

Outdoor Education (Swimming - Instructional)

Instructional Swimming At Designated Swim Areas In Lakes, Ponds And Rivers.

SECONDARY - CURRICULAR 2025

- Consult [Disability-Centred Safety](#) if your groups of students include students with disabilities.
- Consult [Risk Management](#).
- The safety standards for this activity must be presented to the activity provider prior to the activity taking place. The activity provider must meet the minimum requirements listed in the safety standards. For more information on planning trips using outside providers, consult [Outside Activity Providers](#).
- Designated Swim Areas (waterfront) in camps are governed by [Ontario Regulation 503/17 \(s. 24 and 25\)](#).
- Also consult [Outdoor Education \(General Procedures\)](#).
- Consult [Swimming](#) if the activity occurs in a pool.
- Consult [Outdoor Education \(Swimming - Leisure\)](#) for a definition of and safety standards for leisure swimming if, during an instructional swimming session, the focus moves from instructional to leisure swimming.
- Consult [Outdoor Education \(Swimming – on Watercraft and Land-based Trips\)](#) for a definition of and safety standards for swimming at Non-Designated Swim areas in lakes, ponds and rivers when on Outdoor Education watercraft and/or land-based trips.

Equipment

- Determine that all equipment is safe (for example, no sharp corners, cracks, or splinters) and all assistive devices (e.g., a walker) are in good working condition and properly adjusted for the height and mobility needs of the student prior to participation.
- Those supervising the waterfront area (for example, Aquatic Instructor or Lifeguard) must have a whistle or other signaling device.
- Boundary markers must be used to establish the swimming area.
- Correctly fitting and [Transport Canada](#) approved personal flotation device (P.F.D.) or lifejacket must be worn by identified non-swimmers at all times when near or in the water.
- Accessibility to standard safety equipment as stated in Ontario Regulations 503/17, s. 24 is required:
 - one or more buoyant rescue aids attached to a shoulder loop with a 6mm (0.25") line at least 1.6m (5'3") in length
 - one or more reaching poles of 3.6m (12') or greater in length
 - one or more buoyant throwing aids attached to a 6mm (0.25") line at least 8m (26'5") in length
 - spinal board
 - paddleboard or boat, when any part of the swimming area is more than 50m meters from the shore
- A correctly fitting, properly secured/fastened and Canadian approved personal flotation device (PFD) or lifejacket must be worn at all times on the deck and in the water by Students who do not successfully complete the In-Water Swim Assessment or do not have a Bronze Star certification or higher. Refer to [In-Water Swim Assessment](#) within the Special Rules/Instructions section.

Refer to the [First Aid](#) section for first aid equipment requirements.

Clothing/Footwear/Jewellery

- Appropriate clothing and footwear must be worn.
- When long hair poses a safety risk it must be secured. Devices (for example, hair pins, elastics and barrettes) used to tie back long hair must not present a safety concern.
- Students must not participate when the length of fingernails poses a safety risk to themselves or others.

Facilities

- Determine that all facilities are safe and accessible for the students participating. Students must be encouraged to report facility problems to the teacher.
- Prior to swimming, the Teacher must check with local authorities to determine whether water is safe for swimming (for example, location, water quality and away from fast moving water).
- Designated Swim area must:
 - Be clearly designated with defined physical boundaries (for example, at camps buoyed, or enclosed dock areas);
 - Have boundaries that are clearly visible to watercraft users (for example, buoy line is visible to users of personal watercraft and motorboats occupying the same body of water);
 - Be free from hazards;
 - Be of suitable water temperature; and

- Have stationed water rescue equipment.

Environmental Considerations

- When environmental conditions may pose a risk to student safety (for example, thunderstorms [lightning] or student(s) with asthma, triggered by air quality), Teachers must take into consideration their school board/school's protocols and procedures related to:
 - environmental conditions (consult [Weather](#)); and
 - insects (for example, mosquitoes and ticks [consult the school/school board's protocols and/or regional Public Health Department's website]).
- Students must receive instruction on safety procedures related to environmental conditions and be made aware of ways to protect themselves (for example, sun burn, heat stroke, poisonous plants).
- At all times the school board's weather and insect procedures are the minimum standards. In situations where a higher standard of care is presented (for example, outside activity providers, facility/program coordinators), the higher standard of care must be followed.
- Do not swim if there are any indications of hazardous weather (for example, lightning, high winds). If hazardous weather approaches, leave the water immediately. Prior to allowing students back into the water, there must be a 30-minute lapse from the last visual observation of lightning or sound of thunder. If possible, consult local weather radar predictions and Canadian lightning danger maps.
- The Teacher, Trip Guide, Qualified Instructor, and Lifeguard (as appropriate) must:
 - be aware of and respond to changing weather and water conditions prior to and during the activity; and
 - cancel, postpone, or alter the activity if conditions put Students' safety at an elevated level of risk (for example, wind, temperature, lightning storms, fog).

