

# Troop 37 Water Safety Committee

## Water Safety Rules

[Published November 2002]

The Water Safety Committee of Troop 37 has prepared these rules as an easy reference guide for adults and scouts in the troop who are planning trips that involve either swimming activity or activity afloat. It is based on the Aquatics Safety Chapter of the Guide to Safe Scouting [see [www.bsa.scouting.org/pubs/gss](http://www.bsa.scouting.org/pubs/gss)], and, if there is any conflict between the rules and the Guide to Safe Scouting, the mandates in the Guide to Safe Scouting shall prevail.

### Swimming Activity [PDQBALLS]

- P: Physical Fitness.** Scouts must present evidence of fitness for swimming with a complete health history from a physician, parent or legal guardian.
- D: Discipline.** Everyone should understand that swimming is allowed only with proper supervision and consistent with the rules, which should be reviewed for all participants at the water's edge just before the swimming activity begins.
- Q: Qualified Supervision.** All Scout swimming activity must be supervised by an adult-in-charge who (1) is at least 21 years old, (2) is experienced in the water, (3) is confident of being able to respond in the event of an emergency, and (4) is trained in and committed to compliance with the eight points of BSA Safe Swim Defense. The adult must (a) have commitment card no. 34243, (b) be trained as a BSA Lifeguard, or (c) be accompanied by a Scout holding BSA Lifeguard training.

It is strongly recommended, but not required, that an adult or older Scout trained as a BSA Lifeguard assist in the planning and conduct of all swimming activity.

- B: Buddy System.** Every Scout must be paired with another Scout in the same ability group. Buddies should check in and out of the swimming area together and should be aware that they are responsible for life guarding each other. Using a single whistle blast, everyone in the water should be checked every 10 minutes, or as needed, to keep the buddies together (the buddies should be able to pair up in 10-15 seconds). Two whistle blasts signals a resumption of swimming and three whistle blasts signals checkout.
- A: Ability Groups.** *All participants* (scouts, parents, siblings, friends, etc.) should be divided into three Ability Groups as follows:
- ***Non-swimmers*** are those who have not passed any swimming test.
  - ***Beginners*** are those who have jumped feet first into water over the head in depth, leveled off, swum 25 feet on the surface, turned around and returned to the starting point [2d class requirement #7b].
  - ***Swimmers*** are those who have jumped feet first into water over the head in depth, leveled off, swum continuously 75 yards in a strong manner using any recognized swimming stroke, turned over and swum 25 yards with an easy, resting backstroke, and then floated for one minute (so long as the test administrator is confident the swimmer can initiate the float when exhausted, it need not immediately follow the swimming segment) [1<sup>st</sup> class requirement #9b].

The swimming classification tests should be *renewed annually*, preferably at the beginning of the season. *All persons* (scouts, parents, siblings, friends, etc.) who will be at the waterfront or in the water must be classified.

**L: Lifeguards on Duty.** In areas in which lifeguards are not otherwise provided, the Adult-in-Charge must designate a minimum of two capable Swimmers (see Ability Groups, above) as Lifeguards. They should be equipped with a lifeline (a 100 foot length of 3/8-inch nylon cord). In an emergency, one of the lifeguards can enter the water with one end of the line and, after effecting the rescue, be pulled back in by the other lifeguard. Depending on the number of people in the water, additional lifeguards must be provided so there is at least one lifeguard for every 10 swimmers.

Lifeguards must not take their eyes off the water and should keep all swimmers clearly in view. They should avoid talking to others when on duty.

**L: Lookout.** A Lookout must be stationed on the shore where s/he can see and hear everything (s/he may be the Adult-in-Charge and may also give the buddy signals).

**S: Safe Area.** Any areas not regularly maintained and used for swimming must be examined for depths, currents, deep holes, rocks and stumps.

All swimming areas must be marked for three groups as follows:

- ***Non-swimmers*** should be restricted to an area not more than 3½ feet deep. This area should be marked with poles and twine or buoy lines.
- ***Beginner swimmers*** should be restricted to an area in which the water reaches just over their heads. This area should be marked with poles and twine or buoy lines.
- ***Swimmers*** should be restricted to an area not more than 12 feet deep (swimming is prohibited in water over 12 feet deep). This area should be marked with floats. In murky water, only surface swimming is permitted. For any entry into the water from more than 18 inches above the water, clear-water depth must be 10-12 feet and entry into the water is prohibited from more than 60 inches above the surface of the water. No one should be allowed to dive unless there is a clear-water depth of at least 7 feet and diving is prohibited from any height more than 40 inches above the water surface.

