Water safety code

Spot the dangers

Water can be dangerous, even if it looks safe. Learn to spot and keep away from dangers such as:

- Cold temperatures
- Hidden currents
- Deep water (or it being difficult to know how deep the water is)
- Hidden rubbish (for example, shopping trolleys or broken glass)
- Steep or slippery banks that make it difficult to get out
- No lifeguards
- Water pollution that can make people ill

Look out for safety advice

Flags and notices may warn people of danger. Learn what they mean and do what they tell you. Commonly used signs and flags include:

| No swimming | Danger: deep water | Danger: strong currents | Lifejackets must be worn |

At the seaside, there's a flag system to tell people when and where it's safe to enter the water.

Red and yellow flags mean lifeguards are on patrol. You should only swim (or bodyboard) in the area between the flags.

A red flag means it's dangerous to bathe or swim. You shouldn't go into the water.

A quartered black and white flag means that the area is for surfing. If you're swimming or bathing, you shouldn't go into the water here.

Always go together
Young people should always go with adults, not by themselves. An adult can point out dangers or help is somebody gets into trouble.

Learn how to help
You may be able to help yourself and others if you know what to do in an emergency. If you see someone in difficulty, tell a lifeguard (if there's one nearby). Alternatively, go to the nearest telephone, dial 999, and ask for the police (if you're inland) or the coastguard (if you're at the beach).

How you can help

Dial 999. Rescuing someone from the water is the last resort. You should do everything possible to avoid getting into a dangerous situation in the first place. If you have to make a rescue attempt, think of your own safety first – never put yourself in danger. If the rescue is too dangerous, wait until the emergency services arrive.

Get help. If you see someone in trouble in the water, shout for help and send someone to call 999.

999

Reach. Use something like a long stick or scarf. Crouch or lie down to avoid being pulled in.

Wade. Test the depth with a long stick before wading in, and then use the stick to reach out. Hold on to someone else or the bank.

Throw. If you can, throw a rope so you can pull the person in. Otherwise, throw something that will float (such as a ball, plastic bottle, or lifebuoy); this will keep the person afloat until help comes.

Row. Use a boat if there's one nearby that you can use safely. Don't try to pull the person on board in case they panic and capsize the boat.

Once rescued. Keep the person warm and make sure they get medical help.