

# Water safety skills for every child

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Every parent wants to make sure their children are safe and protected. While it can be a daunting task, starting with the basics can make the burden easier. Remember: safety skills start at home. The earlier you can instill safety awareness in your children, the better they will remember it.

Drowning is the leading cause of unintentional death in children under the age of five. Teaching your child the basics of water safety can significantly reduce their risk of water-related accidents. Here are the key water safety principles every **child should know** .

## Understanding the underwater environment

Before children enter the water, they need to have a basic understanding of the environment they are about to enter. Water can be unpredictable and it is important to educate them about still water, moving water, breaking waves and strong currents. Explain the difference between still water that they might see in a pool or bath and moving water, i.e. canals, rivers or streams where the water is constantly flowing.

If you are planning to take your children to the beach, surf is a topic to research before you go. Surf breaks occur when waves break on the shore, and strong rip currents are common in oceans and larger bodies of water. It is

essential to teach children how to identify these environmental factors and the potential dangers they pose. Teach them to stay away from dangerous waters and to swim in designated areas under adult supervision.



### **Entering and exiting the water safely**

Getting in and out of water safely is an important part of preventing water-related accidents. Children should never jump or dive into a body of water without knowing its depth and checking for underwater obstacles. You should also teach children how to exit the water safely, whether using a ladder or going to a designated exit point. Additionally, children should never run near bodies of water as the ground can be slippery, increasing the risk of falls & accidents.

### **Swimming skills**

Swimming is an essential skill that all children should learn. Even if your child is not a proficient swimmer, teaching them basic swimming skills can help them stay safe in the water. Diving underwater, floating with their airway above the surface for at least 30 seconds, gliding, and kicking are all essential swimming skills that children should learn. These skills can help keep them afloat and save energy if they find themselves in a difficult situation in the water.



## Rescue skills

No one wants to think about their child being in danger. However, if something does happen, you need to make sure your child knows how to help rescuers get them out of danger as quickly as possible. Practice a dryland rescue before getting close to the water. Have your child practice holding onto a pole or flotation device. Repeating these routines over and over again will help your child remember what to do if they need to be rescued from the water.

## Building capacity and confidence at home

Every child moves through the stages of getting used to water at their own pace. Remind your child that they are safe when they are with you and when they follow the rules. If your child sees water as a place to play, it can help to eliminate some of their fears. Introducing them to water little by little and learning to swim will help them feel more confident.

And if you don't know how to swim, it's never too late to learn! Knowing how to swim plays an important role in ensuring your child learns and stays safe in the water.

Pool play, lake swimming, and a day at the beach are all fun ways to enjoy the water. Make every day of water play a safe day by discussing water safety rules and practices, whether you're splashing around at home or swimming at your favorite spot!

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