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### Activity Afloat [BSABESAFE]:

- B: Buddy System.** When on the water, every individual must have a buddy and each craft should have a buddy craft.
- S: Swimming Ability [Swim Test].** A person (scout, parent, sibling, friend, etc.) who has not been classified as a Swimmer (see Water Safety Rules, Swimming Activity, Ability Groups) may ride as a passenger in a rowboat or motorboat with an adult swimmer, or in a canoe, raft or sailboat with an adult who is trained as a lifeguard or lifesaver by a recognized agency. In all other circumstances, the person must be a Swimmer to participate in any activity afloat.
- A: Skill Proficiency (Ability).** All participants in activity afloat must be trained and experienced in watercraft handling skills, safety and emergency procedures. For unit activity on white water, all participants must complete special training by a BSA Aquatics Instructor or qualified whitewater specialist. Powerboat operators must be able to meet requirements for the Motorboating merit badge or equivalent. Except for whitewater and powerboat operation, 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.
- 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.
- B: Physical Fitness (Be Fit).** All persons present must present evidence of fitness with a complete health history from a physician, parent or legal guardian.
- E: Equipment.** All equipment must be suited to the craft, to water conditions and to the individual participant. All equipment must be in good repair and must satisfy all state and federal requirements. Spare equipment or repair materials must be carried and appropriate rescue equipment must be available for immediate use.
- S: Qualified Supervision.** All activity afloat must be supervised by an Adult-in-Charge who (1) is at least 21 years old, (2) is experienced and qualified in the particular water craft skills and equipment involved in the activity, and (3) is trained in and committed to compliance with the nine points of BSA Safety Afloat. Sufficient additional adults who are at least 18 years old and have completed BSA Safety Afloat and Safe Swim Defense training and rescue training for the type of water craft to be used must be present so there is at least one for every 10 people on the water (the ratio required for cub scouts is one adult to five scouts). A minimum of two adults is required at all times and at least one of them must be trained in CPR (the adults must have commitment card no. 34242A).

It is strongly recommended, but not required, that an adult or older Scout trained as a BSA Lifeguard assist in the planning and conduct of all activity afloat.

- A: Planning (in Advance).** (a) Float Plan. Know exactly where the unit will put in, where the unit will pull out, and precisely what course will be followed. Estimate travel time with ample margins. Obtain accurate and current maps and information on the waterway to be travelled, 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. All state and local regulations should be ascertained and followed. If private property is to be used or crossed, obtain written permission from the owners. (c) Notification. The float plan must be filed with the parents of the participants and a member of the Water Safety 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. The weather forecast should be checked before setting out and an alert eye toward the weather should be kept. When rough weather threatens, all craft should be brought ashore. (e) Contingencies. Planning must anticipate possible emergencies or other circumstances that could force a change in the original plan.

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). Suitable weather requires clear skies, no appreciable wind and warm air and water.

- F: Personal Flotation Device.** Properly fitted U.S. Coast Guard-approved flotation devices (PFDs) must be worn by all persons engaged in activity on the open water.
- E: (Exercise) Discipline.** All participants should know, understand and respect the rules and procedures for safe activity afloat. The applicable rules should be reviewed for all participants at the water's edge just before the activity begins.

## Appendix to Water Safety Rules

The following are the forms Troop 37 uses to administer the written tests (PDQBALLS) and (BSABESAFE):

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Tell what precautions must be taken for a safe swim:

**P-** \_\_\_\_\_  
**D-** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Q-** \_\_\_\_\_  
**B-** \_\_\_\_\_  
**A-** \_\_\_\_\_  
**L-** \_\_\_\_\_  
**L-** \_\_\_\_\_  
**S-** \_\_\_\_\_

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Tell what precautions must be taken for a safe excursion afloat:

**B-** \_\_\_\_\_  
**S-** \_\_\_\_\_  
**A-** \_\_\_\_\_  
**B-** \_\_\_\_\_  
**E-** \_\_\_\_\_  
**S-** \_\_\_\_\_  
**A-** \_\_\_\_\_

**F-** \_\_\_\_\_  
**E-** \_\_\_\_\_