



## General Water Safety

**Presentation Length:** Approximately 30 minutes

### Key Terms

**Buddy:** A person who helps another person follow the rules and can summon help in an emergency.

**Depth:** The distance from the surface of the water to the bottom of the body of water; a measurement taken downward from the surface of the water.

**Emergency:** A sudden, urgent, usually unforeseen occurrence or occasion requiring immediate action.

**Rules:** Guidelines for conduct or action that help keep one safe at pools and swimming areas.

### Objectives

After completing this presentation, participants will be able to:

- Recognize the importance of water safety training.
- Describe the links in the Circle of Drowning Prevention.
- Describe the steps in the Chain of Drowning Survival.
- Describe the elements of water competency.
- Explain steps to take to remain safe in, on and around water.

### Materials, Equipment and Supplies

- American Red Cross identification
- Easel pad and markers, chalkboard and chalk or white board and markers
- Handouts (one for each participant):
  - Circle of Drowning Prevention
  - Chain of Drowning Survival
- *American Red Cross Swimming and Water Safety*

**Leader's Note:** *Because the range of topics in this presentation is broad, it is helpful to know some general information about the expected audience. For example, try to find out if this is a group of parents with young children, a homeowner's association meeting, a civic organization made up of adults or a summer camp of teenagers on their way to a waterpark. This knowledge can help you customize your presentation to meet the audience's needs.*

*In preparation, ask the individual who requested the presentation:*

- *Who will be attending.*
- *The reasons for offering it.*

*Prepare with this information in mind. Refer to the American Red Cross Swimming and Water Safety manual to find specific content for your audience. As an example, if your audience is a group of parents with young children, include the additional topic, "Watching Children Around Water." Consider following the approach of asking for their input, which requires audience members to draw on their knowledge, followed by a brief discussion to ensure their understanding and ability to apply the information.*

## Presentation Outline

Topic	Length
Introduction	2 minutes
The Importance of Learning How to Swim and Water Safety Education	15 minutes
Optional Topic: Watching Children Around Water	5 minutes
Water Activities and Safety	10 minutes
Wrap-Up	3 minutes
Approximate Time for Total Presentation	30 minutes
Approximate Time for Total Presentation with Optional Topic	35 minutes

### Topic: Introduction

Time: 2 minutes

#### Activity

- Welcome participants and thank them for allowing you to speak about this important lifesaving information.
- Have participants introduce themselves and explain their reasons for attending this presentation.
- Explain that this session will cover general water safety information that will help participants and their families stay safe in, on and around water.
- Distribute brochures, newsletters or course catalogs that list Red Cross courses offered locally, if available.

### Topic: The Importance of Learning How to Swim and Water Safety Education

Time: 15 minutes

#### Key Points

- From weekends at the beach, rides on the family boat and pool parties to just “having the neighborhood kids over to use the pool,” recreational swimming and water activities are tremendously popular and enrich our lives.
- Although these activities add great value to our lives, water can potentially be a source of danger.
- In the United States, drowning ranks second (behind motor vehicle crashes) as a cause of death from unintentional injury in children ages 1 through 14.
- The best thing you can do to enjoy water activities is to participate in swimming and water safety training, such as swim lessons and safety courses that help prepare you to handle an aquatic emergency.
- It is the mission of the Red Cross to prevent, prepare for and respond to emergencies. The Red Cross Swimming and Water Safety program helps fulfill that mission by teaching people to be safe in, on and around the water through water safety courses and presentations, such as this one, as well as Learn-to-Swim courses for all ages and different abilities. These courses include Parent and Child Aquatics, Preschool Aquatics, Learn-to-Swim and Adult Swim courses.
- To find courses in your area, go to [redcross.org/takeaclass](http://redcross.org/takeaclass), or contact swimming pools in your area and ask for Red Cross training.

## Circle of Drowning Prevention

- Layers of protection are essential to help prevent drowning. The American Red Cross has established the Circle of Drowning Prevention to help people to remember 5 important points:
  - Learn swimming and water safety survival skills.
  - Swim in lifeguarded areas.
  - Have children, inexperienced swimmers and boaters wear U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jackets.

