

The following pages provide an update of programs and policies, as of April 2017, for the 2015 printing of Aquatics Supervision. Front and back pages are provided so that sheets printed on two sides may be substituted for the out-of-date material.

Changes include:

1. An update of the age appropriate chart to be consistent with the current version in the Guide to Safe Scouting
2. Deletion of multiple references to the retired Tour and Activity Plan, including those in Safe Swim Defense and Safety Afloat
3. Updates to Safety Afloat dealing with PWC's and whitewater.
4. Replacement of unreadable application for Boardsailing BSA.
5. Updates of all award applications to a consistent format.
6. Correction of minimum age for the Aquatics Supervision courses.
7. Addition of requirements for the new river module for Paddle Craft Safety
8. Deletion of old BSA Lifeguard requirements with links to the new material.

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## Council Aquatics Committees

Few units have the resources to independently provide all of the programs listed above. Councils can give units additional opportunities by establishing a council aquatics committee to foster local programs, provide training, help recruit camp aquatics staff, and oversee council resources, such as establishing policies for units to use council canoes when camp is not in session. Additional information on aquatics committees is found in Appendix 1. A major goal of every

council aquatics committee is to see that every member of Scouting has both the opportunity and the encouragement to learn how to swim.

Robert Baden-Powell founded the international Scouting movement in 1907. His outlook on the importance of swimming ability follows:

### Baden-Powell's Outlook on Swimming and the First Class Scout

*"A boy does not really get the value of the Scout training until he is a First Class Scout. The Second Class rank is only a step to that standing. But it is a lamentable fact that a good many are content to remain as Second Class Scouts once they have gained a few badges of proficiency. It is primarily for that reason mainly, that the All Round Cords are now obtainable only by First Class Scouts. This move has been welcomed by Scoutmasters as giving an incentive to the lads to keep progressing in their training.*

*"Of course, the main objection to it is that it necessitates the boys learning to swim, and facilities for this do not exist in all centers. It has, therefore, been suggested in one or two cases that this rule should be relaxed. I am afraid that I have been very 'sticky' about it, and although I generally make things as elastic as possible, I may have appeared unnaturally obstinate in this one particular: but I had reasons, and experience has now shown those reasons were right.*

*"When a boy has become a First Class Scout—but not before then—he has got a founding in the qualities—mental, moral and physical—that go with making a good, useful man. And I look on swimming as a very important step, combining as it does attributes of all three of those classes. Mentally, it gives the boy a new sense of self-confidence and pluck; morally, it gives him the power of helping others in distress and puts a responsibility upon him of actually risking his life at any moment for others; and physically, it is a grand exercise for developing wind and limb.*

*"Every man ought to be able to swim; and in Norway and Sweden, the home of practical education, every boy and girl is taught swimming at school.*






*"The fact that swimming has got to be learned by the Boy Scout before he can gain his First Class badge has had the effect of putting the character of the lads in very many cases to a hard and strengthening test.*

*"At first they complained that there was no place near where they could learn to swim. But when they found this was not accepted as an excuse, they set to work to make places or to get to where such places existed. I have heard of boys riding five miles on their bicycles day after day to swimming baths; streams in many country places have been dammed up, and bathing places made by the Scouts; the summer camp has been established at some seaside or riverside spot for the special purpose of getting everyone trained in swimming.*

*"It can be done if everybody sets his mind to it. If the boys are put to extra trouble in bringing it about, so much the better for their character training. In any case, I look upon swimming as an essential qualification for First Class Scout, and for every man. Also, I don't consider a boy a real Scout till he has passed his First Class tests."*

—Lord Baden-Powell, February 1914



Swimming and Boating						
		Tigers (with adult partner)	Wolf/Bear Cub Scouts	Webelos Scouts	Boy Scouts	Older Scouts, Varsity & Venturers
Age-Appropriate Guidelines (see text for complete criteria)						
Learn-to-swim programs						
Recreational swimming		Divided by ability groups, only Swimmers in deep water				
Snorkeling in confined area		Divided by ability groups, only Swimmers in deep water				
Snorkeling in open water		⊘	⊘	⊘	Snorkeling BSA required	
Scuba BSA		⊘	⊘	⊘	Swimmers only	
Scuba diving in open water		⊘	⊘	⊘	Certification required	
Open-water distance swims		⊘	⊘	⊘	Swimmers only—Mile Swim safety criteria	
Triathlon (races in open water)		⊘	⊘	⊘	⊘	Sanctioned events only
Surfing		⊘	⊘	⊘	Swimmers only	
High board, platform, cliff diving		⊘	⊘	⊘	⊘	⊘
Commercial marine transport (ferries, cruise ships, etc.)						
Day rides on large private craft		Qualified adult operation, calm water, capacity of four or more. All ability groups.				
Crew member, overnight cruise		⊘	⊘	⊘		
Youth-operated small craft on calm, flat water:	Stable, fixed-seat rowboats & Pedal boats	Non-swimmers & beginners buddied with swimmer in same boat				
	Canoes, tandem Kayaks, Rafts	Non-swimmers & beginners buddied with adult swimmer in same boat				
	single-person Kayaks	Swimmers only				
	SUP	Swimmers only				
	Rowing shells	⊘	⊘	⊘	Swimmers only	
	Sailboats	⊘	⊘	⊘	Swimmers only	
	Sailboards	⊘	⊘	⊘	Swimmers only	
	Powerboats (subject to state regulations)	⊘	⊘	⊘	Approved supervision on board, swimmers only	
Tubing on gently flowing water		Swimmers only				
Commercial trips on whitewater		⊘	⊘	⊘	Professional operator on board, swimmers only	
Small craft, youth-operated on whitewater: Class I and II		⊘	⊘	⊘	Swimmers only	
Small craft, youth-operated on whitewater: Class III		⊘	⊘	⊘	⊘	Only trained swimmers
Towed activities (water skis, wakeboards, floats)		⊘	⊘	⊘	Approved towboat operator, swimmers only	
Aerial towed activities (kites, parasails, etc.)		⊘	⊘	⊘	⊘	⊘
Personal watercraft (PWC)		⊘	⊘	⊘	⊘	Approved council training programs

Whenever a person loses consciousness or needs medical care beyond simple first aid, such as transport by EMS to a hospital emergency room, leaders should immediately notify the parent or other person designated in advance as an emergency contact. The emergency action plan should include such a contact list.

In case of a missing person, serious injury, or fatality, unit leaders are responsible for informing their council office as soon as possible. The Scout executive or designee will provide trained help with notification of next of kin, dealing with the press, and counseling for others in the unit.

## Youth Protection

The Boy Scouts of America places the greatest importance on creating the most secure environment possible for our youth members. To maintain such an environment, the BSA developed numerous procedural and leadership selection policies and provides parents and leaders with resources for the Cub Scout, Boy Scout, and Venturing programs.

The BSA takes great pride in the quality of our adult leadership. Being a leader in the BSA is a privilege, not a right. We work closely with our chartered organizations to help recruit the best possible leaders for their units.

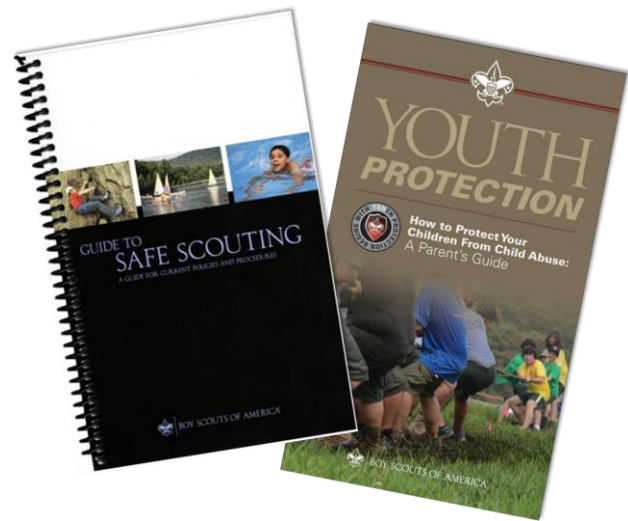
The BSA has implemented mandatory Youth Protection training for all registered volunteers. New leaders are required to complete Youth Protection training within 30 days of registering.

The adult application requests background information that should be checked by the unit committee or the chartered organization before accepting an applicant for unit leadership. Please visit [www.scouting.org/YouthProtection](http://www.scouting.org/YouthProtection) for Scouting's Barriers to Abuse and other important resources.

**Two registered adult leaders or one registered leader and a parent of a participant, or other adult, one of whom must be 21 years of age or older, are required on all trips and outings. All registered adults must have completed Youth Protection training.**

Therefore, even though Safe Swim Defense or other aquatics policies may designate that only one trained adult is needed to supervise the activity, it is assumed that at least one other responsible adult, who may not be trained in water safety, is available to assist with implementing an emergency action plan.

The Youth Protection policies of the BSA also address privacy and appropriate attire. Adult leaders must protect their own privacy and respect the privacy of youth members in situations such as changing into swimsuits, whether in a changing room at a public water park or at a remote campsite. Neither skinny-dipping nor revealing bathing suits are appropriate as part of Scouting.



