



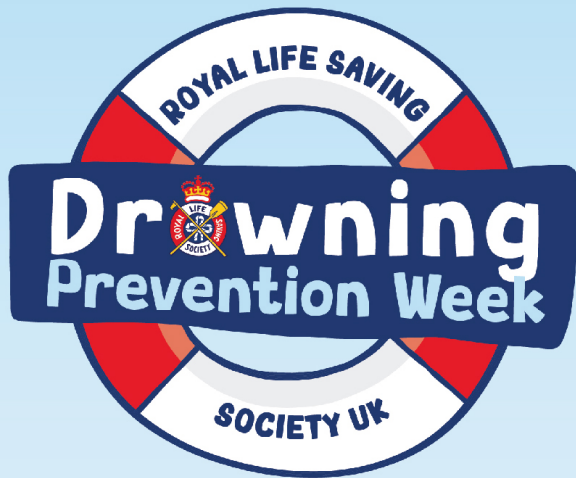
ROYAL  
LIFE SAVING  
SOCIETY UK



**WATER SAFETY ADVICE**

**for you and your families,  
allowing you to enjoy water safely**

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**Help keep your family safe in,  
on and around water.**



**Watch RLSS UK's animation to learn  
more about water safety.**



**Enjoy Water Safely**

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# Key Stats

Why it's important to understand how to enjoy water safely



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# 10 DROWNING FACTS

**312** UK and Irish citizens lose their lives to accidental drowning each year, on average.

**49%** of accidental drownings occur between May and August.

**83%** of those that accidentally drown in the UK are male.

**19 people** drowned across **4 days** in July 2022 as temperatures exceeded 38°C.

**59%** of UK accidental drownings occur in inland waters, e.g. rivers, lakes and canals.

**Alcohol and or drugs** are a factor in **29%** of all UK accidental drownings.

In our analysis, **73%** of drownings occurred in the absence of professional supervision, such as an RLSS UK qualified lifeguard.

2022 saw a **46%** increase in the number of child drownings in the UK, compared to the 5-year average.

In our analysis of outdoor drownings in the UK, **cold water shock** was cited in **38%** of cases.

**44%** of those that lost their lives to accidental drowning in the UK never intended to be in the water.

## Drowning is preventable.

We provide expert lifesaving education in the UK and Ireland, protecting families from the sudden and devastating impact of drowning.

Notes: UK drowning data taken from WAID (2018-2022). Irish data taken from Water Safety Ireland (2018-2022). These numbers do not include UK or Irish nationals drowning overseas. 'Inland' and 'Coastal' splits are as follows: 'Inland' refers to the following locations: canal/aqueduct, dry ground, drain/well, lake/loch/rough, marsh, pond, quarry, reservoir, river, stream/ditch/burn. 'Coastal' includes at sea, harbour/dock, coast/shore/beach. Locations excluded from this analysis are bath, pool (swimming) and water container. RLSS UK analysis of supervision based on n=240 cases of accidental drowning in the UK. RLSS UK analysis on cold-water shock based on n=133 cases of accidental drowning in outdoor water in the UK.

# ALWAYS FOLLOW THE WATER SAFETY CODE



Whenever you are around water:

## STOP AND THINK

Take time to assess your surroundings.

Look for the dangers and always research local signs and advice.



## STAY TOGETHER

When around water always go with friends or family.

Swim at a lifeguarded venue.



In an emergency:

## CALL 999

Ask for the Fire and Rescue Service when inland and the Coastguard if at the coast.

Don't enter the water to rescue.



## FLOAT

Fall in or become tired - stay calm, float on your back and call for help.

Throw something that floats to somebody that has fallen in.





# Summer

# water safety

Accidents are mostly preventable with the correct knowledge and judgment and here are our tips to staying safe in the water during the summer:

## To enjoy the water safely and make the right call...

- **Enter slowly and carefully**  
Think carefully about your ability to splash or swim in cold outdoor water. 49% of those who lost their life were classified as swimmers\*. Are you really a good swimmer?
- **Stay within reach**  
Don't go too far and stay within a standing depth.
- **Always be supervised**  
Over 70% of fatal accidents occur in the absence of professional supervision. Seek life guarded areas and always make sure some one is available to raise the alarm.

