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Survival Swimming and Water Safety

To save your own life, assuming that you are not required, or are not competent enough to save others in a water emergency, other than to apply artificial respiration

1 Enjoyable, re-creative, stimulating and a worthwhile aspect of swimming
2 People of varying ability and any age can take part.
3 It should be presented as a challenge that is as realistic as possible. This will call for a reasonable amount of imagination when using a swimming pool.
4 Emphasis should be placed on performance and endurance, which are assessed in an objective manner by a series of tests, based on distance time, repetitions, etc.
5 British Swimming Organisation, ASA Survival Swimming Awards may be gained, as well also the Royal Life Saving Society, RLSS, Water Safety Awards, and these form a basis for vital standards of water safety for all aquatics activities, examples, sailing, canoeing, sub-aqua, surfing, kite surfing, jet skis, water skis, etc.
6 The basic skills involved are:

Entering Water – from varying heights into varying depths

1 From heights over three metres- jump by stepping off with one foot, keeping the body straight, assuming there is a good depth of water. This technique avoids the tendency to fall forwards or backwards in flight with consequent injury in hitting the water. Hold the nose if water tends to rush up on entry

2 From heights up to three metres

Straddle jump- from a running take-off or by a one foot lunge from a ledge into at least three metres of water, or less if the height is lower. Leap well out with the legs spread forward, and backward. NOT ASTRIDE. Lean slightly forward, and as the water comes to up top waist level, close the legs forcibly and use legs and arms to drive the body to the surface.

Tuck or Bomb jump – the safest into shallow water – thrust well-cut, tuck up, lean slightly back for shallow water, and forward for deepwater. Hit the surface with the seat, keeping the heels well up and use the hands only in shallow water to to drive the body to the surface.

Running Shallow dive

Only for those with diving experience

Crash dive

EMERGENCY FAST SWIM - this should follow an entry where there is immediate danger from which wish to get away rapidly, examples, explosion, fire, etc. In clothes use any stroke which gives the most speed, keeping the head up to see where you are going and to avoid any floating debris or other dangers ahead. THE MINIMUM TIME UNDERWATER ON ENTRY AND MAXIMUM SWIMMING SPEED WILL GET YOU OUT OF A DANGER AREA. For Life saving similar entries will allow you to watch your subject and reach him or her speedily.

TREADING WATER – whilst waiting for assistance to take; to take a breather whilst you wish to get away rapidly, examples, explosion, fire, etc, in clothes, use either breast stroke or crawl type leg action with hand sculling action; keep the head back; float in a near horizontal position if you are buoyant enough. Avoid swimming about as this wastes energy and moves you from a known position if help is on the way. Practice treading water under handicaps, i.e. injured limbs; one hand and two legs; legs only; hands clasped behind the back; arms only; feet crossed; one arm and one leg only- holding the other leg with the other hand on the same side of the body, and also on the opposite side of the body.

UNDRESSING IN THE WATER – there is no set order to do this, nor need you remain above the surface to do so. Remove heavy clothing first, retain trousers, slacks, items of clothing, if made of cotton, nylon or other close-weave material will retain air when wet can be inflated as a floating aid. BEWARE of removing any such clothing over the head as this can cause suffocation – rip shirts, etc, down the front unless they unbutton like a jacket, or stretch a garment to remove it over the thighs and legs.

INFLATION OF CLOTHING – Tie a simple knot in the end of trouser legs, sleeves or the top or bottom end of a nightdress or dress. Alternatively tie the end of legs and sleeves together to form a lifebelt or collar. Air can be forced into the garment by: flinging it through the air, keeping the open end wide with the hands, from behind or side of the head, and so trapping air as you force it down on to the surface. Splashing air bubbles into the open end with one hand cupped and plunging it down to the surface and upwards into the open end of the garment. Submerging and blowing air upwards into the open end of the garment. Blowing air through the cells of the material by holding a small area tightly stretched against your mouth. The last two methods are better used for re-inflating the garment when some of the initial air has escaped through the cells. PROVIDED THAT YOU KEEP THE OPEN END BENEATH THE WATER THEN AIR WILL STAY IN IT FOR UP TO 30 minutes depending on the material Avoid pulling the garment down too much into the water, since water pressure will then force air out which will be seen as a stream of bubbles from the material cells.