**Additional information on Youth Protection and transportation is found in these publications.**

## Transportation

Since traffic accidents are the primary cause of accidental death in the United States, with the number of fatalities far exceeding those from drowning, unit members may be more at risk traveling to an aquatics area than when engaged in the activity. The BSA has established transportation policies and guidelines to minimize such risk. The complete policies are in the *Guide to Safe Scouting* and should be reviewed before the unit goes on an outing. By way of review, recall that:

- Transport by commercial carriers, such as chartered buses, is recommended, particularly for large groups.
- Except in special circumstances, all drivers must be at least 18 years of age with a valid license for the type of vehicle in use, and must observe traffic regulations, including speed limits.
- All occupants of cars, vans, and trucks must wear seat belts.



- Driving time is limited to a maximum of 10 hours per day and must be interrupted by frequent rest, food, and recreation stops.
- Fatigue is a major cause of highway accidents. Don't drive while drowsy.
- All driving, except for short trips, should be done in daylight.

Highway transport of boats, by trailer or on roof carriers, requires special consideration and will be discussed further in sections on various craft.

## Tour and Activity Plans

In the past, the BSA had a formal Tour and Activity Plan with various policies and procedures related to distance travelled and reporting to the council. That process has been discontinued. However, informed planning is still a valid concept for any unit activity and is recognized as such in the BSA Safety Afloat policy.

## Legal Considerations

A leader's moral obligation to protect the youth under his or her supervision should overshadow any concerns about legal accountability. Nevertheless, some volunteers may have concerns about legal exposure should something happen despite their diligent efforts. The best way to avoid litigation is to prevent physical or mental trauma through safety awareness, preparation, consistent application of policies, and other tools of risk management. The material reviewed here is presented as an additional aid to ensure preparedness, not as a reason to forego the pleasure, challenges, and satisfaction that arise from participating in aquatics activities.

Most legal actions that result from an accident during a supervised youth activity are civil: an injured party, or **plaintiff**, charges a person or organization, the **defendant**, with responsibility for the accident. Legal responsibility, or **liability**, is the issue, and the court may award compensation for both actual damages and as punishment (a punitive award). In a criminal case, the government charges the defendant with violating a law. The issue is guilt, which if proved, causes the court to impose punishment.

Although civil suits may be initiated under a wide variety of circumstances, the plaintiff generally must establish that harm has resulted from **negligence**, or the failure to act properly. Negligence need not be intentional or willful. It arises when the defendant fails to act appropriately, or acts improperly. Negligence can result from carelessness, poor judgment, forgetfulness, inexperience, ignorance, or failure to notice and/or correct a hazardous situation.

To establish negligence, the plaintiff must first show that the defendant had a **duty to act**. A duty to act, or duty of care, is established when a person or organization accepts responsibility for the safety of another. A parent has a duty to a child. **In loco parentis** means that another person has temporarily assumed a parent's responsibility. A person who invites a neighbor's child to play in a backyard wading pool has a duty of care, as does a Scoutmaster supervising a troop swim on a campout.

After a court determines that a duty of care exists, the next step is to determine the **standard of care** that applies to that duty. The parent watching neighborhood children in a wading pool may only be required to act as a "reasonable" or "prudent" person would under the circumstances. A bystander applying first aid at an accident scene is generally held to a lesser standard of care than an on-duty emergency room physician. Lay persons are often afforded some legal protection by Good Samaritan laws, so long as they act in accord with and within the limits of any training they have received. Note that the standard of care expected of a volunteer leader may be modified by the training and policies imposed by a sponsoring organization. For example, a plaintiff may establish negligence by showing that the actions of a Scout leader were not in accord with BSA policy or that they were inconsistent with how similarly trained persons would have acted.

Failure to perform the duty of care to the appropriate standard is called a **breach**. A breach by itself does not constitute negligence. Harm or damage has to result from the breach.

The following examples, some of which may fit in more than one category, may support a claim of negligence. Numerous other examples can be constructed simply by taking the inverse of any previously stated safety policy.



## Safe Swim Defense

All swimming activities in Scouting are required to follow the eight basic principles known collectively as the Safe Swim Defense plan. The elements of Safe Swim Defense were formulated during the 1930s through careful study of swimming emergencies. At the 1953 National Scout Jamboree in California, thousands of Scouts swam in the ocean with the plan in place. Water-safety consultants cautioned BSA officials to expect a large number of drownings, based on public statistics. There were none. Small refinements have been made to the plan over the years, but the basics have not changed. The emphasis has always been on prevention. A unit that follows the plan can expect a safe, enjoyable experience.



A summary of Safe Swim Defense was provided in Chapter 3. The complete text is given here in bold type with additional explanatory material in regular print.

**BSA groups shall use Safe Swim Defense for all swimming activities. Adult leaders supervising a swimming activity must have completed Safe Swim Defense training within the previous two years. Safe Swim Defense standards apply at backyard, hotel, apartment, and public pools; at established waterfront swim areas such as beaches at state parks and U. S. Army Corps of Engineers lakes; and at all temporary swimming areas such as a lake, river, or ocean. Safe Swim Defense does not apply to boating or water activities such as waterskiing or swamped boat drills that are covered by Safety Afloat guidelines. Safe Swim Defense applies to other nonswimming activities whenever participants enter water over knee deep or when submersion is likely, for example, when fording a stream, seining for bait, or constructing a bridge as a pioneering project. Snorkeling in open water requires each participant to have demonstrated knowledge and skills equivalent to those for Snorkeling BSA in addition to following Safe Swim Defense. Scuba activities must be conducted in accordance with the BSA scuba policy found in the *Guide to Safe Scouting*. Because of concerns with hyperventilation, competitive underwater swimming events are not permitted in Scouting.**

Safe Swim Defense training may be obtained from MyScouting.org, at council summer camps, and at other council and district training events. Additional information on various swimming venues is provided in the *Aquatics Supervision* guide available from council service centers.

## 1. Qualified Supervision

All swimming activity must be supervised by a mature and conscientious adult age 21 or older who understands and knowingly accepts responsibility for the well-being and safety of those in his or her care, and who is trained in and committed to compliance with the eight points of BSA Safe Swim Defense. It is strongly recommended that all units have at least one adult or older youth member currently trained in BSA Aquatics Supervision: Swimming and Water Rescue or BSA Lifeguard to assist in planning and conducting all swimming activities.



The purpose of this publication is to provide the unit leader with sufficient information to confidently know when he or she meets the expectations set forth in the first point. This book also serves as the text for training in Swimming and Water Rescue. Check with your council service center for course offerings.

## 2. Personal Health Review

A complete health history is required of all participants as evidence of fitness for swimming activities. Forms for minors must be signed by a parent or legal guardian. Participants should be asked to relate any recent incidents of illness or injury just prior to the activity. Supervision and protection should be adjusted to anticipate any potential risks associated with individual health conditions. For significant health conditions, the adult supervisor should require an examination by a physician and consult with the parent, guardian, or caregiver for appropriate precautions.

This important item is shared with Safety Afloat and was covered in detail in Chapter 4.

## 3. Safe Area

All swimming areas must be carefully inspected and prepared for safety prior to each activity. Water depth, quality, temperature, movement, and clarity are important considerations. Hazards must be eliminated or isolated by conspicuous markings and discussed with participants.

- **Controlled Access:** There must be safe areas for all participating ability groups to enter and leave the water. Swimming areas of appropriate depth must be defined for each ability group. The entire area must be within easy reach of designated rescue personnel. The area must be clear of boat traffic, surfing, or other nonswimming activities.





## Safety Afloat

All boating activities in Scouting are required to follow the nine basic principles known collectively as Safety Afloat. During the 1970s, public interest in river canoeing experienced a huge surge in popularity with a corresponding increase in the number of fatalities. Scouting's response was to devise a set of safety guidelines for float trips based on the successful Safe Swim Defense plan. The emphasis is on accident prevention through proper preparation and skill. A unit that follows Safety Afloat can expect a safe, enjoyable experience.

A summary of Safety Afloat appears in Chapter 3. The complete text is given here in bold type with additional explanatory material in regular print.



1. **Qualified Supervision.** All activity afloat must be supervised by a mature and conscientious adult age 21 or older who understands and knowingly accepts responsibility for the well-being and safety of those in his or her care, and who is trained and committed to compliance with the nine points of BSA Safety Afloat. That supervisor must be skilled in the safe operation of the craft, knowledgeable in accident prevention, and prepared for emergency situations. Additional leadership is provided in ratios of 1-to-5 for Cub Scouts and 1-to-10 for Boy Scouts and Venturers. At least one leader must be trained in CPR. It is strongly recommended that all units have at least one member trained in BSA Paddle Craft Safety to assist in activity afloat.
2. **Personal Health Review.** Adjust supervision to anticipate any potential risks identified by review of required health histories.
3. **Swimming Ability.** Operation of any boat is limited to those who have completed the BSA swimmer classification test. Those not classified as swimmers may ride as passengers on calm water when there is little chance of capsizing or falling overboard.
4. **Life Jackets.** Approved, properly fitted life jackets must be worn by all persons engaged in boating activity.
5. **Buddy System.** All participants are paired as buddies and monitor the safety of the other.

BSA groups shall use Safety Afloat for all boating activities. Adult leaders supervising activities afloat must have completed Safety Afloat training within the previous two years. Cub Scout activities afloat are limited to council, district, pack, or den events that do not include moving water or float trips (expeditions). Safety Afloat standards

apply to the use of canoes, kayaks, rowboats, rafts, floating tubes, sailboats, motorboats (including waterskiing), and other small craft, but do not apply to transportation on large commercial vessels such as ferries and cruise ships. Parasailing (being towed airborne behind a boat using a parachute), kitesurfing (using a wakeboard towed by a kite), and unit-level recreational use of personal watercraft (small sit-on-top motorboats propelled by water jets) are not authorized BSA activities.