Summer is an amazing time to enjoy our beautiful waterways but we must be mindful that warmer weather is directly linked to an increase in fatal drowning incidents.

Rivers and Lakes/Lochs pose the greatest statistical risk as there are often hazards that the average person is equipped to handle and there is a lack of professional supervision.

## In an emergency...

- **Call 999**  
Ask for the Fire and Rescue Service when inland and the Coastguard if at the coast. Don't enter the water to rescue.
- **If you're in trouble FLOAT and call for help**  
Fall in or become tired – stay calm, float on your back and call for help. Throw something that floats to somebody that has fallen in.



STOP AND THINK



STAY TOGETHER



CALL 999



FLOAT



*Winter*

# water safety

**In winter, children and pets are particularly at risk when tempted to play on the ice formed on open water, and adults can find themselves at risk in attempting to save them.**

Taking a nice walk in cold weather with your family, friends or dogs in tow can be really refreshing, just make sure you know some simple tips on how to stay safe in winter.

Here are some useful tips to keep safe this winter:



### KEEP BACK FROM THE EDGE

Keep back from slippery banks.

Stick to well-lit areas and plan your walks in daylight or along well-lit paths.

Never go onto the ice.



### KEEP CHILDREN AND DOGS WITHIN REACH

Teach children not to go onto ice.

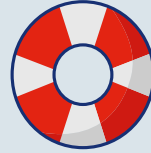
Keep dogs on a lead near ice and slippery banks.

If out enjoying a winter walk, walk with friends.



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for more  
information and  
free resources  
for parents

## In an emergency:



### IF YOU'RE IN TROUBLE FLOAT AND CALL FOR HELP.

Stay calm, float on your back and call for help.

Wait for help and keep as still as possible. Preserve heat by pressing your arms by your side and keep your legs together. Keep your head clear of the water.

Throw something that floats to somebody that has fallen in.



### CALL 999

Do not enter cold water or ice to rescue.

Try and reach them from the bank using a rope, pole, tree branch, clothing tied together or anything else which can extend your reach.



# ... at home

In the last 5 years, 50% of children aged 7 and under who accidentally drowned did so at home.\*

Follow our guidance to help ensure that your home is a safe, secure place for your family and friends to enjoy water safely.



STOP AND THINK

Securely cover or empty all water vessels after use (including baths, toilets, paddling pools and storage containers).

Stop water vessels from re-filling by:

- Turning them over
- Turning off the hosepipe at the tap, so children cannot fill essels themselves



STAY TOGETHER

Stop children gaining access to ponds and pools by:

- Installing secure fencing at least 4 feet high
- Add a strong mesh or grill to the top of your pond



CALL 999

Never leave your child unattended in the bath.

Always keep children under the constant supervision of a capable adult.



FLOAT

Be sure everyone in your household knows who to call in the event of an emergency.

Make sure the whole family knows basic water safety and what to do if they find themselves in the water unexpectedly. You can access FREE RLSS UK resources to help.



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\*source: WAID 2017-21

WATER SAFETY

# ...on Holiday

More than

**85**

**BRITISH  
NATIONALS  
DROWNED**

abroad in 2021.



Whether holidaying abroad, or at home in the UK and Ireland, follow these basic principles to help ensure your family stays safe whilst having fun in, on or around water.



STOP AND THINK



STAY TOGETHER



CALL 999



FLOAT

- When visiting new places, take time to review safety notices. Find out what local signs and flags mean.
- Always look out for potential hazards and warn members of your group to avoid possible risks.
- Never use inflatables in open water - although they look fun, inflatable water toys can quickly get caught in the wind and be blown out to sea.
- Take extra care when intoxicated around water and never enter the water whilst under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs.
- Always choose to visit a lifeguarded venue.
- Swim with others. It's safer to swim in pairs or groups who can help should anyone get into trouble in the water.
- Always keep children under the constant supervision of a capable adult.
- Be sure children know where to go if they become lost or separated from the group.
- Be sure everyone in your group knows who to call in the event of an emergency. If you are abroad, be sure you know the correct number to call.
- Make sure the whole family knows basic water safety and what to do if they find themselves in water unexpectedly. You can access FREE RLSS UK resources to help.