Special Rules/Instructions

- Inform In-Charge Person of any student with a medical history or any medical problems that may affect the student's safety in water (for example, diabetes, asthma, heart condition, convulsions, epilepsy, frequent ear infections).
- Refer to school board policies and procedures (i.e., transportation, excursion/field trip) for communication with parents/guardians, the location of an off-site activity, means of transportation, supervision ratios, and parent/guardian permission.
- When a student displays hesitation (verbally or non-verbally) with participating, the Teacher must determine the reason(s) for doubt. If the Teacher believes that a potential hesitancy during the skill could put the student at risk, the student must be directed toward a more basic skill, or be permitted to select a role within the activity at their comfort level, including the choice to not participate.
- Prior to participation, the Teacher must reference and apply their school board's policy on equity and inclusion as it affects student participation and makes appropriate accommodations/modifications to provide a safe learning environment. Consult the Intent subsection within the [About section](#).
- Students must be made aware of all rules and regulations associated with the swimming area.
- Students must be informed that the use of equipment and the gymnasium are prohibited without supervision. In addition to verbal communication, the doors must be locked or signs must be posted indicating that students are not allowed to use the gym unless appropriately supervised.

Student Medical Information

- Teachers must be aware of Students whose medical condition (for example, asthma, anaphylaxis, diabetes, epilepsy) may affect participation. Consult Medical Conditions.
- Teachers must be aware of Students participating with orthopedic device(s) and/or assistive devices and establish safety rules and procedures to ensure Students can participate safely in activities.
- Teachers are required to inform all individuals who assist with the activity (for example Qualified Instructors, Aquatic Instructors, Lifeguards, Volunteers) of Students who have needs, orthopedic,

assistive devices, and/or medical conditions that may influence participation.

School Board Policies and Procedures

- Prior to participation, the Teacher must reference and apply their school board's policy on equity and inclusion as it affects student participation and makes appropriate accommodations/modifications to provide a safe learning environment. Consult the Intent subsection within the [About section](#).
- Students must not participate in the activity until they receive information on concussion prevention specific to the activity, inherent risks of the activity (for example, outline possible risks and ways to minimize the risks), and procedures and rules for safe play. Students must receive instruction on the importance of reporting symptoms related to a suspected concussion.
- Refer to school board policies and procedures (i.e., transportation, excursion/field trip) for parent/guardian communication and permission (for example, the location of an off-site activity, description of the activity and physical environment, means of transportation, inherent risks of the activity, supervision).

Teacher Awareness/Preparation

- Activities must be modified according to the age, ability level, language, and experience of students, number of participants, and the facility available.
- Previous training, fitness level, and the length of time and intensity of physical activity must be taken into consideration.
- Activities must be based on skills that are taught.
- Skills must be taught in proper progression.
- A warm-up and cool-down must be included.
- Teachers and all individuals who assist the Teacher with the activity must be aware of the possibility of pressuring Students. Students must be informed not to coerce a reluctant student into participating in any component of the activity with which they display or vocalize reluctance.

- When a student displays or vocalizes reluctance about participation, at any time, before or during any component of the activity, they must be provided with alternative ways to participate in the activity (for example, permit Students to select a role within the activity, remain at or return to a different component of the activity, break down new experiences/ components into smaller steps, be introduced to a new component with which they are comfortable).
- Adequate liquid replacement (personal water bottles, water fountains) must be accessible for students before, during, and after physical activity to prevent dehydration.
- Duration of swim must depend on:
 - the capability of swimmers;
 - the weather conditions;
 - the conditions of water; and
 - the time of day.
- Instructional swimming may include organized games (for example, relay activities, tag games which incorporate skills) but cannot include a Leisure/free swim
- Prior to participation in the activity, an In-Water Swim Assessment of Students' swim ability must be completed at a pool or Designated Swim Area at a waterfront (Refer to the In-Water Swim Assessment).

