



## Why Is Water Safety So Important?

It only takes a moment. A child or weak swimmer can drown in the time it takes to reply to a text, check a fishing line or apply sunscreen. Death and injury from drownings happen every day in [home pools and hot tubs](#), at the [beach or in oceans, lakes, rivers and streams](#), bathtubs, and even buckets.

The Red Cross believes that by working together to improve water competency – which includes swimming skills, water smarts and helping others – water activities can be safer... and just as much fun.

## What Does It Mean to Be Water Competent?

Water competency is a way of improving water safety for yourself and those around you through avoiding common dangers, developing fundamental water safety skills to make you safer in and around the water, and knowing how to prevent and respond to drowning emergencies. Water competency has 3 main components: water smarts, swimming skills and helping others.

### Water Smarts

Take these sensible precautions when you're around water (even if you're not planning to swim):

- Know your limitations, including physical fitness, medical conditions.
- Never swim alone; swim with lifeguards and/or water watchers present.
- Wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved [life jacket](#) appropriate for your weight and size and the water activity. Always wear a life jacket while boating, regardless of swimming skill.
- Swim sober.
- Understand the dangers of hyperventilation and hypoxic blackout.
- Know how to call for help.
- Understand and adjust for the unique risks of the water environment you are in, such as:
  - River currents.
  - Ocean rip currents.
  - Water temperature.
  - Shallow or unclear water.
  - Underwater hazards, such as vegetation and animals.

### Swimming Skills

Learn how to perform these 5 skills in every type of water environment that you may encounter (such as in home pools, oceans, lakes, rivers and streams):

1. Enter water that's over your head and return to the surface
2. Float or tread water for at least 1 minute.
3. Turn over and around in water
4. Swim at least 25 yards
5. Exit the water

### Helping Others

These actions will help your family avoid emergencies – and help you respond if an emergency occurs:

- Paying close attention to children or weak swimmers you are supervising in or near water.
- Knowing the signs that someone is drowning.
- Knowing ways to safely assist a drowning person, such as “reach or throw, don't go”.
- Knowing [CPR](#) and [first aid](#).

## Local Swim Lesson Opportunities

City of Tallahassee Parks and Rec:  
<https://www.talgov.com/parks/aquatics-lessons>

Florida State University Campus Recreation:  
<https://campusrec.fsu.edu/fitness/aquatics/youth-swim-lessons/>