Safety Afloat training may be obtained from MyScout.org, at council summer camps, and at other council and district training events. Additional guidance on appropriate skill levels and training resources is provided in the *Aquatics Supervision* guide available from council service centers.

## 1. Qualified Supervision

All activity afloat must be supervised by a mature and conscientious adult age 21 or older who understands and knowingly accepts responsibility for the well-being and safety of those in his or her care and who is trained in and committed to compliance with the nine points of BSA Safety Afloat. That supervisor must be skilled in the safe operation of the craft for the specific activity, knowledgeable in accident prevention, and prepared for emergency situations. If the adult with Safety Afloat training lacks the necessary boat operating and safety skills, he or she may serve as the supervisor only if assisted by other adults, camp staff personnel, or professional tour guides who have the appropriate skills. Additional leadership is provided in ratios of one trained adult, staff member, or guide per 10 participants. For Cub Scouts,

the leadership ratio is one trained adult, staff member, or guide per five participants. At least one leader must be trained in first aid including CPR. Any swimming done in conjunction with the activity afloat must be supervised in accordance with BSA Safe Swim Defense standards. It is strongly recommended that all units have at least one adult or older youth member currently trained in BSA Aquatics Supervision: Paddle Craft Safety to assist in the planning and conduct of all activities afloat.

The purpose of this publication is to provide the unit leader with sufficient information to confidently know when he or she meets the expectations set forth in the first point. This book also serves as the text for training in BSA Paddle Craft Safety.

## 2. Personal Health Review

A complete health history is required of all participants as evidence of fitness for boating activities. Forms for minors must be signed by a parent or legal guardian. Participants should be asked to relate any recent incidents of illness or injury just prior to the activity. Supervision and protection should be adjusted to anticipate any potential risks associated with individual health conditions. For significant health conditions, the adult supervisor should require an examination by a physician and consult with parent, guardian, or caregiver for appropriate precautions.

This important item is shared with Safe Swim Defense and was covered in Chapter 4.

## 3. Swimming Ability

Operation of any boat on a float trip is limited to youth and adults who have completed the BSA swimmer classification test. Swimmers must complete the following test, which should be administered annually:

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 completed in one swim without stops and must include at least one sharp turn. After completing the swim, rest by floating.



For activity afloat, those not classified as a swimmer are limited to multiperson craft during outings or float trips on calm water with little likelihood of capsizing or falling overboard. They may operate a fixed-seat rowboat or pedal boat accompanied by a buddy who is a swimmer. They may paddle or ride in a canoe or other paddle craft with an adult swimmer skilled in that craft as a buddy. They may ride as part of a group on a motorboat or sailboat operated by a skilled adult.

Note that this directive allows flexibility for those with poor swimming skills to participate, primarily as passengers, in various situations. However, only swimmers may participate in whitewater activities.

## 4. Life Jackets

Properly fitted U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jackets must be worn by all persons engaged in boating activity (rowing, canoeing, sailing, boardsailing, motorboating, waterskiing, rafting, tubing, and kayaking). Type III life jackets are recommended for general recreational use.

For vessels over 20 feet in length, life jackets need not be worn when participants are below deck or on deck when the qualified supervisor aboard the vessel determines that it is prudent to abide by less-restrictive state and federal regulations concerning the use and storage of life jackets, for example, when a cruising vessel with safety rails is at anchor. All participants not classified as swimmers must wear a life jacket when on deck under way.

Life jackets need not be worn when an activity falls under Safe Swim Defense guidelines—for example, when an inflated raft is used in a pool or when snorkeling from an anchored craft.

Life jackets with tears and inoperable buckles do not meet Coast Guard standards. Proper fit, including correct sizing and fastening, is just as important as Coast Guard approval. The next chapter provides additional information on life jacket selection, fit, and use.

## 5. Buddy System

All participants in an activity afloat are paired as buddies who are always aware of each other's situation and prepared to sound an alarm and lend assistance immediately when needed. When several craft are used on a float trip, each boat on the water should have a "buddy boat." All buddy pairs must be accounted for at regular intervals during the activity and checked off the water by the qualified supervisor at the conclusion of the activity. **Buddies either ride in the same boat or stay near one another in single-person craft.**

Buddy tags and boards are often used at BSA summer camps where boating is done in a limited area with the same launch and landing site. That specific tracking system is not required for a unit float trip, but the unit leader must have an unambiguous means to ensure that everyone who ventures on the water also gets off the water when expected.

## 6. Skill Proficiency

Everyone in an activity afloat must have sufficient knowledge and skill to participate safely. Passengers should know how their movement affects boat stability and have a basic understanding of self-rescue. Boat operators must meet government requirements, be able to maintain control of their craft, know how changes in the environment influence that control, and undertake activities only that are within their personal and group capabilities.

- Content of training exercises should be appropriate for the age, size, and experience of the participants, and should cover basic skills on calm water of limited extent before proceeding to advanced skills involving current, waves, high winds, or extended distance. **At a minimum, instructors for canoes and kayaks should be able to demonstrate the handling and rescue skills required for BSA Aquatics Supervision: Paddle Craft Safety. All instructors must have at least one assistant who can recognize and respond appropriately if the instructor's safety is compromised.**
- Anyone engaged in recreational boating using human-powered craft on flat-water ponds or controlled lake areas free of conflicting activities should be instructed in basic safety procedures prior to launch, and allowed to proceed after they have demonstrated the ability to control the boat adequately to return to shore at will.



- For recreational sailing, at least one person aboard should be able to demonstrate basic sailing proficiency (tacking, reaching, and running) sufficient to return the boat to the launch point. Extended cruising on a large sailboat requires either a professional captain or an adult with sufficient experience to qualify as a bareboat skipper.
- Motorboats may be operated by youth, subject to state requirements, only when accompanied in the boat by an experienced leader or camp staff member who meets state requirements for motorboat operation. Extended cruising on a large powerboat requires either a professional captain or an adult with similar qualifications.
- Before a unit using human-powered craft controlled by youth embarks on a float trip or excursion that covers an extended distance or lasts longer than four hours, each participant should receive either a minimum of three hours' training and supervised practice or demonstrate proficiency in maneuvering the craft effectively over a 100-yard course and recovering from a capsize.
- Self-guided unit trips on Class III whitewater may only be done after all participants have received American Canoe Association or equivalent training for the class of water and type of craft involved. Unit trips on whitewater sections of rivers rated Class IV are only allowed in rafts with a professionally trained guide in each raft. Trips above Class IV are not allowed.

Skill is an important component for an enjoyable, safe activity afloat. Because skills must be learned, Safety Afloat provides for novice participation in a controlled, safe teaching environment with progressively more skill expected as the participant moves to independent control

of the craft in a remote setting. The specific skills required for different craft in various situations are too diverse to detail in a general policy statement. Instead, Safety Afloat depends on unit leadership's prior awareness of skill levels appropriate for an activity. Leaders without that awareness must recruit experienced assistants with such knowledge to supervise an event afloat.

## 7. Planning

Proper planning is necessary to ensure a safe, enjoyable exercise afloat. All plans should include a scheduled itinerary, notification of appropriate parties, communication arrangements, contingencies in case of foul weather or equipment failure, and emergency response options.

- *Preparation.* Any boating activity requires access to the proper equipment and transportation of gear and participants to the site. Determine what state and local regulations are applicable. Get permission to use or cross private property. Determine whether personal resources will be used or whether outfitters will supply equipment, food, and shuttle services. Lists of group and personal equipment and supplies must be compiled and checked. Even short trips require selecting a route, checking water levels, and determining alternative pull-out locations. Changes in water level, especially on moving water, may pose significant, variable safety concerns. Obtain current charts and information about the waterway and consult those who have traveled the route recently.



- **Float Plan.** Complete the preparation by writing a detailed itinerary, or float plan, noting put-in and pull-out locations and waypoints, along with the approximate time the group should arrive at each. Travel time should be estimated generously.
- **Notification.** File the float plan with parents, the local council office if traveling on running water, and local authorities if appropriate. Assign a member of the unit committee to alert authorities if prearranged check-ins are overdue. Make sure everyone is promptly notified when the trip is concluded.
- **Weather.** Check the weather forecast just before setting out, and keep an alert weather eye. Anticipate changes and bring all craft ashore when rough weather threatens. Wait at least 30 minutes before resuming activities after the last incidence of thunder or lightning.
- **Contingencies.** Planning must identify possible emergencies and other circumstances that could force a change of plans. Develop alternative plans for each situation. Identify local emergency resources such as EMS systems, sheriff's departments, or ranger stations. Check your primary communication system, and identify backups, such as the nearest residence to a campsite. Cell phones and radios may lose coverage, run out of power, or suffer water damage.

This item reinforces the Scout motto: Be Prepared.



## 8. Equipment

All craft must be suitable for the activity, seaworthy, and float if capsized. All craft and equipment must meet regulatory standards, be properly sized, and be in good repair. Spares, repair materials, and emergency gear must be carried as appropriate. Life jackets and paddles must be sized to the participants. Properly designed and fitted helmets must be worn when running rapids rated Class II and above. Emergency equipment such as throw bags, signal devices, flashlights, heat sources, first aid kits, radios, and maps must be ready for use. Spare equipment, repair materials, extra food and water, and dry clothes should be appropriate for the activity. All gear should be stowed to prevent loss and water damage.





