmer to rest and regain wind.

4. "... The 100 yards must be swum continuously and include at least one sharp turn. ..."

The total distance is to be covered without rest stops. The sharp turn simply demonstrates the swimmer's ability to reverse direction in deep water without assistance or push-off from side or bottom.

5. "... After completing the swim, rest by floating."

This critically important component of the test evaluates the swimmer's ability to maintain in the water indefinitely even though exhausted or otherwise unable to continue swimming. Treading water or swimming in place will further tire the swimmer and are therefore unacceptable. The duration of the float test is not significant, except that it must be long enough for the test administrator to determine that the swimmer is, in fact, resting and could likely continue to do so for a prolonged time. The drownproofing technique may be sufficient if clearly restful, but it is not preferred. If the test is completed except for the floating requirement, the swimmer may be retested on the floating only (after instruction) provided that the test administrator is confident that the swimmer can initiate the float when exhausted.

Reference: **Swimming and Lifesaving** merit badge pamphlets

## Beginner Test

**Jump feetfirst into water over the head in depth, level off, swim 25 feet on the surface, stop, turn sharply, resume swimming as before, and return to starting place.**

The entry and turn serve the same purpose as in the swimmer test. The swimming can be done with any stroke, but no underwater swimming is permitted. The stop assures that the swimmer can regain a stroke if it is interrupted. The test demonstrates that the beginning swimmer is ready to learn deepwater skills and has the minimum ability required for safe swimming in a confined area in which shallow water, sides, or other support is less than 25 feet from any point in the water.

## Pool and Surf Swimming

The Safe Swim Defense applies to swimming at the beach, private or public pool, wilderness pond, stream, lake, or anywhere Scouts swim. Here are some additional points for the pool and the surf.



Pool - If the swimming activity is in a public facility where others are using the pool at the same time, and the pool operator provides guard personnel, there may be no need for additional designation of Scout lifeguards and lookout.

The buddy system is critically important, however, even in a public pool. Remember, even in a crowd, you are alone without protection if no one is attentive to your circumstances.

The rule that people swim only in water suited to their ability and with others of similar ability applies in a pool environment. Most public pools divide shallow and deep water, and this may be sufficient for defining appropriate swimming areas. If not, the supervisor should clearly indicate to the participating Scouts the appropriate areas of the public facility. Although such procedures add a margin of safety, their use may not always be practical when the swim activity is conducted at a public facility where non-Scouts are present. A responsible adult supervisor, who understands his or her responsibility and the elements of safety, can exercise discretion regarding certain procedures while maintaining safety.

Surf - The surf swimming environment of wave action, currents, tides, undertow, runouts, and sea pests like stinging jellyfish requires precautions for safe swimming that aren't necessary in other environments. A swimmer's physical condition is very important and should enable the swimmer to recover footing in waves, swim vigorously for at least five minutes without becoming exhausted, and remain calm and in control when faced with unexpected conditions.

Designated swimming areas are marked by flags or pennants that are easily seen. Beginners and nonswimmers are positioned inshore from the standing lifeguards equipped with reach poles. Better swimmers are permitted seaward of the lifeguard but must remain shoreward of anchored marker buoys. The lifeguard-to-swimmer ratio should always be 1-to-10, with a rescue team stationed at the beach area and supplied with a rescue tube or torpedo buoy.

## Safety Afloat

Safety Afloat has been developed to promote boating and boating safety and to set standards for safe unit activity afloat.

**Before a BSA group may engage in an excursion, expedition, or trip on the water (canoe, raft, sailboat, motorboat, rowboat, tube, or other craft), adult leaders for such activity must complete Safety Afloat**



**Training, No. 34159A, have a commitment card, No. 34242A, with them, and be dedicated to full compliance with all nine points of Safety Afloat.**

## **1. Qualified Supervision**

All activity afloat must be supervised by a mature and conscientious adult age 21 or older who understands and knowingly accepts responsibility for the well-being and safety of the children in his or her care, who is experienced and qualified in the particular watercraft skills and equipment involved in the activity, and who is committed to compliance with the nine points of BSA Safety Afloat. One such supervisor is required for each 10 people, with a minimum of two adults for any one group. At least one supervisor must be age 21 or older, and the remaining supervisors must be age 18 or older. All supervisors must complete BSA Safety Afloat and Safe Swim Defense training and rescue training for the type of watercraft to be used in the activity, and at least one must be trained in CPR. It is strongly recommended that all units have at least one adult or older youth member currently trained as a BSA Lifeguard to assist in the planning and conducting of all activity afloat.

