

Safe Swim Defense Plan for Units

This plan has been most successful throughout the years in making unit swims safe and giving Scouts an understanding of basic principles of group swimming under adequately supervised and safe conditions. If every Scout thoroughly understands it, he can cooperate in its operation and help teach other Scouts its basic principles. Here are the items:

1. Qualified supervision – A responsible adult must be in charge at all times when Scout swimming is conducted. He must be qualified with water-safety training or have trained assistants under his direction.

2. Physical fitness – It is important that the swim supervisor be aware of the physical condition of all participants in or on the water and take special precaution when needed. A current individual health history that includes information on heart, lung, breathing, and ear/hearing conditions is normally sufficient.

3. Safe swimming area – The bottom of the swimming area is examined to make sure it's safe, with no deep holes, stumps, or rocks. It's then marked off in three sections: not more than 1.06 meters (about 3 feet) deep for non-swimmers, up to just-over-head depth for beginners, and deep water for swimmers (not over 12 feet).

4. Lifeguards – Two older Scouts who are good swimmers are guards. They stand at the edge of the water, equipped with a lifeline, ready to assist any swimmer in trouble. In addition, if a boat is available, it should be manned by two older Scouts, preferably good swimmers. One should be at the oars. The other should be equipped with a reaching pole or extra oar, and he should be in the stern, but turned around so both he and the oarsman are facing the swimmers. The boat is stationed just outside the swimming area, with stern toward the swimmers, ready to backwater toward anyone who needs help.

5. Lookout – A lookout stands where he can watch all swimmers. It's best if he is high above so his view is never blocked.

6. Ability – Before group swimming starts, each Scout's swimming ability is tested. The Scouts are then divided into three groups: **non-swimmers** who are just learning, **beginners** who have jumped feetfirst into deep water and swum 7.5 meters (25 feet), then reversed direction and swum another 7.5 meters to their starting point. **Swimmers** pass this test: jump feetfirst into water over the head in depth, level off, and begin swimming. Swim 67.5 meters or 75 yards in a strong manner using one or more of the following strokes: side stroke, breast stroke, trudgen, or crawl; then swim 22.5 meters or 25 yards using an easy resting back stroke. The 90 meters or 100 yards must be swum continuously and 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 each season. Each group stays in its own area during the swim.

7. Buddy system – Each Scout is paired with another of about the same swimming ability. The two check in together on the buddy board or its equivalent, keeping within 9.1 meters (10 feet) of each other at all times, and check out together. Whenever a buddy signal is sounded, buddies grasp each other by the hand and hold their arms high so the lookout can check up on the number of buddy teams.

8. Good discipline – The adult supervisor sees to it that there's intelligent discipline--with strict attention to the rules, but with a chance for everyone to have a good time and to become a better swimmer.

Scouting's Safe Swim Defense plan easily can be used when you are swimming with your own family or with any other group. An annual physical examination will certainly alert your family to facts they should know about their physical condition.

When you go to a public swimming pool or beach, the management should provide supervision, lifeguards, and lookouts, so you need only concern yourself with those things which affect you individually.

Be sensible and keep within the proper area for swimmers of your ability. You should **ALWAYS SWIM WITH A BUDDY**, regardless of where you are swimming. This assures that every swimmer is always watched by at least one other person. If a checkin and checkout plan is not provided by the management, be sure to make some sort of an arrangement to provide it for your own immediate group. It can even be as simple as a scribbled list of swimmers by buddies, with each name being crossed off as they leave the pool.

Of course, all the rules posted and announced by the management should be obeyed by any Scouting group. The Safe Swim Defense plan is simple and **EFFECTIVE!** Use it, enjoy it, and **TEACH IT TO EVERYONE!**