

# Safe Swim Defense

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# SMALLBAD

**S**upervision, Qualified

**M**edical – Physical Fitness

**A**rea, Safe Swim

**L**ifeguards – Response Personnel

**L**ookout

**B**uddy System

**A**bility Groups

**D**iscipline

# Qualified Supervision

1. Qualified Supervision **All swimming activity** must be supervised by a **mature and conscientious adult age 21 or older** who **understands and knowingly accepts responsibility for the well-being and safety of those in his or her care, and who is trained in and committed to compliance with the eight points of BSA Safe Swim** 7 The online version of the Guide to Safe Scouting is updated quarterly. Go to [www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss](http://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss). II. Aquatics Safety Defense. It is **strongly recommended** that **all units** have at least one adult or older youth member currently trained in BSA Aquatics Supervision: **Swimming and Water Rescue or BSA Lifeguard** to assist in planning and conducting all swimming activities

# Medical – Physical Fitness

.Personal Health Review **A complete health history is required of all participants as evidence of fitness for swimming activities.** Forms for minors must be signed by a parent or legal guardian. Participants should be asked to relate any recent incidents of illness or injury just prior to the activity. Supervision and protection should be adjusted to anticipate any potential risks associated with individual health conditions. For significant health conditions, the **adult supervisor should require an examination by a physician and consult with the parent, guardian, or caregiver for appropriate precautions**

# Safe Swim Area

.Safe Area **All swimming areas must be carefully inspected and prepared for safety prior to each activity.** Water depth, quality, temperature, movement, and clarity are important considerations. Hazards must be eliminated or isolated by conspicuous markings and discussed with participants

Controlled Access

Diving and Elevated Entry

Water Quality:

Diving and Elevated Entry

Visibility:

Moving Water

Bottom Conditions and Depth

Water Temperature

Life Jacket Use:

# Lifeguards – Response Personnel

4. Response Personnel (Lifeguards) Every swimming activity must be closely and continuously monitored by **a trained rescue team** on the alert for and ready to respond during emergencies. **Professionally trained lifeguards** satisfy this need when provided by a regulated facility or tour operator. When lifeguards are not provided by others, the adult supervisor must assign **at least two rescue personnel**, with additional numbers to maintain **a ratio of one rescuer to every 10 participants**. The supervisor must provide instruction and rescue equipment and assign areas of responsibility as outlined in Aquatics Supervision, No. 34346. The qualified supervisor, the designated response personnel, and the lookout work together as a safety team. **An emergency action plan** should be formulated and shared with participants as appropriate.

# Lookout

5. Lookout The lookout continuously monitors the conduct of the swim, **identifies any departures from Safe Swim Defense guidelines**, alerts rescue personnel as needed, and monitors the weather and environment. The lookout should have a clear view of the entire area but be close enough for easy verbal communication. **The lookout must have a sound understanding of Safe Swim Defense but is not required to perform rescues.** The **adult supervisor may serve simultaneously** as the lookout but must assign the task to someone else if engaged in activities that preclude focused observation.

# Buddy System

7. Buddy System **Every participant is paired** with another. Buddies stay together, monitor each other, and alert the safety team if either needs assistance or is missing. Buddies check into and out of the area together. Buddies are **normally in the same ability group** and **remain in their assigned area**. If they are not of the same ability group, then they swim in the area assigned to the buddy with the lesser ability. A **buddy check** reminds participants of their obligation to monitor their buddies and indicates how closely the buddies are keeping track of each other. **Roughly every 10 minutes**, or as needed to keep the buddies together, the lookout, or other person designated by the supervisor, gives an audible signal, such as a single whistle blast, and a call for “Buddies.” Buddies are expected to raise each other’s hand before completion of a slow, audible count to 10. Buddies who take longer to find each other should be reminded of their responsibility for the other’s safety. Once everyone has a buddy, **a count is made by area** and compared with the total number known to be in the water. After the count is confirmed, a signal is given to resume swimming

# Ability Groups

6. Ability Groups All youth and adult participants are designated as **swimmers**, **beginners**, or nonswimmers based on swimming ability confirmed by standardized BSA swim classification tests. Each group is assigned a specific swimming area with depths consistent with those abilities. The classification tests must be renewed annually, preferably at the beginning of the season even if the youth has earned the Swimming merit badge.

**Swimmers** pass this **test**: Jump feetfirst into water over the head in depth. Level off and swim 75 yards in a strong manner using one or more of the following strokes: sidestroke, breaststroke, trudgen, or crawl; then swim 25 yards using an easy resting backstroke. The 100 yards must be completed in one swim without stops and must include at least one sharp turn. After completing the swim, rest by floating.

**Beginners** pass this **test**: Jump feetfirst into water over the head in depth, level off, and swim 25 feet on the surface. Stop, turn sharply, resume swimming, and return to the starting place. Anyone who has not completed either the beginner or swimmer tests is classified as a nonswimmer. The nonswimmer area should be no more than waist to chest deep and should be enclosed by physical boundaries such as the shore, a pier, or lines. The enclosed beginner area should contain water of standing depth and may extend to depths just over the head. The swimmer area may be up to 12 feet in depth in clear water and should be defined by floats or other markers

# Discipline

8. **Discipline Rules are effective only when followed.** All participants should know, understand, and **respect the rules and procedures for safe swimming provided by Safe Swim Defense guidelines.** Applicable rules should be discussed prior to the outing and reviewed for all participants at the water's edge just before the swimming activity begins. People are more likely to follow directions when they know the reasons for rules and procedures. Consistent, impartially applied rules supported by skill and good judgment provide steppingstones to a safe, enjoyable outing

# Suggestions

- | 1. | Get your scouts swimming in the off-season.   |
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| 2. | Get scouts acquainted to the BSA swim tests before going to camp, in an indoor pool if possible.  |
| 3. | Certify a leader in your pack or troop in “Aquatics Supervision: Swimming & Water Rescue,” if you can find an adult training class at camp. |
| 4. | Make sure more than one leader has had Safe Swim Defense training at each swimming activity.  |