ROYAL
LIFE SAVING
SOCIETY UK

WATER SAFETY ADVICE

for you and your families,

allowing you to enjoy water safely

ROYAL LIFE SAVING

Drowning Prevention Week

SOCIETY UK

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

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

ROYAL LIFE SAVING SOCIETY UK

Enjoy Water **Safely**

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Key Stats

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

10 Drowning Facts

47% OF ACCIDENTAL DROWNINGS occur between May and August.

Only 30% of parents surveyed said they were 'very confident' that their child knows how to stay safe in and around water.

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

Only 51% of Black children in the UK can swim, compared to 73% for White British children

59% of UK accidental drownings occur at inland water sites.

Around two thirds of UK adults surveyed have never had any formal training or education in water safety.

47% of those who lost their life to accidental drowning in the UK **never intended to be in the water.**

An average of **312 UK and Irish Citizens lose their life to accidental drowning** each year.

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

Alcohol and/or drugs are a factor in **32% of all UK accidental drownings.**

Drowning is preventable.
Even one drowning is one too many.

Notes: UK drowning data taken from WAID (2017-2021). Irish drowning data taken from Water Safety Ireland (2017-2021). Overall drowning statistics exclude drowning of UK & Irish nationals overseas. Inland and Coastal split is as follows: 'Inland' includes canal/aqueduct, dry ground, drain/well, lake/loch/lough, marsh, pond, quarry, reservoir, river, stream/ditch/burn. 'Coastal' includes at sea, harbour/dock, coast/shore/beach. Excluded are bath, pool (swimming) and water container. Survey data taken from Nationally Representative survey of UK adults aged 18-65, March 2022. Swimming data based on being able to swim 25m from Sports England Active Lives Survey 20/21. RLSS UK Analysis based on 240 cases of accidental drowning in the UK.

ALWAYS FOLLOW THE WATER SAFETY CODE

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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:

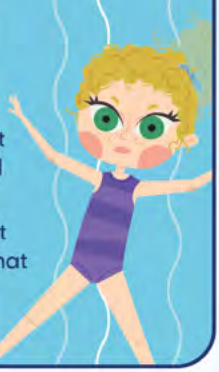
Call 999

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.



Enjoy Water **Safely**

Learn basic lifesaving and CPR skills.
Visit **www.rlss.org.uk**

Summer WATER SAFETY

Drowning accidents are always especially high in the summer months and over the last few years we have heard of too many tragedies that could have been avoided.

Every year people drown both at home and on holiday because they don't take simple precautions, so reaching people with water safety messages is vital.

We want people to enjoy the water safely. Please help to avoid another tragic summer this year by spreading the following water safety advice far and wide:

LOOK OUT FOR LIFEGUARDS

If you're looking for a place to cool off, always find a lifeguarded swimming site

IT'S COLDER THAN IT LOOKS

Water at open and inland sites is often much colder than it looks. Cold water can affect your ability to swim and self-rescue

DON'T GO TOO FAR

Always swim parallel to the shore, that way you're never too far away from it

IT'S STRONGER THAN IT LOOKS

Currents in the water can be very strong. If you find yourself caught in a current – don't swim against it – you'll tire yourself out. Stay calm, swim with the current and call for help

BRING A FRIEND

Always bring a friend when you go swimming so if anything goes wrong, you've got someone there to help

For more information visit **rlss.org.uk**

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rlss.org.uk

... at home

In the last 5 years, 50% of childen 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 trong mesh or grill to the top of your pond

Never leave your child unattended in the bath.

CALL 999

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

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.

SCAN ME
to get free resources for parents

*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 aroound 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 childrenunder 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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WATER SAFETY

...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 aroound 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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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 formedby a build-up of water on the beached 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 on 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

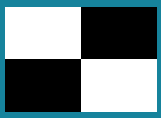
In the UK tides are relatively regular and predictable, yet despite this fact every year a number of people are caught out by rapidly rising water and end up being trapped in isolated bays. If you intend to venture across any beach or bank affected by tidal water, make sure you know when the incoming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

British beach flag signs

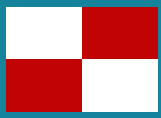
It must be remembered that beach flag systems are different across the world. However, current ordinate the flags for the future.

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 relatvely safe places to swim is the presence of a trained lifeguard.

SCAN ME
to get free resources for parents

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

STOP AND THINK

STAY TOGETHER

CALL 999

FLOAT

- 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.
- Take extra care when intoxicated aroound 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.
- 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.
- 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
- Familarise 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?

...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 you 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

Bystanders 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

WATER SAFETY

...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 sport 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 the mselves, 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

View our instructional videos to help teach your children some basic water safety skills

Watch our Families stories who have lost loved ones to drowning

Learn how to rescue someone who is drowning

Water Safety Activity Sheets

Lifesaver Lifechanger Toolkit

ROYAL LIFE SAVING SOCIETY UK

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MAKE A SPLASH Challenge 2023

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.

Don't forget

to add your time spent on the water at the Head of the Dart SUP Challenge

Visit www.rlss.org.uk/make-a-splash for 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

SCAN HERE
to sign up today!

www.rlss.org.uk/make-a-splash

Registered with FUNDRAISING REGULATOR

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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