

Be River Safe

Swimming in Rivers

Activities

ACTIVITY:

Swimming safely in rivers

- Watch the **Be River Safe** DVD section **River Safety** segment **Swimming in Rivers**.
- Discuss the **Be River Safe** safety messages in the DVD footage. If you find five or less then you need to watch the footage again.

ACTIVITY:

A safe swimming hole

- Work in groups and discuss:
 - how swimming in rivers is different to swimming in a pool or swimming in the sea
 - why you need to check out the river swimming hole every time before you use it
 - what you need to check when you are checking to see if a river swimming hole is safe
 - what a safe swimming hole in a river is like
 - what river features would make a swimming hole unsafe
 - what skills you need to have to swim in a river swimming hole.

Check your answers by viewing the factsheet: SWIMMING IN RIVERS.



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ACTIVITY: Having fun but being responsible for ourselves and others

- Work in groups and discuss:
 - why rivers are dangerous places to swim
 - why groups need to sort out rules like 'no swimming deeper than this' or 'no swimming out past me' or 'no pulling anyone under'
 - how teenagers and young people get into difficulty when swimming in rivers
 - how easy it is to forget safety when you are having fun in the river
 - why everyone in the water needs to act responsibly while they are having fun
 - what a buddy system is and why two mates should look out for each other.

ACTIVITY: Supervision

It takes less than one minute to drown.
Drowning is a silent activity.

- Work in groups and discuss why:
 - there must be a supervisor in the river when you are swimming in a river
 - older children should not supervise younger children in rivers
 - supervisors need to be strong swimmers or only act as extra supervisors on the land
 - supervisors should not get involved in fun activities in the water.

*Check your answers by viewing on line Be River Safe factsheet:
SUPERVISION AT SWIMMING HOLES AND NEAR RIVERS.*



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

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ACTIVITY:

Planning a trip to the swimming hole

- Prepare a plan for a group of you to go to the local swimming hole. Either your group is old enough to go without adult supervision or there are two adult supervisors going with you.
- Sequence your planning under these headings:
 - Before we set out
 - Getting to the river
 - At the river
 - In the water.
- Remember to consider:
 - gear - personal, group, technical and safety
 - communication
 - risk identification and management
 - supervision.

Give some reasons to support this statement:

'Make a plan before you complete any activity in or on the river.'

Alternatively prepare an argument against the statement:

'Swimming in the swimming hole is what we do lots of days every summer; we don't need to do any planning.'

ACTIVITY:

Is it safe to do this activity here today?

Before we start any aquatic activity we need to do a final assessment to make sure it is safe to do that activity.

- Select an activity you like to do in the river.
- Consider what questions you would ask to make sure it is safe for the group you are with to conduct that activity on the river.
- Use these headings:
 - Local conditions here today
 - Assessment of the river
 - Weather
 - Gear
 - My competence (skills, attitude and level of experience of being in or on the river)
 - Our group's competence (skills, attitudes and level of experience of being in or on the river)
 - Things that could go wrong and how we would deal with it.

Check your responses with the factsheet: IS IT SAFE FOR US TO DO THIS ACTIVITY HERE TODAY?



Be River Safe ... if in doubt STAY OUT

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ACTIVITY:

Stop and think before you enter the water

- Read the following articles then discuss the idea that if people acted on these two safety messages there would be fewer drownings in rivers.

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

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

RIVER SWIMMERS UNDAUNTED BY SAFETY WARNINGS

Dozens of people went swimming in the [redacted] river yesterday despite warnings that the river is not safe following the suspected drowning of a swimmer on Sunday. A male went missing from the jetty when he tangled in an obstacle underwater before he went under and was not seen again. The jetty has a sign that reads: *Danger Be Warned. River currents and debris make swimming unsafe.*

A 17 year old said he had no problem swimming in the river. 'The younger ones might need guidance but for us it's not even dangerous,' he said while climbing a greasy pole 1 metre above the jetty to jump in. 'As long as you stay out of the current you're fine.'

As he dived into the murky water his friend and two other teenagers dragged a rusting shopping trolley from the water and dumped it next to a bike they had pulled out earlier. The friend said obstacles in the water didn't make swimming dangerous.

'We just look around there for things. They are normally pretty deep so we never hit them.'

Trapped kayakers feared death

Two fifteen year old friends thought they would die as they huddled together, wet and cold in the dark. They were waiting for rescuers to find them beneath a cliff on the [redacted] river.

The pair were trapped at the spot for 4 hours after a Sunday afternoon kayaking trip⁴ went wrong. The pair set off in separate kayaks with three others. One of the girls said 'we'd never kayaked before. The river looked calm with some small rapids. Then we got to a big rapid. We went down it and it swept us to the other side of the river. We were panicking. Our kayaks went under the water. I was panicking to get out of the kayak. We bumped against a ledge on the rock.. I got the kayak skirt off and stepped onto the ledge. My friend ended up on the ledge too'.

The boys went and got help calling the police from a farmhouse. Darkness set in and the girls did not have warm clothing and had 'pretty well convinced ourselves we were going to die' when the rescue party arrived.

Weak with hypothermia the girls were winched to safety by the Westpac helicopter and taken to hospital. They were wearing life jackets and helmets but did not have the right gear to spend a night outdoors. Both girls say the experience has put them off kayaking.

Thrill seeker battles for his life

As [redacted] was being swept down the river toward a river control chute he started worrying about the people he would leave behind if he drowned.

'I was thinking "Oh no is this how I die. I go for a 15 minute kayak and I don't come home". I thought my Mum and my girlfriend are going to be angry I died paddling into dangerous white water for an adrenaline rush.'

Fortunately the 19-year old did not die as a large and spectacular rescue operation that required lowering ropes and harnesses off a bridge pulled him to safety.

The 19-year old learned some important lessons. 'I was just really lucky to be able to hang onto a bridge support. There was a ledge I got onto and hung on but the force of the river tried to knock me off it. Before that it wasn't too funny when I was frantically swimming around in the water thinking I was going to die. I should have been more aware and shouldn't have done it, but at the time it was an adrenaline rush. It just got out of hand so quickly'.

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