- Provide close and constant supervision to children who are in or near the water.
- Fence pools and spas with adequate barriers to prevent unsupervised access.

### Activity

- Distribute the handout, Circle of Drowning Prevention, to each participant.
- Facilitate a discussion about each link in the circle.

## General Water Safety Tips

### Key Points and Discussion

- Whether it is a day at the beach, boating, visiting a waterpark or going to a neighborhood pool party, do not let the good times distract your focus.
- Staying safe in, on and around the water is no accident—it takes knowledge and forethought.
- There are many tips for water safety that you may already know. In addition to learning to swim, what are some general water safety tips you can think of?

**Answer:** Responses will vary. Prompt participants to include the following:

- Swim only in areas supervised by a lifeguard.
  - Never swim alone.
  - Read and obey all rules and posted signs.
  - Only swim in designated areas.
  - Do not mix alcohol with boating, swimming or diving.
  - Always wear a life jacket when boating.
- It is important to apply general water safety practices whenever you and your family are in, on or around water.
  - Nobody should ever swim alone. Always swim with a buddy—a person who helps another person follow the rules and who can get help in an emergency.
  - Have young children or inexperienced swimmers take extra precautions, such as wearing a U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket, when around the water.
  - Designate a responsible individual as the person to watch over children whenever they are in, on or around any body of water, even if a lifeguard is present.
  - Watch out for the “dangerous too’s”:
    - Too tired
    - Too cold
    - Too far from safety
    - Too much sun
    - Too much strenuous activity
  - Set specific swimming rules for each individual in a family or a group based on swimming ability (for example, inexperienced swimmers should stay in water less than chest deep). Young children should have an adult in the water with them within arm’s reach at all times.
  - The more informed people are, the more aware they will be of hazards as well as safe practices. Make sure swimmers know about the water environment and any potential hazards, such as:
    - Deep and shallow areas.
    - Currents.
    - Obstructions.
    - The locations of entry and exit points.

- Identify potential water hazards within the community and make certain that children stay away from them.
- Use a feetfirst entry when entering the water.
- Enter headfirst only when the area is clearly marked for diving and has no obstructions.
- Do not mix alcohol with boating, swimming or diving. Alcohol:
  - Impairs judgment, balance and coordination.
  - Impacts the ability to operate watercraft safely.
  - Affects swimming and diving skills.
  - Reduces the body's ability to stay warm.
- Take a boating safety course before operating any watercraft.
- Be especially cautious near moving water, cold water and ice.
- Know how to prevent, recognize and respond to emergencies.
- Be prepared. Aquatic emergencies happen quickly and suddenly. Whenever possible have a telephone or mobile phone nearby.

### Activity

- Distribute the handout, Chain of Drowning Survival, to each participant.
- Facilitate a discussion about each link in the chain.

## Optional Topic: **Watching Children Around Water**

Time: 5 minutes

**Leader's Note:** *If the audience is primarily parents, you may choose to use the Key Points and Discussion for Watching Children Around Water.*

### Key Points and Discussion

- Children between the ages of 1 and 4 years have the highest rate for drowning.
- Drowning is a leading cause of death for older children as well.
- Anyone watching children who are in, on or around water must understand that drowning happens quickly and suddenly.
- What are some tips for watching children around water?

**Answer:** *Responses will vary. Prompt participants to include the following:*

- *Know each child's swimming ability and set specific rules for each child based on swimming ability.*
- *Maintain constant supervision, keeping an eye on the children at all times.*
- *Stay within an arm's reach of any weak or inexperienced swimmer who is in the water.*
- *Do not allow children to swim outdoors during inclement weather conditions, especially prior to and during storms with lightning and high winds.*
- *Empty kiddie pools immediately after use.*
- Here are some additional tips for watching children around water:
  - Provide vigilant supervision whenever children are around any source of water (such as pools, rivers, lakes, bathtubs, toilets and even buckets of water) no matter how well the child can swim and no matter how shallow the water. This is also true if you are in boat, on a dock or just near the shore.
  - If a child is in distress, provide assistance by notifying a lifeguard, if one is available. If no lifeguard is available, provide assistance consistent with your level of training.