**For float trips with multiple craft, the number of craft should be sufficient to carry the party if a boat is disabled, and critical supplies should be divided among the craft.**

Proper equipment depends on the kind of craft as well as the type and duration of the activity. Someone who has conducted a similar activity should be a valuable resource—experience is hard to beat.

## 9. Discipline

**Rules are effective only when followed. All participants should know, understand, and respect the rules and procedures for safe boating activities provided by Safety Afloat guidelines. Applicable rules should be discussed prior to the outing and reviewed for all participants near the boarding area just before the activity afloat begins. People are more likely to follow directions when they know the reasons for rules and procedures. Consistent, impartially applied rules supported by skill and good judgment provide steppingstones to a safe, enjoyable outing.**

Like the bread that holds together a sandwich, discipline and qualified supervision are the foundation and cover that make safe Scouting a reality. Scouts are accustomed to following rules in other situations and will likely also be well-behaved during boating events. That is particularly true if the Scouts are reminded of their dual responsibility for their own safety and that of others in the unit. Youth leaders should share in decisions and guidance. However, youthful exuberance may at times cause momentary lapses in attention. That is, fun and a sense of adventure can overwhelm common sense. Dealing with such situations is a learning experience for youth and leaders, but leaders should realize that youngsters cannot always be expected to act rationally in the interest of their own safety. Adult leaders should therefore accept that they, not the Scouts, are ultimately responsible for implementing BSA rules and procedures.





## Who to Take Where

Recall that Safety Afloat guidelines do not permit Cub Scout or Webelos dens to conduct float trips.

Any youth operating a canoe or kayak must have passed the BSA swimmer classification test. Although there are special allowances for nonswimmers and beginners to ride as passengers under limited conditions, a unit with many members lacking swimming skills should concentrate on learn-to-swim opportunities rather than float trips.

Safety Afloat requires participants for trips on flat water and moving water below Class III to demonstrate basic skill proficiency. Ideally, skill instruction is provided before a float trip, but time may be set aside at the beginning of a trip for basic skill review. Travel distances the first day should be adjusted accordingly. If a group arrives at the put-in point at midday, then an overnight stay at the launch area allows for skill review in the afternoon, followed by an early start the next day. The unit leader needs to use sound judgment when considering such options. It may be reasonable to allow time at the beginning of a short trip to check out a new member who claims to have experience. In a pinch, such a person can ride in a boat with a skilled leader. It is not appropriate to attempt basic instruction at the start of a long, remote trip when every member of the crew is a novice.

On rivers with rapids above Class II, there are three options: (1) a group with basic skills may portage an occasional Class III rapid; (2) those with advanced whitewater training may run rapids rated at Class III or above, provided they are confident in their ability to do so after scouting each rapid; and (3) a novice group may ride in rafts (or dories) under the direction of a professional guide in each craft. That last option means that trip planning involves selecting a rafting company as discussed in Chapter 20.

All things considered, Safety Afloat guidelines require unit leaders to only consider float trips consistent with the skill levels of unit members, both youth and adults. That might limit a large troop to conducting special high-adventure trips only for older, more skilled members. A Venturing crew whose activity interest survey focuses on whitewater canoeing may set a goal of a trip down a local whitewater river. However, the crew may need to plan training sessions and intermediate trips to accomplish that goal.

## How Far in How Long?

River guidebooks are likely to give mileages between takeout points but may not provide typical times needed to make a run. That's because "typical" depends on many factors, such as the water level; how often and how long the party stops to rest, eat, play, explore, or scout; and the physical conditioning of the party. A Venturing crew practicing for a marathon race might cover 20 miles in a day, but five to 10 miles is more "typical" for a day trip, depending on how much time is needed to get to the launch point and make any necessary shuttles to get home before dark.

The best way to judge the time needed to cover a given stretch of lake or river is to make a conservative estimate based on previous experience with a similar group under similar conditions. Given a choice of a takeout point that is a little short compared with the next one that is twice the distance, choose the shorter distance. That way, the group can take time to enjoy the trip rather than racing against dusk while fighting a strong headwind. Livery companies on popular rivers will be able to provide reasonable estimates of travel time for a given flow level.

For an overnight trip on a weekend, you may need to choose among several popular river segments even though the group would like to do more. Make sure to factor in driving time, which is limited to a maximum of 10 hours a day. If you rent boats from a livery company, the livery's location may dictate your put-in and takeout points. They may prefer you start or end at their location to reduce the number of shuttles. Alternately, you may be able to launch upstream one day, camp overnight at the company's campground, and continue the next day to a takeout point.

For an extended trip on the water, it is prudent to schedule a short leg or a layover midway through the trip, ideally at a spot where there is something else to do rather than paddle.

## Gear: What, From Where, at What Price

At a minimum, any float trip will require boats, life jackets, and paddles. Overnight trips will also require standard camping gear and provisions. Detailed lists are needed later in the planning stage, but the source of boats is a major consideration when first deciding on a location.

A unit with its own boats and boat transport has the greatest flexibility in choosing a location. Some boat livery companies rent boats only for their local stretch of lake or river, but others will rent boats and trailers you can take to various locations within their region. Using a local livery company is advantageous when they transport the boats for you. Otherwise, arranging your own shuttle can take time away from the water. Many boat livers supply only the necessary marine equipment. Others are total outfitters equipped to provide food, tents, and cooking stoves in addition to boats. Although contracting with a complete outfitter simplifies the planning, it also ups the cost. A typical unit may find a better fit to their budget if they rent canoes from their council camp, buy their own provisions, and use their own camping gear.

**Note:** Even though you have made reservations for boats for a certain time, rental companies, including local councils, may void the agreement at the last minute if a river is up due to heavy rains the day before. That's a prudent business decision on their part and it also speaks to your safety. The best-laid schemes “gang aft-a-gey” and need contingencies.

## How to Get There: People, Boats, and Shuttles

Buses are handy for large groups with gear traveling over long distances without boats, and commercial carriers are recommended. Many groups arrive that way at the Northern Tier bases. If a unit uses its own or a rental bus, the drivers must have the appropriate driving licenses. Smaller groups may travel in rented vans or private automobiles.

The best way to transport canoes or kayaks is on a trailer designed for that use. Make sure the boats are securely fastened with straps, bungee cords, or lines. Such trailers often have lockers for life jackets and paddles. If not, those are packed in the tow vehicle. Make sure that the tow vehicle and hitch are rated for the trailer and that



the trailer meets all legal requirements such as lights, license, and safety chains. You should carry a spare tire for the trailer and an appropriate jack.

It is also feasible to car-top canoes or kayaks for a small group. Pipe racks on pickups can often be used as is, but standard luggage racks on vans and SUVs are seldom designed for hauling boats, particularly two canoes side by side. You may be able to order special attachments from a dealer. Alternately, removable racks can be purchased. Some less-expensive models are generic and can be adjusted to fit many vehicles. Higher-end racks are tailored to fit specific automobiles. It is important to obtain a good-quality rack that is held securely to the vehicle. At highway speeds, the wind resistance on the boats creates large forces. Foam blocks and other temporary arrangements may be sufficient for transporting a new boat slowly from the store to a garage, but are not recommended for long distances at highway speeds.

The boats should be balanced on two racks that extend across the top of the automobile. If necessary, adjust the racks so that the end of the boat toward the front of the car is level or slightly down. The wind needs to part along the sides of the boat, not catch it from beneath. Canoes



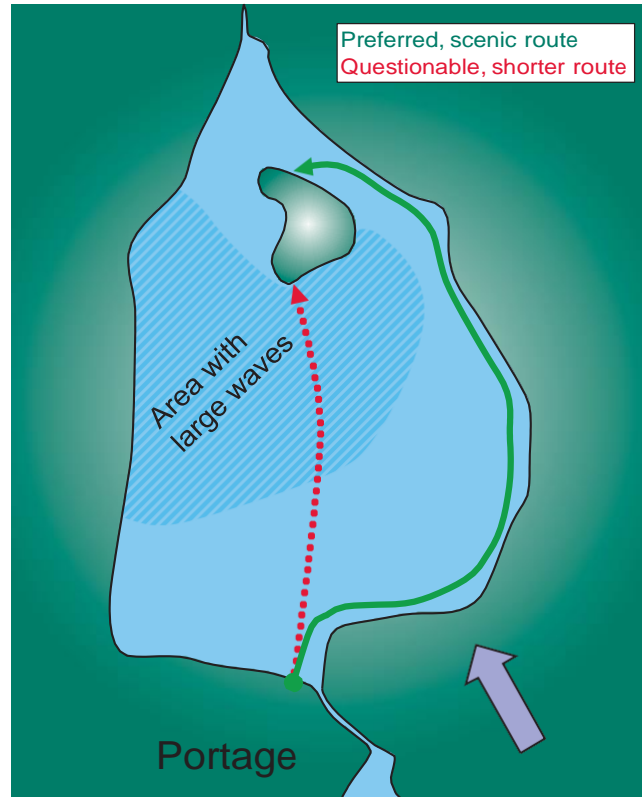
A cruising canoe can hold an amazing amount of gear, as shown in the photo on a previous page. Like to cook in a Dutch oven? There's plenty of room to carry one. However, if your trip involves reaching your destination by float plane, portaging from lake to lake, or moving gear on steep, rough trails around rapids, keep the number and weight of the items small enough that everything can be carried in one trip.

On a backpacking trip, hikers typically carry individual packs. On a canoe trip, it often makes sense to share a pack. That allows one person to portage gear while the other carries the canoe. Split critical group supplies, such as food, between boats. If a boat is lost, including its share of the gear, the group should still be able to continue, although on a shorter schedule, perhaps.