**For Cub Scouts:** The ratio of adult supervisors to participants is one to five.

## **2. Physical Fitness**

**All persons must present evidence of fitness assured by a complete health history from physician, parent, or legal guardian.** The adult supervisor should adjust all supervision, discipline, and protection to anticipate any potential risks associated with individual health conditions. In the event of any significant health conditions, the adult leader should require proof of an examination by a physician.

Those with physical disabilities can enjoy and benefit from aquatics if the disabilities are known and necessary precautions taken.

## **3. Swimming Ability**

**A person who has not been classified as a "swimmer" may ride as a passenger in a rowboat or motorboat with an adult "swimmer" or in a canoe, raft, or sailboat with an adult certified as a lifeguard or a lifesaver by a recognized agency. In all other circumstances, the person must be a swimmer to participate in an activity afloat. "Swimmers" must pass this test:**

**Jump feetfirst into water over the head in depth, level off, and begin swimming. Swim 75 yards in a strong manner using one or more of the following strokes: sidestroke, breaststroke, trudgen, or crawl; then swim 25 yards using an easy, resting backstroke. The 100 yards must be swum continuously and include at least one sharp turn. After completing the swim, rest by floating.**

This qualification test should be renewed annually.

## **4. Personal Flotation Equipment**

**Properly fitted U.S. Coast Guard-approved personal flotation devices (PFDs) must be worn by all persons engaged in activity on the open water (rowing,**

**canoeing, sailing, boardsailing, motorboating, waterskiing, rafting, tubing, kayaking, and surfboarding). Type II and III PFDs are recommended.**

## 5. Buddy System

**All activity afloat must adhere to the principles of the buddy system.** The buddy system assures that for every person involved in aquatics activity, at least one other person is always aware of his or her situation and prepared to lend assistance immediately when needed. Not only does every individual have a buddy, but every craft should have a "buddy boat" when on the water.

## 6. Skill Proficiency

**All participants in activity afloat must be trained and experienced in watercraft handling skills, safety, and emergency procedures. (a) For unit activity on white water, all participants must complete special training by a BSA Aquatics Instructor or qualified whitewater specialist. (b) Powerboat operators must be able to meet requirements for the Motorboating merit badge or equivalent. (c) Except for whitewater and powerboat operation as noted above, either a minimum of three hours' training and supervised practice or meeting requirements for "basic handling tests" is required for all float trips or open-water excursions using unpowered craft.**

For Cub Scouts: **Canoeing and rafting for Cub Scouts (including Webelos Scouts) is to be limited to council/district events on flat water ponds or controlled lake areas free of powerboats and sailboats. Prior to recreational canoeing, Cub Scouts are to be instructed in basic handling skills and safety practices.**

## 7. Planning

- a. **Float Plan.** Know exactly where the unit will put in, where the unit will pull out, and precisely what course will be followed. Determine all stopover points in advance. Estimate travel time with ample margins to avoid traveling under time pressures. Obtain accurate and current maps and information on the waterway to be traveled, and discuss the course with others who have made the trip under similar seasonal conditions. (Preferably, an adult member of the group should run the course before the unit trip.)
- b. **Local Rules.** Determine which state and local laws or regulations are applicable. If private property is to be used or crossed, obtain written permission from the owners. All such rules must be strictly observed.
- c. **Notification.** The float plan must be filed with the parents of participants and a member of the unit committee. For any activity using canoes on running water, the float plan must be filed with the local council service center. Notify appropriate authorities, such as Coast Guard, state police, or park personnel, when their jurisdiction is involved. When the unit returns from this activity, persons given the float plan should be so advised.
- d. **Weather.** Check the weather forecast just before setting out, know and understand the seasonal weather pattern for the region, and keep an alert "weather eye." Imminent rough weather should bring all ashore immediately.

