

Be River Safe

River Crossings

Activities

ACTIVITY:

Selecting a safe place to cross the river

Many groups plan their trip so that they can cross rivers using bridges. However if a group needs to enter the river to cross it they must select a safe crossing place.

- Watch the **Be River Safe** DVD section **River Crossing** segment **Site Selection** and determine the five factors that the group need to consider when they are selecting a safe crossing site.
- Watch the **River Features** section of the DVD to get an understanding of river features and the risks they would present to groups who tried to cross a river close to the feature. The features can also be viewed on this website: www.watersafety.org.nz
- You may wish to complete some of the **River Feature Activities** to make sure you can identify the features and understand the risks they present for a river crossing.
- Use diagrams or photographs and a written explanation to explain what you are looking for as you assess each of these factors:
 1. depth of the water
 2. current or speed of the water flowing down the river
 3. safe entry and exit points
 4. safe run out
 5. the nature of the river bed and the colour of the river water.

Check your answers with the factsheet: RIVER CROSSING – SELECTING A SAFE PLACE TO CROSS THE RIVER .



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- Assess each of the sites in the photographs as possible sites for a group of five trampers to cross the river. Mark on the photographs factors that make the sites suitable or unsuitable. Decide where you would choose to cross the river.



Be River Safe ... *plan your trip*

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Be River Safe ... *know your environment*

Be River Safe

River Crossings

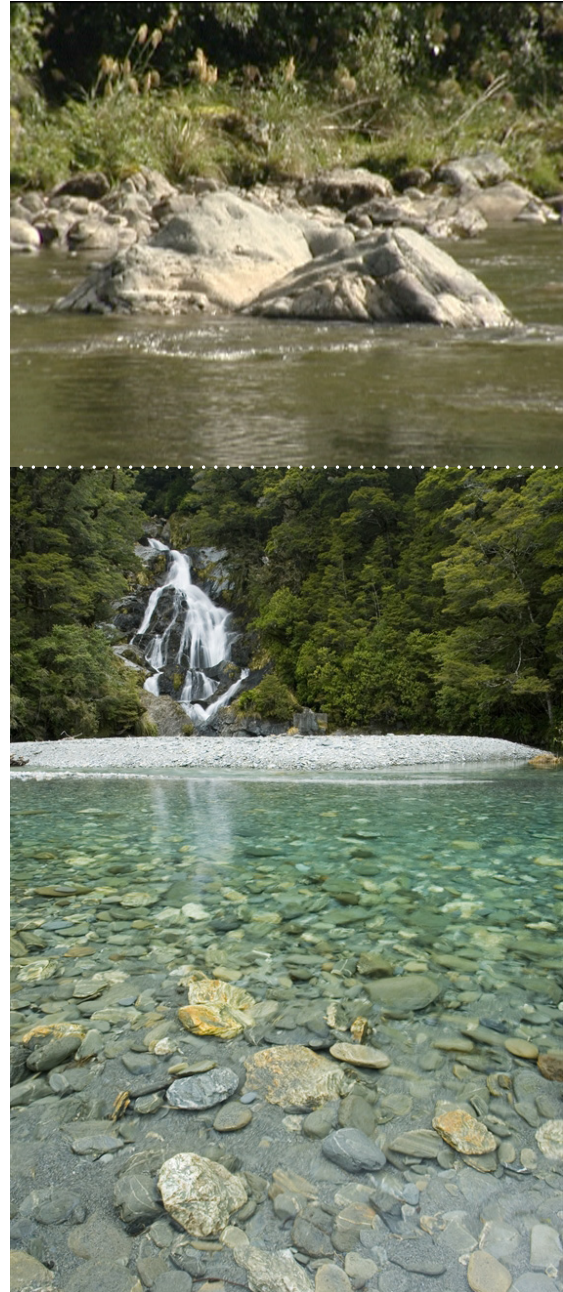
Activities

- Obtain some photographs or footage of a local river and make an assessment of suitable and unsuitable sites to cross the river.

ACTIVITY:

A trip to a local river

- Plan a trip to the river to look at river features and to identify some safe sites to cross the river and some unsafe sites. You may wish to extend your planning to include a river crossing at a suitable site.
- Sequence your planning under these headings:
 - Before we set out
 - Getting to the river
 - At the river
 - In the water (if you are crossing the river).
- Remember to consider:
 - gear: personal, group, technical and safety
 - communication
 - risk identification and management
 - supervision.
- Use the factsheet: PLANNING A TRIP to check your planning and revise your plan if required.