## On the Water

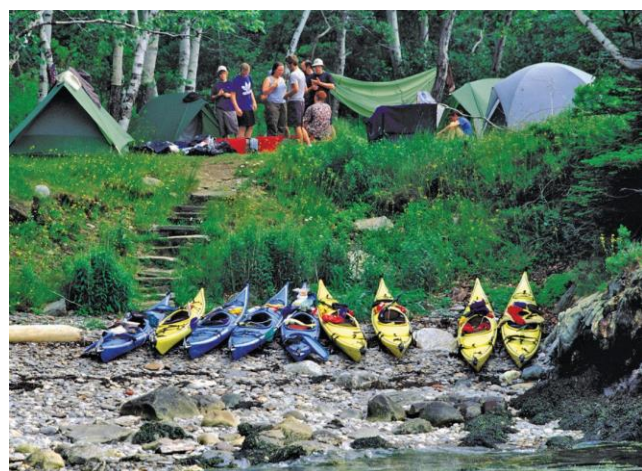
Planning needs to include procedures used on the water. Buddies in tandem boats should be matched according to size and skill as well as compatibility. Size is a consideration for proper trim. Pairing those with lesser skill with more experienced paddlers will keep the group moving efficiently while providing valuable training. Buddy boat assignments for solo craft should also pair experienced paddlers with novices. However, make sure the lead and sweep boats have experienced crews. It is particularly important to have someone familiar with the route in the lead boat. A missed portage trail or scouting location could lead the following boats into hazards.

If possible, plan a route that follows the shoreline rather than striking long distances across open water. If a long-distance, open-water segment is desired, for example to reach an island campground, review local and approaching weather patterns before leaving shore. Either wait or take a contingency route if facing strong winds, high waves, or strong currents. Be leery of leaving a shoreline with the wind at your back. While such a wind will help push you in the desired direction, it may also cause increased offshore wave action that makes the path ahead hazardous and the return path to safety increasingly difficult.



When planning a long trip with several portages, try to arrange the route so that longer portages come after the group becomes conditioned on shorter runs. Plus, the weight of food decreases as the trip progresses. Make sure to allow extra time in the itinerary for long or difficult portages.

When stopping at a campsite, make sure to secure all boats against changes in wind or water levels during the night. Normally, that means bringing them completely ashore. Minimalist campers may use the canoe itself as a shelter. An overturned canoe balanced on rocks serves as a makeshift table for food preparation.





# Sample Float Plan (Different formats may be used, but should include all relevant information.)

## MEMBERS

Trip leader:

	Age	Check if currently trained in:			
		Safe Swim Defense	Safety Afloat	CPR	First Aid
1. _____	_____	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

Assistant leaders:

2. _____	_____	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
3. _____	_____	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
4. _____	_____	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

Youth members:

5. _____	6. _____
7. _____	8. _____
9. _____	10. _____
11. _____	12. _____
13. _____	14. _____

## ITINERARY

Date:

Start at:

Via:

Overnight:

_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

**CONTACT INFO**—Names and numbers or radio info for:

Party \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency \_\_\_\_\_ services

Emergency contacts \_\_\_\_\_

## TRANSPORTATION

Automobiles:

Boats:

Number \_\_\_\_\_

Number \_\_\_\_\_

Type \_\_\_\_\_

Type \_\_\_\_\_

License \_\_\_\_\_

Registration \_\_\_\_\_

Parked at \_\_\_\_\_

Rented from \_\_\_\_\_

## notes

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Carry float plan with health histories, consent forms, and required permits. Leave copies with contacts.**



## Requirements and Application Forms

This text serves as the manual for the BSA Aquatics Supervision: Swimming and Water Rescue and Paddle Craft Safety programs. It also serves as a primary resource for the Mile Swim BSA, Snorkeling BSA, Kayaking BSA, and Boardsailing BSA recognitions. The requirements for each of those recognitions follow. Anyone interested in earning those recognitions should check with the local council for qualified instructors. Anyone interested in serving as an instructor needs to check with the council for the qualification procedure and additional support material.

Requirements for Scuba BSA are also given here, but both the participant and the instructor need to review the additional material found in the *Scuba BSA* brochure, No. 430-515.

Requirements for the aquatics merit badges are found in the individual merit badge pamphlets and are summarized in the *Boy Scout Requirements* book.

# Kayaking BSA Application



Name of Applicant \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Unit type \_\_\_\_\_ Unit number \_\_\_\_\_ Council \_\_\_\_\_

Name of council-approved counselor \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Counselor Qualification \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of counselor signifies  
applicant has completed all requirements: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Requirements

1. Before fulfilling the following requirements, successfully complete the BSA swimmer test.
2. Do the following:
  - a. Describe various types of kayaks and how they differ in design, materials, and purpose.
  - b. Name the parts of the kayak you are using for this exercise.
  - c. Demonstrate how to choose an appropriately sized kayak paddle and how to position your hands.
3. Do the following:
  - a. Tell what precautions must be taken for a safe trip afloat.
  - b. Demonstrate how to select and properly fit a life jacket.
  - c. Explain the importance of safety equipment such as life jackets, air bags, grab loops, and helmets.
4. Demonstrate your ability to aid yourself and others in the event of a capsize:
  - a. Capsize your kayak in water at least seven feet deep, perform a wet exit if necessary, and swim the boat to shore.
5. As a solo paddler, demonstrate the following:
  - a. Entering and launching a kayak from shore or dock
  - b. Landing or docking and exiting a kayak
  - c. Forward stroke
  - d. Sweep stroke
  - e. Reverse sweep
  - f. Draw stroke
  - g. Rudder stroke
  - h. Back stroke
6. As a solo paddler, do the following:
  - a. Paddle forward in a reasonably straight line.
  - b. Move the kayak sideways to the right and to the left.
  - c. Pivot 360 degrees to the right and left.
  - d. Stop the kayak.
- b. With assistance, if needed, ready the capsized craft for use.
  - c. Show how to approach a capsized paddler in your kayak and tow him to shore.
  - d. While upright in your kayak, right a capsized kayak, empty it of water, and assist the paddler aboard without returning to shore.

## Notes to Counselor:

Any youth or adult who is registered with a troop, team, crew, or ship and completes the requirements is eligible for a patch and recognition card, available from the local council service center. The completed award application should be handled as directed by the council Training, Aquatics, or other committee. Instruction for Kayaking BSA is to be conducted under safe conditions on calm water. Two to four hours in one or more sessions should suffice for instruction and practice. Paddle lengths and life jacket sizes should be adequate to fit all participants. Feathered blades are preferred, but blades at the same angle are allowed. Information and skills are discussed in *Aquatics Supervision*, No 34346, and the Kayaking merit badge pamphlet. All counselors must be trained in Safety Afloat.

Any person with current training as a BSA Aquatics Instructor, a BSA Aquatics Supervision: Paddle Craft Safety kayak instructor or as a kayak instructor by the American Canoe Association may serve as a counselor for this award with the approval of the local council. A person with similar experience in kayaking skills, safety, and instruction may also serve as a counselor with council approval. Kayaking BSA is intended to provide Scouts and their leaders with an introductory experience to kayaking on lakes, ponds, slow-moving water, or calm ocean areas. Additional preparation is needed before a unit does extended kayak touring or takes trips on class I or above whitewater.



# Snorkeling BSA Application



Name of Applicant \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Unit type \_\_\_\_\_ Unit number \_\_\_\_\_ Council \_\_\_\_\_

Name of council-approved counselor \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Counselor Qualification \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of counselor signifies

applicant has completed all requirements: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Requirements

1. Before doing other requirements, successfully complete the BSA swimmer test: Jump feetfirst into water over the head in depth, level off, and begin swimming. 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 completed in one swim without stops and must include at least one sharp turn. After completing the swim, rest by floating.
2. Discuss the importance of using the buddy system at all times while snorkeling and list duties of a buddy, beginning with equipment checks.
3. Explain the function, fit, and selection of mask, fins, and snorkel. Discuss the use of inflatable flotation vests and life jackets when snorkeling in open water.
4. In confined, shallow water (about waist deep), demonstrate use of mask and snorkel:
  - a. Show how to prevent the mask from fogging and how to equalize pressure in mask, ears, and sinus cavities. With your head underwater, flood the mask, observe the effect on your vision, surface, and drain the water from the mask.
  - b. With your face in the water, breathe through the snorkel. Then submerge, surface, clear water from the snorkel, and resume free breathing without removing the snorkel from your mouth.
5. In confined, shallow water, demonstrate the use of swim fins: Do first using only fins, and then repeat with a mask and snorkel.
  - a. Fit and adjust fins to feet.
  - b. Walk with fins as if entering from a beach.
  - c. Swim at the surface (10 yards) and underwater (three yards) using the flutter kick.
  - d. Control direction without using hands while swimming with fins at the surface and underwater.
6. In confined, deep water (six to 12 feet), demonstrate:
  - a. Proper techniques for entering and exiting the water with snorkeling equipment from a dock or boat.
  - b. Headfirst and feetfirst surface dives, including proper body position for safe ascent and descent.
7. Show knowledge of snorkeling signals:
  - a. Demonstrate divers' signs and signals, both audible and visual, for use at the surface and underwater.
  - b. Set out a diver down flag and explain its function.
8. In clear, confined water eight to 12 feet deep that has a firm bottom, while swimming with a buddy, use mask, fins, and snorkel to locate and recover an object from the bottom.
9. Demonstrate basic survival skills:
  - a. Float facedown for five minutes while breathing through a snorkel with a minimum of movement.
  - b. Demonstrate survival floating for five minutes without use of a snorkel.
  - c. Using fins, show how to tow an exhausted or unconscious buddy to safety.
10. Review and explain the eight points of Safe Swim Defense and BSA Snorkeling Safety. Explain training, preparations, and precautions required for snorkeling in open water. Explain environmental factors that affect snorkeling and discuss special precautions needed for oceans, streams, and lakes.
11. Explain pressure, buoyancy, and submerged optics and acoustics related to snorkel swimming and diving.
12. Discuss the effects of submersion on the body and how to handle potentially dangerous situations:
  - a. What is hyperventilation and how is it avoided?
  - b. What are the symptoms and consequences of hypothermia?
  - c. Why is CPR training recommended for those participating in swimming and snorkeling activities?