- e. **Contingencies.** Planning must anticipate possible emergencies or other circumstances that could force a change in the original plan. Identify and consider all such circumstances in advance so that appropriate contingency plans can be developed.

For Cub Scouts: **Cub Scout canoeing and rafting does not include "trips" or "expeditions" and is not to be conducted on running water (i.e., rivers or streams);** therefore, some procedures are inapplicable. Suitable weather requires clear skies, no appreciable wind, and warm air and water.

## **8. Equipment**

All equipment must be suited to the craft, to the water conditions, and to the individual; must be in good repair; and must satisfy all state and U.S. Coast Guard requirements. To the extent possible, carry spare equipment. On long trips or when spare equipment is not available, carry repair materials. Have appropriate rescue equipment available for immediate use.

## **9. Discipline**

All participants should know, understand, and respect the rules and procedures for safe unit activity afloat. The applicable rules should be presented and learned prior to the outing, and should be reviewed for all participants at the water's edge just before the activity begins. When Scouts know and understand the reasons for the rules, they will observe them. When fairly and impartially applied, rules do not interfere with the fun. Rules for safety, plus common sense and good judgment, keep the fun from being interrupted by tragedy.

**Note: For cruising vessels (excluding rowboats, canoes, kayaks, and rafts, but including sailboats and powerboats longer than 20 feet) used in adult-supervised unit activities by a chartered Venturing crew or Sea Scout ship specializing in watercraft operations or used in adult-supervised program activity in connection with any high-adventure program or other activity under the direct control of the National Council, the standards and procedures in a forthcoming Sea Scout manual may be substituted for the "Safety Afloat" standards.**

## **Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs)**

**Properly fitted U.S. Coast Guard-approved personal flotation devices (PFDs) must be worn by all persons engaged in activity on the open water (rowing, canoeing, sailing, boardsailing, motorboating, waterskiing, rafting, tubing, and kayaking).**

**Only U.S. Coast Guard-approved equipment (types I, II, or III) is acceptable for use in Scouting aquatics.** Ski belts are not acceptable. Scouts and unit leaders should learn which type is appropriate for each specific circumstance and how to wear and check for proper fit.

## Water Clarity

**Swimming activity in turbid water should be limited to surface swimming. Turbid water exists when a 12-inch white disk at the depth of 3 feet is not visible from above the surface of the water. Underwater swimming, headfirst entry (except for racing dives), and board diving are not permitted in turbid water.** Supervised instruction in lifesaving skills and surface diving may be conducted in confined areas of turbid water not exceeding 8 feet in depth and free of bottom hazards.

**Snorkeling and scuba skills are taught and practiced only in clear water. Clear water exists when a 12-inch disk at a depth of 8 feet is visible from above the surface of the water.**

## BSA Lifeguard

BSA Lifeguard training has been established to provide units (packs, troops, teams, and posts) with qualified individuals within their own membership to give knowledgeable supervision for activities on or in the water. The first standard in the Safe Swim Defense and Safety Afloat guidelines establishes a need for qualified supervision. An adult currently trained as a BSA Lifeguard or an adult leader assisted by a Scout holding BSA Lifeguard training meets this requirement. To enroll in the BSA Lifeguard course, you must be at least 14 years of age or have completed the eighth grade. The latest requirements for BSA Lifeguard training are included on the application form, No. 34435. Every unit leader is encouraged to become trained or to be certain that at least one youth or adult member of the unit has such training.