In-Water Swim Assessment

- Students must successfully complete the following in-water swim assessment in its entirety, in sequence, and without any aids or stops to be permitted to swim without a PFD/lifejacket:
 - Swim 50 m (164') continuously any stroke

- Tread water for 1 minute
- In lieu of completing the In-Water Swim Assessment, Students must provide proof of Bronze Star certification or higher.
- If the public aquatic facility has a swimming competency test (i.e. an alternative to the In-Water Swim Assessment) schools must adhere to the components of this in-water swim assessment as well as those of the facility.
- The In-Water Swim Assessment must be administered by a Certified Aquatic Instructor or a Certified Lifeguard. If the Certified Aquatic Instructor does not hold a Lifeguard certificate or an assistant Lifeguard certificate, a Certified Lifeguard must also be on the deck/dock/shore during the In-Water Swim Assessment.
- The In-Water Swim Assessment must be completed within the school year in which the activity is taking place.
- Results of the In-Water Swim Assessment must be documented and communicated as per school board policy (for example, to the Student, Teacher, Principal, Parents/Guardians, Trip Guide(s), Lifeguards, Aquatic Instructor, and Outside Activity Provider [if applicable]).
- Students who do not successfully complete the In-Water Swim Assessment or who do not have a Bronze Star certification or higher must be identified and wear a correctly fitting, properly secured/fastened, and Canadian approved PFD or lifejacket at all times when near the water, where the depth of the water poses a risk, and in the water, or must not participate in the activity.
- The PFD/lifejacket may be removed during instructional swims when Students are under Direct Supervision by the Aquatic Instructor during the learn-to-swim skill instruction.

Safety Rules and Emergency Procedures

- Prior to participation, Students must be familiar with safety rules and emergency procedures.

- A swimmer counting system must be used at regular intervals (for example, number Students, blow whistle and have them count off). Use this counting procedure at the beginning, every 15 minutes, and as the Students exit the water.
- Diving is only permitted in designated swim areas where there is sufficient water depth (2.75m [9'] minimum) and safe water conditions.
- No swimming after sunset or before sunrise.
- Students must not retrieve water toys that go outside the designated swim area. Water toys that go outside the defined swim area boundaries can only be retrieved when safe to do so via watercraft, (approved by a Lifeguard or Aquatic Instructor), and not by the acting Lifeguard or Aquatic Instructor while supervising.
- Students must be informed of acceptable standards of behaviour.
- After initial instruction, Students who must wear a PFD/lifejacket must demonstrate the ability to select a correctly fitting PFD/lifejacket and to properly secure/fasten it.
- Lifeguards must be readily identifiable to all swimmers at all times.
- In a water emergency situation, the Aquatic Instructor/Lifeguard is in charge. Where an emergency situation extends beyond the water, accessing emergency medical services or emergency transportation from the site, the Teacher in charge of the trip in consultation with the Aquatic Instructor/Lifeguard and where appropriate Trip Guides are to determine an action plan in accordance with school board procedures.
- An emergency action plan must be in place and communicated to all Trip Guides, Instructors and Teachers.

- During the initial swim, Students must demonstrate procedures for exiting the water during emergency situations (for example, three loud whistle blasts).

Supervision

- All activities must be supervised.
- The type of supervision must be commensurate with the inherent risk of the activity. The level of risk is related to the number of participants, the skill level of the participants, the type of equipment used, and environmental conditions.
- Direct Supervision is required during the safety and initial skill instruction.
- Direct Supervision is required for the duration of all other components of the activity when students are in the water.
- On-Site Supervision is required for the duration of all other components of the activity when students are on land.
- Teachers must accompany students to the swimming area and be present at the swimming area or in the water during the activity.
- A Volunteer, under the direction of a Teacher, can monitor students during physical education activities. Refer to your school board's policy on Volunteers assisting with students' physical activities.
- Responsibilities must be clearly outlined for additional Teachers and Volunteers who are monitoring the activity.
- Where a Qualified Instructor is used and the Teacher is not directly with the Qualified Instructor, the Qualified Instructor must provide safety and initial skill instruction, and monitoring for the safe application of skills and student behaviour for the duration of the activity.

Supervision Ratios

- There must be a minimum of 2 certified aquatic instructors at the waterfront.

- Supervision ratio is 2 certified aquatic instructors per 1-25 students, with both instructors also certified as lifeguards.
- For every additional 25 students, an additional certified aquatic instructor is required.
- Despite the supervision required, the Lifeguard (at a recreational camp) shall ensure that, where non-swimmers, persons with special needs, or those under five years of age using the waterfront area in the camp, additional supervision is provided that, in the opinion of the operator, is adequate having regard to the characteristics and number of children using the waterfront area. R.R.O. 2018, Reg. 503/17, s. 24 (3).

Refer to the definition of **Instructional Time**.