(See Notes to the Counselor on next page)

# Snorkeling BSA: Notes to Counselor

The Snorkeling BSA requirements introduce the special skills, equipment, and safety precautions associated with snorkeling; encourage the development of aquatics skills that promote fitness and recreation; and provide a foundation for those who later will participate in more advanced underwater activity.

Any youth or adult who is registered with a troop, team, crew, or ship and completes the requirements is eligible for a patch and recognition card. The completed award application should be handled as directed by the council Training, Aquatics, or other committee.

All counselors must have current Safe Swim Defense training and council approval. Anyone currently trained as a BSA Aquatics Instructor or certified as a snorkeling instructor by a BSA recognized scuba training agency may serve as a counselor for the Snorkeling BSA award. Councils may also approve counselors who have been trained and are supervised by those with the previously listed credentials.

Instruction must be conducted in clear, confined water with a maximum depth of 12 feet. A swimming pool is recommended. Snorkeling BSA is ideally suited to winter programs using indoor pools. Three 45-minute sessions are recommended for instruction, practice, and completion of requirements.

All aspects of Safe Swim Defense apply during instruction, practice and all other snorkeling activities. Snorkeling in open water requires each participant to first demonstrate knowledge and skills equivalent to the Snorkeling BSA requirements.

*Aquatics Supervision: A Leader's Guide to Youth Swimming and Boating Activities*, No. 34346, provides reference material for Snorkeling BSA instruction. Scuba training agencies, equipment manufacturers, and others occasionally publish references available online and through bookstores and dive shops. Although few dedicated snorkeling texts are available, instruction manuals for scuba diving contain pertinent information.

All requirements must be completed as stated on the application form. The counselor may not omit, vary, or add requirements. The skill requirements are listed in an order appropriate for instruction.

The second requirement considers the time-honored and time-proven principle of the buddy system. Snorkelers must use the buddy system at all times. Before beginning the activity, each person helps his buddy fit and check equipment. The principle of the buddy system is that two people can enjoy an aquatics activity together while each provides a critical margin of safety for the other. Each buddy must constantly be aware of the condition and circumstances of his buddy, and must always be prepared to call for aid or give immediate assistance if needed.

# Scuba BSA Application



Name of Applicant \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Unit type \_\_\_\_\_ Unit number \_\_\_\_\_ Council \_\_\_\_\_

Name of council-approved counselor \* \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Agency qualification & scuba instructor number \* \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of counselor signifies  
applicant has completed all requirements: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

*\*The counselor must hold an instructor rating with current teaching status with PADI, NAUI, SSI, or RSTC member organization in accordance with BSA scuba policies in the Guide to Safe Scouting. Counselors must have council approval.*

## Requirements

1. Before doing other requirements, successfully complete the BSA swimmer test. To begin the test, jump feetfirst into water over the head in depth, level off, and begin swimming. Swim 75 yards in a strong manner using one or more of the following strokes: side- stroke, breaststroke, trudgen, or crawl; then swim 25 yards using an easy, resting backstroke. The 100 yards must be completed in one swim without stops and must include at least one sharp turn. After completing the swim, rest by floating.
2. Discuss the importance of using the buddy system at all times while scuba diving. Explain that a dive buddy is there to assist with the donning and doffing of equipment, to lend assistance in case of emergency, and to share in the underwater experience. Remember, always dive with a buddy—**Never dive alone!**
3. Review hazards associated with scuba diving, including causes of decompression incidents, and safety procedures to avoid them. Explain the importance of never using scuba equipment unless you are enrolled in a training exercise or have completed a diver certification program taught by a certified instructor.
4. State the purpose of the following pieces of basic diving equipment: mask, fins, BCD, BCD inflator, regulator, air gauge, and alternate air source.
5. Describe how to locate the air gauge, and explain how to recognize the “caution zone” on it.
6. Don and adjust mask, fins, snorkel, scuba unit (BCD, regulator, tank) and weight system with the assistance of a buddy, an instructor, or a certified assistant.
7. While underwater, demonstrate and recognize the following hand signals: OK?/OK!; Stop; Up; Down; Out of air; Come here; Ears not clearing; Slow down/Take it easy; Something is wrong; Watch me; Check your air supply.
8. Inflate/deflate a BCD at the surface using the low-pressure inflator.
9. In shallow water, demonstrate proper compressed air breathing habits; remember to breathe naturally and not hold the breath.
10. Clear the regulator while underwater using both exhalation and purge-button methods, and resume normal breathing from it.
11. In shallow water, recover a regulator hose from behind the shoulder while underwater.
12. In shallow water, clear a partially flooded mask while underwater.
13. Swim underwater with scuba equipment while maintaining control of both direction and depth, properly equalizing the ears and mask to accommodate depth changes.
14. While underwater, locate and read submersible pressure gauge and signal whether the air supply is adequate or low based on the gauge's caution zone.
15. Describe how to avoid hazardous aquatic life (if applicable to your confined water location).

(See Notes to the Counselor on next page)



# Scuba BSA: Notes to Counselor

All aspects of the Scuba BSA program must conform with the BSA scuba policy found in the Guide to Safe Scouting. Instructors not familiar with the Scouting program should consult the BSA manual, *Aquatics Supervision: A Leader's Guide to Youth Swimming and Boating Activities*, No. 34346, which also contains the BSA scuba policy.

Counselors for Scuba BSA must hold current scuba instructor certification from PADI, NAUI, SSI, or RSTC member organizations. Instruction must comply with RSTC standards for introductory scuba experiences. Minimum standards include instructor to participant ratios. In a pool, the maximum ratio is eight participants per instructor. In a confined waterfront setting, the maximum ratio is four participants per instructor. Ratios may be increased by two participants if the instructor is assisted by someone certified as a divemaster or assistant instructor.

A second adult who understands the procedures should be present in case the instructor becomes incapacitated. Two-deep adult leadership is also required by BSA Youth Protection guidelines.

Before participants are allowed in the water, they must complete an Annual Health and Medical Record designed for scuba activities. Instructors should use standard forms advocated by their certifying agency.

Instructors may use agency materials, such as participant guidebooks, slide shows, and videos to help convey cognitive material. Skill instruction must be conducted in clear, confined water. A swimming pool is recommended. Scuba BSA is ideally suited to winter programs using indoor pools. Two 45-minute sessions are appropriate for instruction, practice, and completion of requirements.

Although Scuba BSA is similar to introductory scuba experiences offered by various RSTC member organizations and other dive agencies, those programs are not substitutes for Scuba BSA. All requirements must be completed as stated on the application form. The counselor may not omit, vary, or add requirements. In particular, Scuba BSA has a prerequisite swimming requirement, is only available to youth and adults registered in the Boy Scout, Venturing or Sea Scout programs (minimum age around 10½), and does not include the option of an open-water dive.

Local council programs may not compress or sell air for scuba use, or sell, rent, or loan scuba equipment. All air and equipment for local council Scuba BSA programs must be obtained from properly licensed sources, not affiliated with the Boy Scouts of America and under the supervision of PADI, NAUI, SSI, or RSTC-approved and certified scuba instructors.

Individuals completing the Scuba BSA requirements qualify for a recognition card and patch. The completed award application should be handled as directed by the council Training, Aquatics, or other committee.



The Scuba BSA program was created and implemented with assistance from International PADI Inc., [www.padi.com](http://www.padi.com).

# Mile Swim BSA Application



Name of Applicant \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Unit type \_\_\_\_\_ Unit number \_\_\_\_\_ Council \_\_\_\_\_

Name of council-approved counselor \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Counselor Qualification \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of counselor signifies  
applicant has completed all requirements: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Requirements

1. Explain how regular exercise contributes to good health and why swimming is one of the best forms of exercise.
2. Tell what precautions and procedures a swimmer and escort must follow for distance swimming over open water.
3. Under the supervision of a qualified counselor, participate in four hours of training and preparation for distance swimming (one hour a day maximum).
4. Swim one mile over a measured course that has been approved by the counselor supervising the swim.

## How Important Is Exercise?

Regular exercise is an important contributor to a long and healthy life. For example, exercise lowers several risk factors for heart disease. People who exercise regularly are much less likely to be overweight. Not only does exercise burn calories, it may actually suppress appetite. Blood pressure is reduced by exercise. The combination of exercise and weight reduction often allows people with hypertension to control their blood pressure without the use of medication. Smokers commonly discontinue that habit as they begin exercise programs. Active joggers tend to have lower total cholesterol than those who do not run. When it comes to protecting your heart, there is no substitute for exercise.