## Swimming

Swimming areas should be large enough to avoid crowding (minimum of 40 square feet per swimmer). Note the following in accordance with Safe Swim Defense rules. **Mark off the area for three groups: not more than 3.5 feet deep for nonswimmers; from shallow water to just over the head for beginners; deep water not more than 12 feet for swimmers.**

## Diving and Elevated Entry

**"Diving" refers to any water entry where the feet are not making first contact with the water. "Elevated entry" refers to any water entry from a height more than 18 inches above the water. According to BSA Safe Swim Defense standards, no diving or swimming activity of any kind is done in water with a depth greater than 12 feet.**

**All water entry must be feetfirst where the water has less than 7 feet of unobstructed depth. A leaping entry is recommended where water is at or above head level; a step-down or jump-down entry from a sitting position is recommended for shallower water.**

**No diving is permitted in water with less than 7 feet of unobstructed depth. Diving**

**is permitted in clear water over 7 feet deep from a dock, pier, or platform that is no more than 18 inches above the water surface. For elevated entry from 18 inches high but less than 40 inches above the water surface, clear and unobstructed water depth must be at least 9 feet. The water must be clear enough to enable supervisory and guard personnel to see the diver at the deepest part of the plunge.**

**Board diving is permitted only from boards, mounted on a fixed (not floating) platform or deck, no more than 40 inches (approximately 1 meter) above the water surface. Clear water depth below the board should be 9 to 12 feet. A guard or supervisor should be positioned where the diver can be seen at all times beneath the surface. There should be no other surface or underwater activity or obstruction for at least 15 feet on either side of the board and 25 feet in front of the board. Diving should always be done straight ahead from the board, never to the sides.**

**Any elevated entry from a height greater than 40 inches must be feetfirst and only from a fixed platform or solid footing no more than 60 inches above the water surface. Clear water depth should be 10 to 12 feet. Other protective measures and distances are the same as for board diving.**

## **Scuba (Venturers and older Scouts only)**

**Any person possessing, displaying, or using scuba equipment in connection with any Scouting-related activity must be currently certified by the National Association of Underwater Instructors (NAUI) or the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI). These two agencies are recognized by the Boy Scouts of America for scuba training and instruction. Alternatively, if PADI or NAUI training and instruction is not available, certification may be accepted from other agencies that comply with Recreational Scuba Training Council (RSTC) guidelines, provided that such acceptance has been expressly approved by the BSA local council in consultation with the BSA national Health and Safety Service.**



**Scuba programs may be a part of Boy Scout or Venturing activities for participants who are 14 years of age or older. Persons meeting the age requirement and properly certified may participate in group dives under the supervision of a responsible adult who is currently certified as a dive master, assistant instructor, or any higher rating from NAUI or PADI. Student divers must be under the supervision of a currently certified NAUI or**

**PADI instructor. No exceptions to the BSA age requirement are permitted, and any NAUI or PADI age requirements for those 14 and older shall be followed in all Scout-related activities. A 14-year-old participant with a junior diver certification may dive only when accompanied by a buddy who is a certified open-water diver**

**at least 18 years old.**

**Because of lack of frequency of diving by most sports divers, it is important that any certified divers be screened and evaluated by a certified diving instructor before participating in BSA-related activities. The skills to be evaluated include the following:**

- . Use of buoyancy control device**
- b. Giant stride entry**
- c. Removal and replacement of weight belt**
- d. Neutral buoyancy**
- e. Snorkel to regulator exchange**
- f. Removal and replacement of scuba unit under the water**
- g. Face mask removal, replacement, and clearing**
- h. Emergency swimming ascent**
- i. Alternate air source ascent**
- j. Pre-dive safety drill**
- k. Five-point ascent and descent**
- l. Deepwater exits**
- m. Simulation of surface procedures**

## **BSA Policy on Asthma/Reactive Airway Disease as Related to Scuba Activities**

- 1. Persons with symptomatic or active asthma/reactive airway disease (commonly known as RAD) should not be allowed to scuba dive. This would include, at a minimum, anyone who:**
  - . Is currently taking medication for asthma/RAD**
  - b. Has received treatment for bronchospasm in the past five years**
  - c. Has exercise induced bronchospasm**
  - d. Has cold-induced bronchospasm**
- 2. Persons with asymptomatic asthma/RAD who wish to scuba dive should be referred to a pulmonary medical specialist who is also knowledgeable about diving medicine for a complete medical examination, including exercise and bronchial challenge testing. Any determination of fitness for diving must be made on the basis of such examination and specific testing.**

## **Snorkeling, BSA**

The Snorkeling, BSA, requirements have been developed to introduce Scout-age children to the special skills, equipment, and safety precautions associated with snorkeling; to encourage the development of aquatics skills that promote fitness and recreation; and to provide a solid

foundation of skills and knowledge for those who later will participate in more advanced underwater activity.