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# ...at the beach



STOP AND THINK



STAY TOGETHER



CALL 999



FLOAT

- When visiting new places, take time to review safety notices. Find out what local signs and flags mean
- Always look out for potential hazards and warn members of your group to avoid possible risks.
- Do not swim near or dive from rocks, piers, breakwater and coral.
- Never use inflatables in open water - although they look fun, inflatable water toys can quickly get caught in the wind and be blown out to sea.
- Take extra care when intoxicated around water and never enter the water whilst under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs.
- Always choose to visit a lifeguarded beach or resort. Consider asking your travel agent for this information when booking..
- Swim with others. It's safer to swim in pairs or groups who can help should anyone get into trouble in the water.
- Always keep children under the constant supervision of a capable adult.
- Be sure children know where to go if they become lost or separated from the group.
- Be sure everyone in your household know who to call in the event of an emergency.
- Make sure the whole family knows basic water safety and what to do if they find themselves in the water unexpectedly. You can access FREE RLSS UK UK resources to help.
- If you get stuck in quicksand or mud, do not stand up. Lie down, spread your weight, shout for help and move slowly in a breaststroke action towards the shore.

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free resources for  
parents







In the last 5 years,

**30%**

of accidental  
drownings on the UK  
occurred at the Beach,  
shore or coast. \*

\*source: WAID 2017-21

# ... in Rip currents

Rip Currents are currents of water typically flowing from the shoreline back out to sea. They are commonly formed by a build-up of water on the beach caused by wave and tidal motion but can also form where an estuary runs into the sea.

## How to Escape

- Call for help
- If you have a buoyant aid (like a surfboard or inflatable) keep hold of it
- Do not swim against the current
- Swim parallel to the shore - this makes sure that you are swimming out of and not back into the rip current
- Once out of the rip current, swim towards the shore, being careful to avoid being drawn back by feeder currents

## Tides

In the UK tides are relatively regular and predictable, yet despite this fact every year a number of people are caught out by rapidly rising water and end up being trapped in isolated bays. If you intend to venture across any beach or bank affected by tidal water, make sure you know when the incoming tide is expected and know where all the exits are.

## British beach flag signs

It must be remembered that beach flag systems are different across the world. However, current ordinate the flags for the future.



**Red**  
Don't go into  
the water



**Red over yellow**  
Lifeguarded area  
– swim between  
the flags



**Black and white  
quarters**  
Surfing area,  
swimmers keep out



**Red and white  
quarters**  
Shark warning  
(unusual in UK)



## Orange Wind Sock

Shows the direction of the wind. If the wind is blowing out to sea do not go into the water on an inflatable (NB Advice is never to go into the sea on an inflatable)

# ...in swimming pools

UK swimming pool drownings account for 1% of all accidental drownings\*. One of the reasons UK pools are relatively safe places to swim is the presence of a trained lifeguard.



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There are still some important things to consider when using a public swimming pool:



STOP AND THINK

- Take time to learn the depth, water flow and layout of the pool.
- Always follow the rules set out by the venue e.g., no running poolside.
- Listen and adhere to the instructions given by the lifeguards on duty.



STAY TOGETHER

- Take extra care when intoxicated around water and never enter the water whilst under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs.
- Always keep children under the constant supervision of a capable adult.



CALL 999

- Weak swimmers should stay where they can touch the bottom of the pool with their feet.
- Be sure everyone in your household knows who to call in the event of an emergency.



FLOAT

- Make sure the whole family knows basic water safety and what to do if they find themselves in the water unexpectedly. You can access FREE RLSS UK resources to help.