USE OF INFLATED CLOTHING – to keep afloat and save energy, or tow swim with less energy output Use it to support heavy legs by gripping it between the knees, or sliding it over the thighs as a life-belt or around the nooks on a collar It may be held in the hands or used like water-wings under the armpits; women can inflate a skirt kept on, be flapping the bottom and over the surface of the water and so trapping an air bubble for support. A shirt with sleeves knotted can be buttoned around the neck with the front of it against the chest and the back uppermost to the surface. Then flap the lower end over the surface to trap air inside and tuck the ends into the top of pants or trousers, etc. When you have used clothing for a 'rest', deflate it and tie it around your waist using the legs or sleeves, for use again later if necessary. NEVER DISCARD IT!

Other aids to floatation - buckets, pillow cases, used to trap air and then held in the hands, also wellington boots. A spare car wheel with tyre can be used to keep six people afloat. If you are in a car sinking in water – open the windows to equalise the pressure so that doors can be opened to escape.

DISTANCE SWIMMING – Conserve in every way possible, by using strokes that do not tire you unduly, example, breast, side, back, but you may use crawl or Trugeon, front-crawl arms, breast-stroke legs, if you are a powerful swimmer. Remember that arm recovery over the water means extra weight is going out of the water which tends to sink you, unless you are a very strong swimmer.

SURFACE DIVING – Use to avoid obstacles, small oil patches, etc.

The normal head-first dive, lifting the legs together above the water so that their weight in air carries you under

Feet first by shooting the hands vertically upwards, kicking with the legs and so lifting the upper part of the body above water, causing its weight to submerge you.

When you have dropped to the required depth – swim forward head first.

Feet first by treading water first with hands by the sides, palms turned outwards. Kick upwards and as you sink, move the hands upwards to assist the body to sink.

Use plastic air-filled hoops, attached to weights by ropes, so that the top edge of the hoop is about one metre below the water surface. Swim through these head first, following a surface dive, and also you can use two ropes about four metres apart.

UNDERWATER SWIMMING - Use this with caution and only for short distances, except in dire need to go further. Never hyper-ventilate the lungs first by taking several deep breaths before submerging since this can produce a 'black – out' effect owing to the removal of Carbon Dioxide from the blood stream. Let air escape slowly as you swim. Limit all tests to a maximum of six metres. Use the full sweep around of

the arms, as in breast- stroke, with corresponding leg action. Some people find the dog paddle arm action with crawl or breast leg action is more effective.

DEALING WITH OIL - Small patches you can dive under, but larger patches may cause you to rise for breath. To do this vertically, with the hands above the head so as to splash the water surface first. This will break up the oil and allow you to snatch a breath, by rising with the head well-back. Descend again quickly. Remember that thick oil may choke you, and burning oil will cause severe burns to any exposed parts of the body. The technique described needs much practice to perfect it, and its usage depends on the area of oil, its thickness and whether it is on fire or not.

SWIMMING WITH A HANDICAP - useful to practice in case you should be a victim of some kind which affects the use of one or both arms and legs

CLIMBING FROM DEEP WATER - Hold on to the top of the bank with your hands; raise and lower the body once or twice, then kick with the legs as you pull yourself up with the hands. 'Press ups' will strengthen your arms if they are weak! Also you may practice climbing out of the water by means of a rope or rope ladder suspended from a diving board or roof support. Climb up the edge of the rope ladder to reduce the sway.

DROWNPROOFING – a technique invented by Prof. Fred Lanoue in the USA. The body floats in an open 'mushroom' position with face in the water, arms and legs held loosely, after first taking a deep in-breath. Exhale slowly through nose, training over a period, to do so in twenty seconds or more. To inhale press down with both arms and both feet causing the body to rise; the objective is to float, just under the surface with minimum energy output. 'Sinkers' will have to have to make several combined arm and leg downward movements to keep the body near the surface. It is possible to travel forward by making an underwater full breast-stroke sweep of the hands, followed by a breast or scissor leg action.

TESTS

Apart from British Swimming Organisation, ASA, RLSS, Red Cross and Swimming Teacher Association Awards you an devise other tests based on a points system, whereby points are awarded for completing the tests correctly, or points are deducted for failure to do any part of the test; being underwater too long after an entry, etcetera. The results of points awarded can be graphed and distribution reached to provide a grading scale e.g. A+ to E. Time limits are used to suggest adverse conditions owing to rough waters, tides and currents, which would use up energy at a faster rate, than swimming steadily in the calm waters of a swimming pool

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