Any trained Aquatics Instructor, BSA, may serve as a counselor. A person recognized and certified as a snorkeling instructor by the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI), the National Association of Underwater Instructors (NAUI), American Red Cross, or the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) also qualifies as a Snorkeling, BSA, counselor.

Instructions must be conducted in clear, confined water with a maximum depth of 12 feet. A swimming pool is recommended. All requirements must be completed as stated on the application form, which is available at your local council service center. The counselor may not omit, vary, or add requirements. The requirements are presented in the order in which they should be taught to the Scout. The completed application should be submitted to the local council service center by the counselor or unit leader.

## **BSA Snorkeling Safety**

Snorkeling Safety is the recommended procedure for conducting group snorkeling at a private or public pool, wilderness pond, stream, or wherever the water looks inviting enough to take a dip.

### **1. Qualified Supervision**

All snorkeling activity must be supervised by a mature and conscientious adult age 21 or older who understands and knowingly accepts responsibility for the well-being and safety of the youth members in his or her care; who is experienced in the water and is confident of his or her ability to respond in the event of an emergency; and who is trained in and committed to compliance with the eight points of BSA Snorkeling Safety.

### **2. Physical Fitness**

All persons must present evidence of fitness for snorkeling activity with a complete health history from physician, parent, or legal guardian. The adult supervisor should adjust all supervision, discipline, and protection to anticipate any potential risks associated with individual health conditions. In the event of any significant health conditions, a medical evaluation by a physician should be required by the adult leader. Those with physical disabilities can enjoy and benefit from aquatics if the disabilities are known and the necessary precautions are taken.

### **3. Safe Area**

Training in the use of snorkeling equipment shall be performed in clear, confined water that is not more than 12 feet deep.

Snorkeling may be done in water outside of a confined area under the direction of the qualified supervisor if the participant has met the BSA snorkeling requirements. The local conditions and ability of those engaged in the snorkeling activity should be considered by the qualified supervisor to determine if any special precautions should be taken.

Snorkeling shall not be done if boat traffic, waves, current, water temperature, or weather conditions in the area are deemed unsafe by the qualified supervisor. Time in the water

should be adjusted based on the water temperature.

#### **4. Proper Equipment**

- a. The snorkeling equipment shall be properly fitted and in good repair.
- b. The use of snorkeling vests and personal flotation devices is at the discretion of the qualified supervisor based on the local conditions and the ability of the person(s) engaged in the snorkeling activity.
- c. A diver-down flag must be used in accordance with local rules and regulations.
- d. Appropriate lifesaving equipment in good repair is ready and available to the qualified lookout while supervising the snorkeling activity.

#### **5. Qualified Lookout**

The qualified lookouts are stationed in a location (either afloat or ashore) where it is possible to see and hear all those engaged in the snorkeling activity. The qualified lookout is a strong swimmer with lifeguard skills (i.e., competent swimmers with basic water-rescue skills serve as both lookouts and lifeguards). A minimum of two qualified lookouts are provided with at least one qualified lookout for every eight snorkelers in the water.

#### **6. Ability**

Beginners and nonswimmers in clear, confined water of the appropriate depth may use masks and fins, separately or together, under close supervision. Training for Snorkeling, BSA is limited to qualified swimmers.

Snorkeling in open water is limited to those classified as swimmers unless the supervisor determines that those in the other ability groups may safely participate while wearing a properly fitted personal flotation device.

A group should not undertake a snorkeling activity in open water unless all participants, including the adult supervisor, have completed basic instruction in the Snorkeling, BSA requirements.

