



Safe Swim Defense is required procedure in all Learning for Life swimming activities.

Learning for Life

Safe Swim Defense

Surveys indicate swimming as one of the most popular year-round activities. Unfortunately, swimming also ranks near the top for injuries and fatalities. When accidents occur, they almost always can be attributed to a lack of supervision and discipline. This makes it imperative that good training, planning, and supervision be required at all LFL swimming activities.

All swimming activity must be supervised by an adult at least 21 years of age and trained in LFL Safe Swim Defense. Any adult who works with LFL is eligible for training to become a qualified supervisor. Your local LFL office can conduct this training at their summer camp and has available the training video *Safe Swim Defense . . . It Works*. Arrangements can be made with your local LFL office to view this video.

Learning for Life Safe Swim Defense is made of eight points designed to teach skills needed to conduct a safe swim activity. It is, however, important to understand that training alone will not guarantee that an accident will not occur, but training, planning and discipline will greatly reduce the chance of accidents.

Qualified Supervision

All swimming activity must be supervised by an adult 21 years of age or older who understands and knowingly accepts responsibility for the well-being and safety of the youth in their care. In addition, he or she should be experienced in the water, confident of being able to respond to an emergency, and trained in the eight points of Safe Swim Defense. It is recommended that all posts/groups have one adult currently trained as a lifeguard.

Physical Fitness

Evidence of physical fitness for swimming activity is required with a complete health history from a physician, parent, or legal guardian. The adult supervisor should adjust all supervision, discipline, and protection to anticipate any potential risks associated with individual health conditions. In the event of significant health conditions, an examination by a physician should be required by the adult supervisor.

Safe Area

When swimming in lakes and streams, have lifeguards and swimmers examine the swimming area to determine varying depths, currents, deep holes, rocks, and stumps. Mark the area into three groups: 3½ feet deep or less for nonswimmers; shallow water to just over the head for beginners; and deep water not over 12 feet deep for swimmers. A participant should not be allowed to swim in an area where he or she cannot maintain their position on the water, because of swimming ability or water flow.

When setting up swimming areas, mark each with buoys made of plastic bottles weighted to the bottom. Enclose non-swimmer and beginner areas with buoy lines and mark the swimmer area with floating buoys. Clear-water depth should be at least 7 feet to allow diving. Diving is limited to a height of 40 inches above the water. Feetfirst entry is limited to 60 inches above the water. For any entry of more than 18 inches above the water, clear-water depth must be 10 to 12 feet. Only surface swimming is allowed in turbid water; no swimming is allowed in water more than 12 feet in depth or in whitewater, unless all participants wear personal flotation devices and the supervisor determines it is safe under the circumstances.

Lifeguards on Duty

Swim only where there are lifeguards on duty. For LFL swims where there are no lifeguards provided, the supervisor should designate two capable swimmers as lifeguards. Station them ashore, equipped with a lifeline of 100 feet of 3/8-inch nylon cord. In case of an emergency, one carries out the line, the other feeds it from shore then pulls in his partner and the person being helped. If a boat is available, have two people take it out, one rowing and the other equipped with a reach pole 10 feet long. Provide one guard for every 10 people in the water.

Lookout

Station a lookout on the shore where he can see and hear everything in all areas. He may be the adult in charge of the swim and be responsible for buddy checks.

Ability Groups

Divide into three ability groups: Nonswimmers, beginners, and swimmers. Keep each group in their own area. *Non-swimmers* have not passed a swimming test. *Beginners* must pass this test: jump feetfirst into the water over the head in depth, level off, swim 25 feet on the surface. Stop, turn sharply, resume swimming as before and return to the starting place. *Swimmers* pass this test: jump feetfirst into water over the head in depth. Level off and swim 75 yards in a strong manner using one or more of the following strokes: sidestroke, breaststroke, trudgen, or crawl; then swim 25 yards using an easy resting backstroke. The 100 yards must be swum continuously and include at least one sharp turn. After completing the swim, rest by floating. *These classification tests should be renewed annually, preferably at the beginning of the season.*

Buddy System

Pair every youth with another in the same ability group. Buddies check in and out of the swimming area together. Emphasize that each buddy lifeguards his buddy. Check everyone in the water about every 10 minutes, or as needed to keep buddies together. The adult in charge signals "buddy check" with a blast of a whistle, etc., and counts slowly to 10 while buddies join and raise hands and remain still and silent. Guards check all areas, count the pairs, and compare the total with the number known to be in the water. Signal two blasts of the whistle to resume swimming. Signal three blasts of the whistle for checkout.

Discipline

Be sure everyone understands and agrees that swimming is allowed only with proper supervision and use of the complete Safe Swim Defense plan. The applicable rules should be presented and learned prior to the outing, and should be reviewed for all participants at the water's edge just before the swimming activity begins. Youth should respect and follow all directions and rules of the adult supervisor. When people know the reason for rules and procedures they are more likely to follow them. Be strict and fair, showing no favoritism.

Adult leader: _____ Post/Group _____

Completed Learning for Safe Swim Defense Training: Yes _____ No _____ Date: _____

To be filed with Outing Permit prior to expedition with the local Learning for Life office.

Learning for Life Web site: www.learning-for-life.com