- Do not rely on substitutes. The use of water wings, swim rings, inflatable toys and other items designed for water recreation cannot replace parental supervision, nor should they be counted on as lifesaving devices. These devices can suddenly shift position, lose air or slip out from underneath, leaving the child in a dangerous situation.
- Caution children never to hyperventilate (breathe rapidly and deeply) before or during any swimming activity.
  - Do not allow competitive, repetitive or prolonged underwater swimming or breath-holding.
  - When a person hyperventilates and then swims underwater, the oxygen level in the blood can drop to a point that is so low the person passes out before the brain signals that it is time to breathe. When the person finally does take a breath instinctively, water rushes in and the drowning process begins.
- If there are small children in the home, use safety locks on toilets and keep bathroom doors closed and use doorknob safety covers. Keep toilet lids down.
- Empty cleaning buckets immediately after use.
- When visiting another home, check the site for potential water hazards and always supervise children.
- Teach everyone in the family to swim well by enrolling them in Red Cross Parent and Child Aquatics, Preschool Aquatics, Learn-to-Swim or Adult Swim courses. Do not expect that individuals will learn to swim in one set of lessons, or even in one season. Enroll family members in lessons throughout multiple seasons to ensure that they can swim well and handle themselves in most aquatic situations.
- Enroll in a Red Cross water safety course.
- Get trained in first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and automated external defibrillator (AED) use.
- To enroll in a Red Cross course, go to [redcross.org/takeaclass](http://redcross.org/takeaclass), or contact swimming pools in the local area and ask for Red Cross training.

## Topic: **Water Activities and Safety**

Time: 10 minutes

### Key Points and Discussion

- What specific aquatic activities or environments do you enjoy participating in or plan on pursuing or visiting in the near future?

**Answer:** Responses may include the following:

- *Home pools*
  - *Spas and hot tubs*
  - *Pool parties*
  - *Waterparks*
  - *Lakes and rivers*
  - *Oceans*
  - *Diving*
  - *Boating*
- Participation in aquatic activities can be a rewarding, lifelong pursuit. To stay safe, it is important to understand the risks associated with any aquatics activity you pursue.

- Home swimming pools are an attractive feature for many homeowners. However, if access is not secured, these pools can be a significant threat to the children living in the home and to children living in the surrounding neighborhood.
- Homeowners with pools or hot tubs need to take a multi-tiered approach to securing the pool area and minimizing the likelihood that a child will gain unsupervised entry:
  - Enclose the pool area on all four sides using an appropriate barrier system and then make sure the barrier remains secure. Always make sure gates are latched and keep items away from the barrier (such as lawn furniture) that a child could use to climb up and over into the pool area.
  - Install pool alarms. These alarms use sensors to detect motion in the water. Underwater pool alarms generally perform better and can be used in conjunction with pool covers. Use remote alarm receivers so that the alarm can be heard inside the house or in other places away from the pool area.
  - All doors and windows leading to the pool area should have audible alarms.
- Even if there are lifeguards present, a responsible adult should always monitor children at recreational pools, beaches and waterparks. In addition to the specific hazards at each of these environments, crowded conditions and strong currents can make these areas dangerous.
- Community features, such as canals, ponds, creeks, lakes, drainage basins, reservoirs, wetland areas and shorelines, are hazards that can often be easily accessed. These features represent enticing play areas for adventurous children who may decide to swim on their own or who fall in while playing nearby.
- Boating is a rewarding pastime that allows families to spend time together.
- In 2012, the Coast Guard counted 4515 recreational boating accidents, which resulted in 651 deaths and 3000 injuries. In most cases, wearing a life jacket can mean the difference between life and death in a boating emergency. In all cases, there is never a substitution for boating safety education and experience.

**Leader’s Note:** Refer participants back to the handouts, *Circle of Drowning Prevention and Chain of Drowning Survival*. Reinforce the importance of applying each of the links in the circle and the chain.

## Topic: **Wrap-Up**

Time: 3 minutes

### Key Points and Discussion

- Today we learned general water safety tips to help keep you and your family safe in, on and around water.
- You will find specific safety tips for many of these topics in *American Red Cross Swimming and Water Safety*.