Without sufficient exercise, bones become demineralized. They lose calcium and become brittle. Demineralization can progress rapidly in those who are bedridden and cannot exercise. Demineralization is a concern for astronauts since lack of gravity robs activity of its exercise value. Weak and brittle bones, caused by lack of exercise, are common in the aged.

Exercise is an excellent cardiovascular conditioner and important to living better as well as longer. People who exercise regularly feel and look younger than those who do not. Improvements in muscle tone and circulation undoubtedly contribute to freedom from fatigue and the feeling of well-being that the physically fit enjoy.

Swimming is to some degree superior to other forms of exercise because it is a full-body exercise (all muscles and joints are exercised) and because it avoids the risk of damage to joints and other parts of the body that may result from activity such as running. The extensive use of swimming therapy for the injured and impaired is further evidence of its value as a body conditioner.

**(See Notes to the Counselor on next page)**

# Mile Swim BSA: Notes to Counselor

The Mile Swim BSA recognition provides a sense of accomplishment and supports confidence, safety, skill, and physical fitness. The ability to swim long distances in warm water in time of need provides a margin of safety for all aquatics activities. Swimming skills and physical stamina are also needed to assist others. In addition to safety, Mile Swim BSA should encourage the development of physical fitness by introducing youth to swimming as regular exercise. However, it is not a competitive training program limited to specific strokes that emphasize speed over efficiency. Swimming skills, including mastery of restful strokes, are as important to the program as endurance. Anyone who can walk a mile without stopping should have sufficient stamina to swim a mile with restful strokes. Just as walking is a viable exercise alternative to jogging or sprinting, restful swimming strokes used over long distances in place of a fast crawl can also play a positive role in physical conditioning.

Counselors for Mile Swim BSA must be approved by the council. Adults trained as a BSA Aquatics Instructor, a Red Cross Water Safety Instructor, or a YMCA Swim Instructor are good candidates. Swim coaches with a Scouting background are also appropriate. All counselors must have current Safe Swim Defense training.

All in-water exercises must conform to Safe Swim Defense guidelines. The requirements specify that the participant first prepare before swimming a continuous mile. Four sessions of an hour each are appropriate. Each session should include a discussion of objectives, warm-up, stroke tips, and swims for increased distances. Short sprints may be included to illustrate different levels of aerobic exercise. The groundwork sessions are intended to ensure the success of all applicants who begin with reasonable swimming skills. The goal is encouragement and skill refinement, not elimination. Virtually all of those who participate in the training should be able to complete the mile, particularly if they are shown how to refine the crawl stroke using rhythmic breathing with the head in the water and to use alternative restful strokes such as the elementary backstroke, the breaststroke, and the sidestroke that utilize a relaxed pace and a glide.

The training sessions may be conducted separately or in combination with another program, such as instruction for the Swimming merit badge. Credit may be given anyone, such as a swim-team member, who provides evidence of regular participation in a supervised swim training or fitness program that covers at least four hours over four different, regularly scheduled sessions.

The continuous mile may be done using any combination of strokes and has no time limit. The swimmer may pause in deep water either by floating or treading water but may not rest by standing or holding to the side. Both open and flip turns are allowed in pools.

The mile may be covered by laps in a pool or at an enclosed waterfront swimming area.

Courses over extended distances in open water must conform to Safe Swim Defense guidelines regarding hazards such as submerged trees, currents, or boat traffic, as well as water quality, depth, and clarity.

Each individual swimmer, or at most a buddy pair, may be accompanied by a rowboat with two people onboard, one skilled in controlling the boat and the other trained in basic water rescue, equipped with a reaching device and a flotation aid, continuously watching the swimmer(s). The swimmer, not the boat, must set the pace.

Alternatively, a closed circuit may be established where all swimmers are constantly in reach of safety personnel strategically positioned at fixed points on anchored boats, the shore, or piers. Each participant swims with a buddy, and the number and spacing of those in the water should not exceed the capacity of the watchers to easily count the swimmers as they move from one zone to another.



# BSA Stand Up Paddleboarding Application



Name of Applicant \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Unit type \_\_\_\_\_ Unit number \_\_\_\_\_ Council \_\_\_\_\_

Name of council-approved counselor \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Counselor Qualification \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of counselor signifies  
applicant has completed all requirements: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Requirements

1. Review the BSA Safety Afloat policy. Explain how this applies to stand up paddleboarding.
2. Before fulfilling other requirements, successfully complete the BSA swimmer test: Jump feetfirst into water over the head in depth, level off, and begin swimming. 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 completed in one swim without stops and must include one sharp turn. After completing the swim, rest by floating.
3. Explain safety considerations for stand up paddleboarding in the following environments: lake, moving water, white- water, open ocean, ocean surf.
4. Review the characteristics of life jackets most appropriate for stand up paddleboarding and understand why one must always be worn while paddling. Then demonstrate how to select and fit a lifejacket for stand up paddleboarding.
5. Describe the correct type of leash to wear in the appropriate water venues.
6. Name and point out:
  - a. The major parts of a stand up paddleboard
  - b. The parts of a paddle for stand up paddleboarding
7. Discuss:
  - a. The different types of stand up paddleboards
  - b. How to correctly size and hold a paddle for stand up paddleboarding
8. Using a properly outfitted stand up paddleboard, demonstrate the following:
  - a. How to safely carry a stand up paddleboard
  - b. How to safely paddle away from a dock or shoreline (on knees)
  - c. How to stand and balance on a board in the neutral position
  - d. How to appropriately fall off a board
  - e. How to remount the board
  - f. Forward stroke
  - g. Back stroke
  - h. Forward sweep
  - i. Reverse sweep
  - j. Draw stroke
  - k. One self-rescue technique—lay on your stomach and paddle with your hands
9. With *supervision* from your instructor, paddle a course that involves:
  - a. A straight line for 25 yards and stop within one board length
  - b. A figure 8
  - c. Moving abeam to the right 10 feet and to the left 10 feet

## Notes to Counselor

Any youth or adult who is registered with a troop, team, crew, or ship and completes the requirements is eligible for a patch and recognition card. The completed award application should be handled as directed by the council Training, Aquatics, or other committee. Instruction for the BSA SUP award is to be conducted under safe conditions on calm water. One to three hours in one or more sessions should suffice for instruction and practice.

Information and skills are discussed in *Aquatics Supervision*, No 34346, and the BSA SUP brochure at [www.scouting.org](http://www.scouting.org). All counselors must be trained in Safety Afloat and have council approval. Any person with current training as a BSA Aquatics Instructor or as a SUP instructor by the American Canoe Association, or a person with similar experience in SUP skills, safety, and instruction may serve as a counselor.

# Boardsailing BSA Application



Name of Applicant \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Unit type \_\_\_\_\_ Unit number \_\_\_\_\_ Council \_\_\_\_\_

Name of council-approved counselor \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Counselor Qualification \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of counselor signifies  
applicant has completed all requirements: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Requirements

1. Before fulfilling the following requirements, you must successfully complete the BSA swimmer classification test.
2. Review how each point of BSA Safety Afloat applies to boardsailing.
3. Explain precautions for the following environmental factors: dying wind, high wind, offshore winds, currents, waves, and lightning.
4. Discuss the prevention, recognition, and treatment of the following health concerns that could arise while boardsailing: hypothermia, sunburn, dehydration, and heat exhaustion.
5. Properly rig and prepare the sailboard you are using. Identify each of the following: uphaul, outhaul, downhaul, cleat, leach, tack, clew, foot, luff, skeg, centerboard, wishbone boom, and universal. Explain luffing. Explain how to steer the sailboard by adjusting the center of effort.
6. Demonstrate your ability to uphaul the sail, find the neutral position to the wind (sail luffing), and control the board's position with foot movement.
7. With supervision from your instructor, sail a course that involves beating, reaching, and running. Change direction by tacking into the wind.

## Notes to the Counselor

Boardsailing BSA has been developed to introduce basic boardsailing skills, equipment, and safety precautions; to encourage the development of skills that promote fitness and safe aquatic recreation; and to lay a foundation for more advanced and demanding boardsailing activities. Any youth or adult who is registered with a troop, team, crew, or ship and completes the requirements is eligible for a patch and recognition card. The completed award application should be handled as directed by the council Training, Aquatics, or other committee.

All counselors must be trained in Safety Afloat and have council approval. Any person recognized as a boardsailing instructor by the U.S. Windsurfing or U.S. Sailing associations, or someone with similar experience in boardsailing skills, safety, and instruction, may serve as a counselor for this award.

Instruction must be conducted on a protected body of water in an area free from other traffic or large waves. Initial water entry and practice should be on a gradual beach clear of hazards. A steady three-to-seven knot breeze is ideal for beginner practice. All participants should be close enough to supervisory personnel for efficient instruction and ready assistance.

All requirements must be completed as stated. Basic skills and safety precautions are presented in the BSA publication: *Aquatics Supervision: A Youth Leader's Guide for Swimming and Boating Activities*, No. 34346. Additional resources may be found online at [www.uswindsurfing.org](http://www.uswindsurfing.org) and [www.ussailing.org](http://www.ussailing.org).