\*source: WAID 2017-21

# ...for Open Water Swimming

## 2.68m

people in England participated in open water swimming in 2021, with 408,000 regularly swimming in open water.\*



Have the right equipment



Plan your day



Take a buddy with you



Know your limits



Know how to stay safe and get help

### Plan your day

- Think about the water temperature and weather
- Plan your exit before you get into the water. Consider any currents, the tidal flow and wind direction
- Use a recognised venue
- Research the area – make sure it is safe and you know where to get in and out of the water
- Take time to read the warning and guidance signs and research location advice

### Have the right equipment

- Wetsuits aid exposure to cold water
- Wear a brightly coloured swimming hat
- Take a Tow float
- Warm dry clothes ready – dryrobes are widely used by open water swimmers
- Warm drink
- Always wear a buoyancy aid or lifejacket for activities on the water or at the water's edge
- Something to refuel

### Take a buddy with you

- Tell someone else where you are going and how long you expect to be

\* Active Lives, Nov 20/21



### Know your limits

- Reduce the impact of cold water shock, acclimatise in the home environment and enter the water slowly
- Unless you are a competent open water swimmer, used to swimming in a particular environment you should swim under the supervision of lifeguards
- Swim parallel to the shoreline, wherever possible stay away from deeper water, which will be colder
- Plan and be aware of your exit points
- Avoid drifting in the currents

### Know how to stay safe and get help

- If you get into trouble or feel overwhelmed – Float to Live.
- Fight your instinct to thrash around.
- Lean back
- Catch your breath
- Now think about getting out
- Familiarise yourself with any rescue support or public rescue equipment

### If someone is in difficulty in the water

- Shout reassurance to them and shout for help, and ensure the emergency services are on their way (call 999 or 112)
- Without endangering yourself, see if you can reach out to them, extend your reach with a stick, pole, item of clothing, lie down or stay secure. Alternatively throw something buoyant to them such as a ring buoy, part-filled plastic container, ball, or anything that will float
- Keep your eye on them all the time and shout reassurance, urging them to propel themselves to safety

*Fancy a dip?*

Why not try our Sponge to Plunge programme?

# SPONGE TO PLUNGE

COLD WATER EXPOSURE 2 WEEK HOME PLAN

**DAY  
1**

**30  
SECONDS**

**DAY  
5**

**1 MINUTE  
30 SECONDS**

**DAY  
10**

**2 MINUTES  
30 SECONDS**

**DAY  
14**

**3  
MINUTES**

# ...for Stand Up Paddle Boarding (SUP)



## Top water safety tips for SUP – PLOT your paddle

**Personal Floatation Device** Always wear a buoyancy aid – if you fall into the water it will help you float and keep your airway clear

**Leash** Use an ankle leash for surf or non-flowing water and a quick release waist-belt leash for flowing water or tidal waterways

**Offshore Winds** Check the weather conditions, taking note of local currents and the wind direction – DO NOT paddle in offshore winds

**Telephone** Take a mobile phone with you in a waterproof pouch, if you are in trouble – call 999. Ask for the Fire and Rescue Service when inland and the Coastguard if at the coast



Stand up paddle boarding (SUP) is a great activity for the whole family, both out on the ocean and on open water environments.

### Further tips for your SUP session

- If you get into difficulty, stay on top of your board and signal for help
- Fall into the water and lose your board – Stay calm, float on your back and call for help
- Let somebody know where you are heading and what time you're due to be back
- Paddle with somebody else, it's more fun and they can help in an emergency
- Launch and recover in the relevant lifeguarded zone (black and white flags if at the coast)

### Bystander rescue during your SUP session

Bystander rescues save lives – you could play a critical role in saving somebody's life

- If there is a dedicated rescue service on land raise the alarm with them before you attempt a rescue
- Take a mobile phone with, if you see somebody in trouble in the water – call 999. Ask for the Fire and Rescue Service when inland and the Coastguard if at the coast.
- Never enter the water to rescue – Your personal safety, in any situation is the number one priority
- Avoid direct contact with somebody in trouble. Your paddle is a good reaching aid that you can release quickly
- Know how to perform CPR and learn some basic lifesaving skills

# ...for Runners and Walkers

Each year on average **over 106 people a year lose their life to drowning** as a result of running or walking near water.



Runners and walkers need to know how to stay safe near bodies of water as they are most at risk of accidental drowning.

## Tides

In the UK tides are relatively regular and predictable, yet despite this fact every year a number of people are caught out by rapidly rising water and end up being trapped in isolated bays. If you intend to venture across any beach or bank affected by tidal water, make sure you know when the incoming tide is expected and know where all the exits are.