**Leader’s Note:** Show participants a copy of *American Red Cross Swimming and Water Safety*. Explain that this manual can help them prepare for a variety of aquatic activities or environments. Tell participants that they can purchase a copy of this manual at [Shopstaywell.com](http://Shopstaywell.com).

- Does anyone have any other questions about any of the topics we covered today?
- Remember to go to [redcross.org/takeaclass](http://redcross.org/takeaclass) to enroll in swim lessons; water safety training; and first aid, CPR and AED classes. You can also call swimming pools in your area and be sure to ask for Red Cross training.
- Be sure to download the free Red Cross Swim mobile application, as well as other Red Cross apps that provide lifesaving information on topics such as first aid, tornadoes, hurricanes and more. Download American Red Cross apps directly from the iTunes, Google Play or Amazon Marketplace app stores.

### Leader’s Notes:

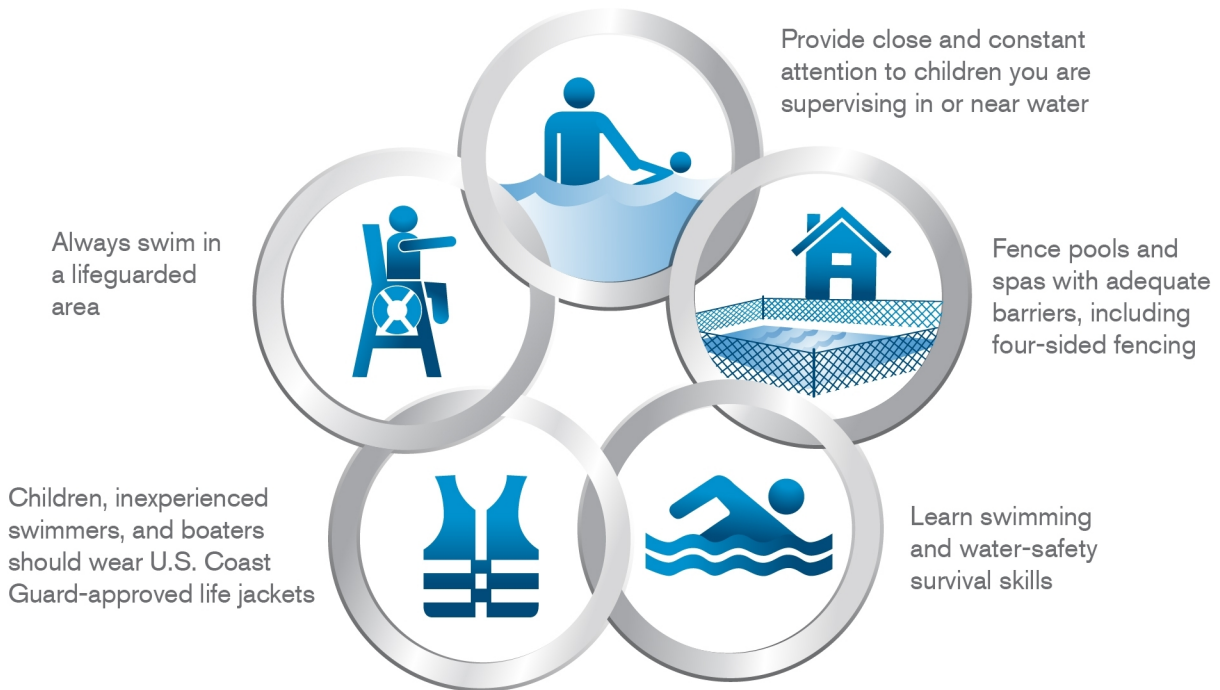
- Briefly answer any questions and thank participants for their time and participation.
- Report your teaching activity and the results of this course to the Red Cross Learning Center.



**American  
Red Cross**

## Circle of Drowning Prevention

Layers of protection are essential to help prevent drowning.  
Plan ahead for aquatic activities:



**American Red Cross**



**American  
Red Cross**

## Chain of Drowning Survival

A person who is drowning has the greatest chance of survival if these steps are followed:



Recognize the signs of someone in trouble and shout for help



Rescue and remove the person from the water (without putting yourself in danger)



Call emergency medical services (EMS)



Begin rescue breathing and CPR



Use an AED if available and transfer care to advanced life support



**American Red Cross**