# BSA Aquatics Supervision: Swimming and Water Rescue

## Purpose

Training for Aquatics Supervision: Swimming and Water Rescue provides BSA leaders with information and skills to prevent, recognize, and respond to swimming emergencies during unit swimming activities. It expands the awareness instruction provided by Safe Swim Defense training. Persons completing the training should be better able to assess their preparation to supervise unit swimming events. The BSA recommends that at least one person with this training is present to assist with supervision whenever a unit swims at a location that does not provide lifeguards. This training is open to any registered adult leader, Scout, Venturer, or Explorer who is age 15 or older. A council-approved instructor must directly supervise all training. The course takes approximately eight hours and is valid for three years. An Instructor Guide is found at: [www.scouting.org/filestore/Outdoor%20Program/Aquatics/pdf/430-505.pdf](http://www.scouting.org/filestore/Outdoor%20Program/Aquatics/pdf/430-505.pdf)

Although the training is consistent with training provided professional lifeguards, the Swimming and Water Rescue course is not a lifeguard training course and is not a substitute for BSA Lifeguard training for summer camp aquatics staff. On the other hand, this course addresses important information that may not be covered in generic lifeguard training programs such as: preventative measures, including the buddy system and swim classification tests; how to set up a safe swim area in diverse situations; the use of non-standard rescue equipment; and emergency action plans in remote settings. Therefore, BSA leaders with lifeguard training from other agencies are encouraged to complete this course prior to supervising unit swim activities in remote settings. A “challenge” option is provided to foster cross-training of individuals with training from other agencies.

Adult and youth first aid training, including CPR, is an important safety consideration for all Scouting activities, not just swimming. First aid training is not included in the Swimming and Water Rescue course with the expectation the leader has addressed this need separately, as noted in the course material and on the training card.

## Prerequisites

1. **Age, physical fitness, and training:**
  - A. Be 15 years old or older prior to training.
  - B. Submit written evidence of physical fitness.
  - C. Complete Safe Swim Defense training.
2. **Swimming ability:**
  - A. Complete the BSA swimmer 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, breast stroke, trudgen, or crawl; then swim 25 yards using an easy, resting backstroke. The 100 yards must be completed in one swim without stops and must include at least one sharp turn. After completing the swim, rest by floating.
  - B. Recover a 10-pound weight from 8 feet of water.

## Requirements

3. Administer **both** the BSA beginner and swimmer classification tests.
4. Demonstrate reaching assists from deck, side, and shallow water using items such as arms, legs, towels, rescue tubes, and poles.
5. Twice demonstrate throwing assists using items such as lines, ring buoys, throw bags, and free-floating supports. Successfully place at least one such aid within reach of a subject 25 feet from shore.
6. Demonstrate stride jump and compact jump entries into deep water.
7. Demonstrate an accompanied rescue for a conscious subject in deep water 20 feet from shore. Enter the water with a buoyant aid, present the aid to the subject, release it, and accompany the subject to shore. Speak to the subject throughout the assist to provide clear instruction and encouragement.
8. Demonstrate a contact rescue for an unconscious subject at or near the surface in deep water 20 feet from shore:
  - A. Approaching the subject from the front, use a wrist tow to move the subject to shore. During the approach, confirm that the subject is passive.
  - B. Approaching the subject from the rear, use an armpit tow to move the subject to shore. During the approach, confirm that the subject is passive.
  - C. With the assistance of one other person, and without the aid of a backboard, remove an unconscious subject from the water at the edge of the pool or pier and check for breathing and circulation.
9. Practice in-water rescues of both conscious and unconscious subjects using a variety of flotation aids.
10. Demonstrate the following defensive actions:
  - A. Front head-hold escape
  - B. Rear head-hold escape
11. Demonstrate a line-and-tender rescue as both the swimmer and the line tender.
12. Demonstrate in-line stabilization for a suspected spinal injury in shallow water:
  - A. For a faceup subject
  - B. For a facedown subject
13. Correctly answer 80 percent of the questions on the Swimming and Water Rescue written exam covering Safe Swim Defense, emergency action plans, surveillance, victim recognition, and water rescue. Review any incomplete or incorrect answers.



# BSA Aquatics Supervision: Paddle Craft Safety - Basic

## Purpose

Float trips are popular Boy Scout and Venturing activities. Safety Afloat awareness training provides guidelines for safe float trips and is required of unit leaders, but does not provide the skill training mandated by those guidelines. Aquatics Supervision: Paddle Craft Safety - Basic expands Safety Afloat training to include the skills, as well as the knowledge, needed for a unit leader to confidently supervise canoeing or kayaking excursions on flat water. Persons completing the training should be better able to access their preparation to supervise paddle craft activities. The training is open to any registered adult leader, Scout, Venturer, or Explorer who is age 15 or older. The training must be conducted by a council approved instructor, takes roughly eight hours and is valid for three years. An Instructor Guide is available at: [www.scouting.org/filestore/Outdoor%20Program/Aquatics/pdf/430-501.pdf](http://www.scouting.org/filestore/Outdoor%20Program/Aquatics/pdf/430-501.pdf)

Adult and youth first aid training, including CPR, is an important safety consideration for all Scouting activities, not just boating. First aid training is not included in the Paddle Craft Safety course with the expectation that the leader has addressed that need separately, as noted in the course material and on the training card.

Float trips that last overnight also require camping skills. Because Scouting emphasizes outdoor skills in many programs, only items specific to canoeing or kayaking are reviewed in the course material.

## Prerequisites

1. **Age, physical fitness, and training:**
  - A. Be 15 years old or older prior to training.
  - B. Submit written evidence of physical fitness.
  - C. Complete Safety Afloat training.
2. **Swimming ability:**

Complete the BSA swimmer 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 completed in one swim without stops and must include at least one sharp turn. After completing the swim, rest by floating.

## Requirements

3. Personal safety skills:
  - A. Select a life jacket of appropriate size and demonstrate proper fit.
  - B. Demonstrate the feet-up floating position used if caught in a current.
  - C. Demonstrate H.E.L.P. and Huddle positions.
  - D. Capsize and swim a boat to shore.
4. Basic boating skills: Demonstrate the following maneuvers on calm water using standard stroke techniques:
  - A. Transport boat from rack or trailer to water's edge.
  - B. Safely board and launch the craft.
  - C. Travel in a straight line for 50 yards.
  - D. Stop the craft.
  - E. From the stop, move the boat sideways, first to the right, then to the left.
  - F. From the stop, pivot the boat to the right, then to the left.
  - G. Return to shore along a curved course demonstrating both left and right turns while under way.
  - H. Land, safely exit, and store the craft.
5. Group safety skills:
  - A. Throw a rescue bag, laying the line within 3 feet of an object 30 feet away.
  - B. Demonstrate a boat rescue of a swimmer.
  - C. Demonstrate an on-water boat-over-boat assist.
6. Correctly answer 80 percent of the questions on the Paddle Craft Safety written exam covering Safety Afloat, trip preparation, emergency action plans, and basic boating knowledge. Review any incomplete or incorrect answers.

\*Skills may be demonstrated either tandem in a canoe or solo in a kayak. If a tandem canoe is used, each participant must demonstrate the maneuvers from both bow and stern positions.

# BSA Aquatics Supervision: Paddle Craft Safety – River

## Purpose

The Basic Paddle Craft Safety training provides an introduction to flat water canoeing and/or kayaking. The River modules extend that introduction to moving water. Any unit planning river trips in canoes or kayaks should be well served by leaders who complete those modules. Details are provided in the same Instructor Guide used for the basic modules.

## Requirements

1. Prerequisites:
  - A. Submit written evidence of physical fitness
  - B. Have current Safety Afloat training.
  - C. Have current training in Aquatics Supervision: Paddle Craft Safety- Basic for the appropriate craft.
  - D. Demonstrate or provide evidence of current ability to complete the 100- yard BSA swimmer classification.
2. View and discuss the ACA/BSA video “Reading the Rhythms of Rivers and Rapids”.
3. Do the following during an instructor-led canoe or kayak trip of at least three miles down a flowing river with Class I or Class II features, including standing waves, a downstream V, and a large eddy. A segment that includes isolated Class II+ or Class III rapids that can be portaged is appropriate, but not necessary. Features and water levels must be consistent with the safe performance of the requirements.
  - A. Transport boat from trailer or carrier to river’s edge. Safely board and launch the boat into a current.
  - B. Review the effect of basic flat-water strokes in moving water, demonstrating the ability to stay parallel with the current.
  - C. Demonstrate knowledge of river signals to communicate with other boats.
  - D. Perform a controlled swamp in a current, safely exit the craft, and guide it to shore.
  - E. Swim feet first in a current without a boat and catch a throw bag deployed from shore.
  - F. Successfully deploy a throw bag to a person fulfilling requirement 3E.
  - G. If canoeing, demonstrate a cross draw stroke. If kayaking, demonstrate a low brace.
  - H. Demonstrate ability to cross the current using a front ferry.
  - I. Demonstrate an eddy turn.
  - J. Demonstrate peel out of an eddy.
  - K. Stop above a rapid indicated on a river map. Scout the rapid to determine how best to run the rapid and then run it.
  - L. Stop above a hole, low-head dam, or other feature indicated on a river map. Scout and portage the feature, even if it can be safely run.
  - M. Land, safely exit, and load the boat for transport.
4. Write a float plan for a troop, crew, or ship covering the stretch of river used for training.



# BSA Lifeguard

BSA Lifeguard requirements and support material were revised effective May 1, 2017. The new BSA Lifeguard Instructor Manual incorporates several changes in response to the industry's evolving standard of care and training requirements.

Participants in BSA Lifeguard training are required to complete all the sessions outlined in the Instructor Manual, which is available for free download at:

[www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/BSA\\_Lifeguard\\_Instructor\\_Manual-2017.pdf](http://www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/BSA_Lifeguard_Instructor_Manual-2017.pdf)

