

Be River Safe

Survival Swimming

Activities

These activities prepare you so you know what to do if you are in a river needing to rescue yourself.

Make sure you understand how to Survival Swim and would be able to adopt the Whitewater Position if you accidentally ended up being swept down a river.

ACTIVITY: Understanding Survival Swimming

- Watch the **Survival Swimming** section on the **Be River Safe** DVD.
- Work in groups and discuss the DVD footage. Consider the following questions.
 - What is Survival Swimming?
 - When do you Survival Swim?
 - Who should learn to Survival Swim?
 - What are the four steps you follow to best learn how to Survival Swim?
- Use these photographs to describe the Survival Swimming technique.

Floating on your back feet first and with your feet on or near the surface of the water is described as the Whitewater Position.

- Explain:
 - the advantages of the Whitewater Position when you are in a river current
 - why the Whitewater Position is the best position to adopt if you are in a river current (and you are not wearing a pack).

Want to check your knowledge of Survival Swimming?

View the factsheet: SURVIVAL SWIMMING on the website:

www.watersafety.org.nz



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

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Survival Swimming

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ACTIVITY:

Survival Swimming – Grand Prix style!

- Set up a land demonstration of Survival Swimming using a grand prix race analogy.
- Have groups of up to 10 line up with one person leading the group in 'pole' position and the rest of the group lined up in twos as for a motor sport race.
- 'Drive a lap of the race course' or 'ride a section of river'. The leader needs to pretend to steer and scull away from obstacles, fend off rocks, bump over rocks on one butt cheek, find a safe exit point, turn over and pretend to swim to the exit point and exit the river. The rest of group follows the leader.
- Repeat with a different person in 'pole' position and this time miss the first exit point, return to the whitewater position and make a successful exit at an imagined second exit point.

ACTIVITY:

Options for trampers wearing full packs

If you are a trumper wearing a pack you may adopt the Whitewater Position and come down the river feet first or you may choose to go head first because your pack provides buoyancy.

There is no 'right method' and unless you have practised going **head first** you are most likely to instinctively go **feet first**.

Either way you need to move with the current until you see a safe exit point then swim strongly to the bank.

If you are wearing a day pack or do not have a pack use the feet first position.

- Watch the **Be River Safe** DVD section **River Crossing**, segment **Pack Float** to see a demonstration of floating head first.

ACTIVITY:

Wearing Personal Floatation Devices or PFDs

- Consider the following questions.
 - What is a PFD?
 - Who should wear a PFD?
 - What are the advantages of wearing a PFD?
 - What would you say to someone who decides they can river kayak without a PFD?



Be River Safe ... take and use the right equipment

ACTIVITY:

A safe river rescue is from the land

If someone is in trouble in the river the only safe rescue is a rescue from the river bank.

In the **Be River Safe** DVD section **Survival Swimming** the students' teacher and instructor chose to follow them down the river. They were able to give the students advice as they completed their survival swim.

It was not their role to rescue the students if they got into trouble.

A safety system was set up where the safety officer on the river bank would throw a throw bag to the student in trouble. The student would grab the rope and be pulled to the river bank.

Every year people enter a river to rescue someone swept into the river current and end up having to be rescued themselves or drowning.

Experienced river rescuers may attempt rescues using kayaks or canoes.

Untrained people should rescue people by:

- standing safely on the river bank at a point where the person in trouble is close to the bank or can swim strongly to get near the bank
- reaching out into the river with any materials they have like a tree branch or a kayak paddle
- encouraging the person in trouble to grab the paddle or tree branch
- pulling the person to the river bank
- helping them out of the river at the river bank.

If people cannot attempt a safe rescue from the river bank they should immediately alert emergency services so a rescue can be attempted.

- Discuss this newspaper article. Consider:
 - how hard it would be for a family member or friend not to enter the water to rescue someone
 - why entering the river to rescue someone is dangerous for the rescuer and not likely to be successful?

MAN DIES RESCUING HIS SON

A 33 year old man was swept to his death after he leapt into the river to rescue his nine year old son. The boy walked into the river to retrieve a soccer ball, but was swept into the river current and carried downstream. Horrified family members were able to run downstream and encourage the boy to grab a kayak paddle and be pulled to the river bank. The man was swept into the middle of the river and could not be rescued from the river bank. His body was later found one kilometre downstream.

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

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ACTIVITY:

Educating others about Survival Swimming

- Prepare a visual presentation and/or a land demonstration of Survival Swimming.
You want to give people information about Survival Swimming that could save their lives if they accidentally ended up in the river.
- You may want to use the short footage of Survival Swimming on the website:
www.watersafety.org.nz
- Select a suitable audience and deliver your presentation.



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