Qualifications

Aquatic Instructor Qualifications

- An Aquatic Instructor must possess both an Aquatic Instructor certificate and a Lifeguard certificate that are dated not more than two years prior to the date on which they are required to instruct and lifeguard. If the Aquatic Instructor does not hold a Lifeguard certificate, a certified Lifeguard must also be on the dock/shore during the aquatic instruction.
- Aquatic Instructor Certificates for Waterfronts:
 - Lifesaving Society - Instructor Certificate
 - YMCA - Instructor Certificate
- Verified copies of certification must be available in the swimming area.

Lifeguard Qualifications

- A Lifeguard must be 18 years of age or older and possess a current (the date on the certificate must not be older than two years) Lifeguard certificate issued by one of the following organizations:
 - Lifesaving Society – National Lifeguard – Pool/Waterfront

- Equivalent certificate approved by Minister of Health and Long Term Care
- A student may not act as a Lifeguard if they are participating in the activity.
- Lifeguard certification is the only acceptable standard in a recreational camp waterfront scenario.
- Verified copies of certification must be available in the swimming area.

First Aid

- A fully stocked first aid kit must be readily accessible. (Consult [Outdoor Education Sample Kit Contents](#))
- A working communication device (for example, satellite or cell phone, or satellite GPS messenger) suitable for the activities/locations must be available. This device must be maintained, waterproofed, protected and dedicated for emergency communications only. The phone number for the device, and phone numbers for emergency services and school contact people (for example, the principal) must be included with the phone.
- At least one individual must have a minimum of a current (three years from the date of issue) first aid certificate (minimum 15 hour course) including CPR C issued by one of the following agencies: St. John Ambulance; Canadian Red Cross; Lifesaving Society; Canadian Ski Patrol; or an organization whose certificate is deemed equivalent by the medical officer of health in the local health unit. This individual must be at the swim area for the duration of the activity.
- Follow the school's first aid emergency response ((consult [First Aid Plan and First Aid Emergency Response](#)) and the school board's concussion protocol (consult [Concussions](#)).
- An emergency action plan and response to deal with evacuations and lockdowns, including specific direction for participants with accessibility needs, must be followed and communicated to all students.☒

Definitions

- **In-charge Person:**

- Some activities refer to an “In-Charge” person. While the teacher is in-charge and responsible for the overall safety and well-being of students under their care, sometimes there are other personnel who must be identified as “In-Charge” related to specific situations (for example, a pool lifeguard). In activities where an “In-Charge” person is designated, that person, in consultation with the teacher, must make final decisions regarding safety of the students

- **Instructional Time:**

- Time during which there is formal instruction and/or instructor led activities. Examples of instructional time are lessons, events, practice, and games.

- **Qualified Instructor:**

- An individual who provides safety and skill instruction, and monitoring for an activity, and possesses the required qualifications (e.g., experience, certifications). This role could be fulfilled by a teacher, volunteer, or an employee of an outside provider. An instructor does not have the authority to supervise.

- **Lifeguard, Assistant Lifeguard and Aquatic Instructor:**

- Refer to the Qualification section.

- **Lifejacket:**

- Canadian-approved lifejackets are designed to turn an unconscious or incapacitated person face-up in the water. Lifejackets are available with varying amounts of flotation and turning ability. Canadian approved Lifejackets are stamped or labelled indicating that they are approved by Transport Canada, the Canadian Coast Guard or the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

- **Monitor:**

- An individual who assists the Teacher with a group of students, (e.g., Volunteer, Qualified Instructor) and has a responsibility to monitor student behaviors for the duration of the activity.

- **Monitoring:**

- The role of monitoring is to observe, identify, act, and report:
 - Observe: Observe with attention to detail the actions of the students.
 - Identify: Identify the student and the unsafe behaviour.
 - Act: Take appropriate actions to safeguard students and others (e.g., stop the activity).
 - Report: Provide the name of the student and the unsafe behaviour to the teacher for management and direction.

- **Outside Activity Provider:**

- A commercial company, volunteer organization, or individual, not associated with the school board, who possess the required qualifications to provide safety and initial skill instruction, and monitoring for the duration of an activity.

- **Personal Flotation Device (P.F.D.):**

- Canadian-approved P.F.D.'s are designed for use in recreational boating and are generally smaller, less bulky and more comfortable than lifejackets. They may have less flotation than lifejackets and may have no or little self-turning ability (the ability to turn an unconscious or incapacitated person face-up in the water). Canadian approved P.F.D.'s are stamped or labelled indicating that they are approved by Transport Canada, the Canadian Coast Guard or the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

- **Supervision:**

- The vigilant overseeing of an activity for management or direction. Activities, facilities, and equipment have inherent risks, but the more effectively they are supervised, the safer they become.
- The Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education includes three Types of supervision, Direct Supervision, On-Site Supervision, and In-the-Area Supervision. These types of supervision take into consideration the level of risk, which is related to the number of participants, the skill level of the participants, the type of equipment used, the environmental conditions, the age, and

developmental stage.