Be River Safe ... *stop and think before you enter the water*

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ACTIVITY: Why take a risk?

Groups must always complete a decision-making process before crossing a river.

The decision-making process has two parts:

1. Assessing whether the river is safe to cross.
 - Do we cross?
 - Where do we cross?
 - How do we cross?
2. Assessing whether the group members have the right equipment and the capability (knowledge, skills and experience) to cross the river.

Every year trampers, including experienced trampers, die crossing rivers.

- Discuss any factors that may encourage groups to attempt a river crossing that has some risks involved.



Be River Safe ... *if in doubt, STAY OUT!*

ACTIVITY: Crossing a river using the Mutual Support Method

- Watch the Be River Safe DVD section River Crossing segments Crossing Preparation, Mutual Support Method and Clothing Grasp Method.
- Describe what the group did to prepare for the river crossing.
- Use these photographs to describe the Mutual Support Method when you are wearing a full pack and when you are wearing a day pack or no pack.
- Explain the advantages of the Mutual Support Method.

You may want to check your answers with information on the factsheet: RIVER CROSSING – THE MUTUAL SUPPORT METHOD.

- Bring packs to your group and practise the Mutual Support Method in groups of four or five.
- In your group, determine the order you would join up to cross the river and give reasons for your decision. Give a reason why, or why not, you would have a leader in your group. If you have a leader decide where they would be placed within your group order.
- Plan a trip to the river where you can learn and practise crossing a river using the Mutual Support Method.

(See Activity: SELECTING A SAFE PLACE TO CROSS THE RIVER for information on how to plan your trip.)



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ACTIVITY: Turning back or retreating

Sometimes it is necessary to stop a river crossing and retreat out of the river.

There are two methods for getting back out of the river:

- back all the way out of the river or
- back out of the river to a safe area then do a Caterpillar Turn and walk out of the river.

In the DVD the group demonstrate doing a Caterpillar Turn but it may have been safer for them to have backed all the way out of the river.

- Watch the **Be River Safe** DVD segment **Turning Back or Retreating** and discuss when a group may decide to stop a river crossing and back out of the river or back out to a safe place, do a Caterpillar Turn and walk out of the river.
- Decide if you think the group should have backed out of the river or done a Caterpillar Turn and why.
- Look at this photograph sequence and determine the risks when you do a Caterpillar Turn.
- Discuss your local river(s) and decide whether groups are most likely to back out of rivers or back out for a distance and then do a Caterpillar Turn.
- If you are planning to do a river crossing include practising backing out of the river and backing out to a safe place and doing a Caterpillar Turn.

Use the factsheet: RIVER CROSSING – TURNING BACK OR RETREATING OUT OF THE RIVER.



Be River Safe ... *look out for your buddy*

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ACTIVITY: Pack float

Things can go wrong when groups are crossing a river and individuals can end up floating in the river current. This is an emergency situation and experienced trampers practise the skill of Pack Floating. The trumper in the **Be River Safe** DVD segment **Pack Float** is experienced at floating down the river head first using his pack for buoyancy.

- Watch the **Be River Safe** DVD segment **Pack Float** and use these photographs to describe what the trumper did to get out of the river.

Check your ideas with the factsheet: RIVER CROSSING – PACK FLOAT.

Consider the following questions.

- How easy would it be to stay calm and float down the river looking for a safe exit point?
- Why did the trumper have to swim hard to cross the eddy line and get out of the river current?
- Why did the trumper walk his pack up the river bank?
- What would the group need to do to make sure this trumper warms up and does not develop the first signs of hypothermia?

Some trampers may choose to travel down the river feet first. If you fall, in this may be the position you naturally assume. There is no one right way.

However if you fall into the river and you are not wearing a full pack you should float on your back in the feet first whitewater position. For a demonstration of this watch the **Survival Swimming** section of the **Be River Safe** DVD or view the segment on this website: www.watersafety.org.nz



Be River Safe ... learn how to swim and survive

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ACTIVITY: A safe river crossing

- Use:
 - the photographs and illustrations provided in these activities and/or photographs from your local rivers and
 - appropriate captions
- to provide a summary of what a group of trampers or walkers should do to cross a river safely.



Be River Safe ... *know your limits*