## Top water safety tips for running or walking near open water

- When running or walking next to open water, stay well clear of bank edges. They are often unstable, and this can create slips, trips and falls
- Try to always walk or run with a friend
- If you are running or walking early in the morning or late at night make sure you stay to well-lit, high traffic areas
- Know how to perform basic survival skills
- If you fall into the water. Stay calm, float on your back and call for help

## Bystander rescue when running or walking

- If you are out running or walking and you spot someone in danger, you could play a critical role in saving their life
- Always raise an alarm with the emergency services and bystanders before you attempt to help
- Never go into the water to rescue a dog, in nearly all cases dogs will be able to get out, don't put yourself at risk
- Take a mobile phone, if you see somebody in trouble in the water – call 999. Ask for the Fire and Rescue Service when inland and the Coastguard if at the coast.
- Know how to perform CPR and learn some basic lifesaving skills



# ...for Anglers

Although angling can seem like a harmless activity, the dangers that large bodies of water pose should always be considered before grabbing your line. Tragically we see a number of anglers lose their lives to drowning each year.

## Top 5 tips for anglers

**1** Know how to perform CPR and learn some basic lifesaving skills

**2** Always wear a floatation vest and nonslip shoes or boots.

**3** When you arrive at your spot, take a moment to stop and think. Assess the area and choose a safe spot with good footing.

**4** Take a mobile phone with, if you see somebody in trouble in the water, don't enter the water to rescue - call 999. Ask for the Fire and Rescue Service when inland and the Coastguard if at the coast.

**5** If you fall into the water. Stay calm, float on your back and call for help

## Further Tips

- Flooded wellington boots or waders make it very difficult to move and can be a significant hazard. Do you need to wear them?
- Be aware of local water hazards such as weirs, strong currents, slippery or undercut banks etc.
- Always try to set up in a safe position with even ground
- Have a throw line with you and get experience in how to use it
- Know where you are located so that you can direct the emergency services to your area if you need to. what3words is an effective way to inform the emergency service of your location, especially if you are rural - remember to call 999 first

People often don't realise the dangers that rivers and open water pose. We want people to enjoy themselves, but look out for their safety and the safety of others when around water. When angling you should always ensure that you wear a buoyancy aid if you can't swim, be trained in CPR and have a throw line on hand which you know how to use. These simple changes could help prevent drowning and keep you and others safe. The RLSS UK offers a fantastic National Water Safety Management Programme, making people aware of the dangers around large bodies of water and teaching them how to react in an emergency.

# Useful Links



SCAN HERE to view our instructional videos to help teach your children some basic water safety skills



SCAN HERE to watch our Families stories who have lost loved ones to drowning



SCAN HERE to learn how to rescue someone who is drowning



SCAN HERE to download our water Safety Activity Sheets



SCAN HERE to view our Lifesaver Lifechanger Toolkit



HEADLINE  
SPONSOR



# MAKE A SPLASH Challenge

Join the RLSS UK Make a Splash Challenge whilst fundraising to help people enjoy water safely.

Whether you are a keen swimmer in a local swimming pool, in open water or a paddleboarder, everyone can take part!

This is a fundraising challenge for RLSS UK, accumulating kilometres in water-based activities. No matter how long or short the distance achieved, we are grateful for every penny raised.

All funds raised will help to deliver national water safety campaigns and help enhance communities through lifesaving courses and education.



**SCAN HERE**  
to sign up today!

Visit [www.rlss.org.uk/make-a-splash](http://www.rlss.org.uk/make-a-splash) for the full challenge information and to sign up, or scan our QR code.

For all enquiries about this fundraising challenge email [fundraising@rlss.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@rlss.org.uk)

[www.rlss.org.uk/make-a-splash](http://www.rlss.org.uk/make-a-splash)



## Enjoy Water Safely

The Royal Life Saving Society UK (RLSS UK) is a registered charity in England and Wales (1046060), and Scotland (SC037912).

Registered office: RLSS UK, Red Hill House, 227 London Rd, Worcester, WR5 2JG

# INSPIRING GENERATIONS to enjoy water safely since 1891



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Enjoy Water **Safely**

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