- The three types of supervision described are not hierarchical but represent the type of supervision that activities require and the type of supervision that is inherently possible.
- Some activities in OPASSE transition from one type of supervision to another type of supervision (e.g., Direct Supervision to On-Site Supervision OR On-Site Supervision to In-the-Area Supervision).

- **Teacher:**

- A person with a current certification from the Ontario College of Teachers and under contract by the school/school board (i.e., teacher, vice-principal, principal). This person is legally responsible for the students and has the authority and responsibility to supervise.

- **Trip Guide:**

- An individual who has the required certifications and/or knowledge/skills of the route and activity. This role could be fulfilled by a Teacher, a Volunteer, or an employee of an Outside Activity Provider and must be approved by the school/school board. Trip Guides have been instructed on their monitoring responsibilities.

- **Types of Supervision:**

- **Direct Supervision:**

- Direct Supervision requires that the Teacher is physically present at the activity, providing visual and verbal oversight for management and direction of both, the activity and student safety.
- **Provisos:**
 - No other activity can occur when part of the activity or the entire activity is under Direct Supervision when there is only one Teacher supervising.
 - The Supervision section of the relevant activity safety standards page in the Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education describes when parts

of an activity are under Direct Supervision.

- Where a Qualified Instructor(s) is providing the safety and initial skill instruction and monitoring for one activity and requires the Teacher to be present at that activity for management and direction.

- An activity may be under Direct Supervision:

- During the entire duration of the activity;
- During the set up and take down of equipment; .
- During the safety and initial skill instruction;
- During the performance/practice of the activity skill; and
- When the activities transition from Direct Supervision to On-Site Supervision.

- **In-the-Area Supervision:**

- The Teacher is located in proximity to a combination of locations where the student activities take place, is circulating, and is accessible for providing management and direction of the physical activity and student safety.

- **Provisos:**

- The Teacher is circulating between the activities occurring at separate locations, and is readily accessible, or the location of the Teacher is communicated to the student.
- Where a Qualified Instructor(s) is providing the safety and skill and instruction and is monitoring at a combination of locations, the Teacher is located in proximity to where the student activities take place, is circulating between the activity locations, and is accessible for management and direction.
- Students may be out of sight for periods of time.

- An activity or a component of the activity is under In-the-Area Supervision:

- Where the same activity is located in separate locations (e.g., Fitness activities);
- Where two or more activities under In-the-Area Supervision occur in separate locations (e.g., Badminton, Table Tennis, Handball (Wall));
- Where the skill application of the activity takes place at a separate location from the teacher (e.g., Cross Country Running, Skiing (Alpine), Cycling, hiking on trails);
- When the activities occur in double or triple gymnasiums; and
- Where more than one Qualified Instructor is providing activities at a combination of locations.

○ **On-Site Supervision:**

- The Teacher is present at one location where the student activity takes place (e.g., gymnasium, sports field, climbing wall at an Outside Activity Provider's facility, campsite) and is accessible for providing management and direction of the physical activity and student safety.
 - **Provisos:**
 - Where more than one activity occurs in one location, the Teacher is circulating between the activities and is accessible for management and direction.
 - Momentary presence in adjoining rooms (e.g., equipment room, outdoor storage shed, boathouse, staff tent) is considered to be On-Site Supervision.
 - Where a Qualified Instructor(s) is providing the safety and initial skill instruction and monitoring for an activity or a combination of activities at one location and the Teacher is present and is circulating and accessible for management and direction.
 - An activity may be under On-Site Supervision:

- During the entire duration of the activity;
- During the safety and initial skill instruction;
- With activities using multiple stations while the Teacher is circulating;
- When combining two or more activities at one location while the Teacher is circulating; and
- When activities transition from On-Site Supervision to In-the-Area Supervision.

- **Volunteer:**

- A responsible adult (e.g., Educational Assistants, Retired Teachers, Co-op Students, Parents/Guardians, Teacher Candidates) approved by the Principal/Designate who is under the direction of a Teacher and has been instructed on their monitoring responsibilities. Refer to your school board's policy on volunteers assisting with student's physical activities.

Last Published

Wed, 08/13/25 10:25 am