#### **7. Buddy System**

All participants in snorkeling activities should be paired as buddies and remain close enough that they are constantly aware of their buddy's location and condition. Generally, buddies should take turns making breath-holding dives. That is, one buddy remains at the surface, floating with his mask in the water while breathing through the snorkel, and keeps an eye on the buddy who is down. When the diver surfaces, both buddies should check their position relative to the rest of the group before moving on or letting the other buddy dive.

It is the combined responsibility of the adult supervisor, the lookout, and the lifeguards to know the number of people in the water at all times, to make periodic checks of that number, and to call for buddy checks when it is necessary to confirm that number.

#### **8. Discipline**

Be sure everyone understands and agrees that snorkeling is allowed only with proper

supervision and use of the complete BSA Snorkeling Safety. The applicable rules should be presented and learned prior to the outing, and should be reviewed for all participants at the beginning of the snorkeling activity. Scouts should respect and follow all directions and rules of the adult supervisor. When people know the reason for rules and procedures they are likely to follow them. Be strict and fair, showing no favoritism.

## **Waterskiing**

Safe waterskiing starts with safe equipment; a thorough knowledge of techniques; competent instruction; an efficient, careful towboat operator; and a conscientious observer. A life jacket is a must for all water-skiers. Skis should be in good shape and free from sharp or protruding edges. The boat operator should be driving solely for the benefit, satisfaction, and safety of the skier. The boat and skier should stay away from docks, swimmers, boaters, people who are fishing, and other objects.

The Water-Skier's Safety Code and Boat Driver's Safety Code are found in the **Waterskiing** merit badge pamphlet. These are guidelines to be followed by all those involved in the sport of waterskiing.

Reference: **Waterskiing** merit badge pamphlet

## **Boardsailing**

The BSA boardsailing program has been developed to introduce Scout-age children to basic boardsailing skills, equipment, and safety precautions, to encourage development of skills that promote fitness and safe aquatics recreation, and to lay a skill and knowledge foundation for those who will later participate in more advanced and demanding activities on the water.

Any person recognized and certified as an instructor by Windsurfer International or the U.S. Board Sailing Association may serve as a counselor for the Boardsailing Award with the approval of the local council service center. Any person trained and experienced in boardsailing skills and safety may serve as a counselor for this award in a Scout summer camp program under the direction and supervision of a currently trained BSA Aquatics Instructor.

Instruction in recreational activity must be conducted according to the BSA guidelines for boardsailing. The Boardsailing Award is now available for inclusion in Scouting programs.

Reference: Boardsailing BSA Award Application, No. 19-935

## **Whitewater Safety Code**

The American Whitewater Affiliation (AWA) Safety Code includes ten recommendations for river safety:

1. Be a competent swimmer.
2. Wear a PFD.
3. Keep your canoe or raft under control, always!



4. Be aware of river hazards and avoid them.
5. Boating alone is not recommended; preferred minimum is three to a craft.
6. Be suitably equipped.
  - a. Wear shoes (tennis shoes or special canoeing shoes are best).
  - b. Tie your glasses on.
  - c. Carry a knife and waterproof matches (also compass and map).
  - d. Don't wear bulky clothing that will waterlog.
  - e. Wear a crash helmet where upsets are likely.
  - f. Carry an extra paddle and canoe-repair tape.
  - g. Open canoes should have bow and stern lines (painters) securely attached. Use at least 15 feet of 1/4- or 3/8-inh rope. Secure them to the canoe so that they are readily available but will not entangle feet and legs in case of a spill.
7. Swim on your back in fast water, keeping your feet and legs downstream and high. Keep watching ahead.
8. When you start to spill, keep the upstream gunwale high.
9. If you do spill, hang on to your canoe and get to the upstream end. (Note: If you are heading into rough rapids and quick rescue is not expected, or if water is numbing cold, then swim for shore or a rock where you can climb out of the water.)
10. When you are with a group:
  - a. Organize the group to even out canoeing ability
  - b. Keep the group compact for mutual support.
  - c. Don't crowd rapids! Let each canoe complete the run before the next canoe enters.
  - d. Each canoe is responsible for the canoe immediately behind it.



---

[Guide to Safe Scouting - Contents](#)

---

The Boy Scouts of America  <http://www.bsa.scouting.org>