

# Outdoor Education (Swimming - Leisure)

## Leisure Swimming At Designated And Non-Designated Swim Areas In Lakes, Ponds And Rivers (for Example, Camps, Municipal Swim Areas)

### ELEMENTARY - CURRICULAR 2023

- 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](#).
- Leisure Swimming at a Designated Swim Area:
  - Requires that all the relevant procedures and safety standards, listed under the headings Designated Swim Areas, must be followed. Consult: Equipment, Clothing/Footwear/Jewellery, Facilities, Special Rules/Instructions, and Supervision, including Supervision Ratios and Qualifications, on the activity page.
- Leisure Swimming at a Non-Designated Swim Area:
  - When it is not possible to follow the requirements for Leisure Swimming at a Designated Swim Area, all relevant procedures and safety standards outlined for the Non-Designated Swim Areas must be followed.
- Designated swim areas (waterfront) at 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 \(Swimming - Instructional\)](#) if during a leisure swimming session the focus moves to Instructional swimming from Leisure swimming, and for a definition of, and safety standards for instructional 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

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- Determine that all of the necessary equipment is included and is safe for use prior to departing on the excursion. Students must be encouraged to report equipment problems to the teacher.
- Those supervising the waterfront area (for example, lifeguard/water safety supervisor) must have a whistle or other signaling device.

## Designated Swim Areas

- Accessibility to standard safety equipment as stated in Ontario Regulation 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 [Transport Canada](#) approved personal flotation device (P.F.D.) or lifejacket must be worn by identified non-swimmers in Designated Swim areas at all times when near or in the water.

## Non-Designated Swim Areas

- Accessibility to the following safety equipment is required:
  - One or more buoyant rescue aids (for example, a spare P.F.D. or lifejacket).
  - One or more Transport Canada approved throw bags or 15m buoyant heaving line with float.
  - Water Safety Supervisors must have a P.F.D. or lifejacket in hand.
  - A first-aid kit must be easily accessible for the duration of the swimming activities.
- A correctly fitting Transport Canada approved personal flotation device (P.F.D.) or lifejacket must be worn at all times by all swimmers in Non-Designated Swim areas when near, or in the water.

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

## Clothing/Footwear/Jewellery

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- Appropriate attire 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.

## Non-Designated Swim Areas

- Water safety supervisors must be dressed appropriately (for example, wearing shoes, swimsuit or appropriate attire) to enter the water (if necessary) while guarding.
- Closed toed shoes must be worn by all students.

## Facilities

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- Swimming in flat water can occur in Designated and Non-Designated swim areas.
- Determine that all facilities are safe for use. Students must be encouraged to report facility problems to the teacher.

- Prior to swimming, the teacher must check with local authorities to determine whether the water is safe for swimming (for example, location, water quality and distance from fast moving water).

## Designated Swim Area

- Must be clearly designated with defined physical boundaries (for example, at camps buoyed, or enclosed dock areas);
- Must 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);
- Must be free from hazards;
- Must be of suitable water temperature; and
- Must have stationed water rescue equipment

## Non-Designated Swim Area

- Must have boundaries clearly defined by the water safety supervisors with suitable visual markers and/or distance from shore;
  - Visual markers may include the following:
    - A natural feature (for example, a visible rock, tree stump, edge of the shoreline, edge of a sandy beach, a tree on the shoreline).
    - A watercraft (for example, canoe or kayak with a supervisor, or anchored, a suitable distance offshore).
    - A floating marker buoy or floating rope line.
  - Distance from shore boundaries may include the following:
    - Suitable number of front crawl strokes from shore (for example, ten front crawl strokes from shore).
    - Suitable number of canoe lengths from shore (for example, three canoe lengths from shore).

- Must avoid hazards (for example, drains, dams, boating areas);
- Must be checked by the water safety supervisor and/or trip guide for underwater hazards (for example, broken glass, drop-offs, dangerous bottoms [for example logs, large rocks], undertows); and
- Must be of suitable water temperature.

## Environmental Considerations

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- 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).
- 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.
- Teacher and trip guide/instructor/lifeguard/water safety supervisor (as appropriate) must:
  - be aware of and respond to changing weather and water conditions prior to and during the excursion; and
  - cancel, postpone or alter the excursion if conditions put students' safety at an elevated level of risk (for example, wind, temperature, lightning storms, fog).
- 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.

## Special Rules/Instructions

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- Be aware of students whose medical condition (for example, asthma, anaphylaxis, casts, previous concussion, orthopaedic device) may affect participation. Consult [Medical Conditions](#).
- 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).
- 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 communication with parents/guardians, the location of an off-site activity, means of transportation, supervision ratios, and parent/guardian permission.
- 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.
- A proper warm-up and cool-down must be included.
- 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](#).

- Adequate liquid replacement (personal water bottles, water fountains) must be accessible for students before, during, and after physical activity to prevent dehydration.
- 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.
- Students must swim with a partner
- Duration of swim must depend on:
  - the capability of students;
  - the weather conditions;
  - the conditions of water; and
  - the time of day.
- No swimming after sunset or before sunrise.
- 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 water safety supervisor), and not by the acting lifeguard or water safety supervisor while supervising.
- Students must be made aware of all rules and regulations associated with the swimming area.
- Students must be informed of acceptable standards of behaviour.

## Designated Swim Area

- Identified non-swimmers must wear a P.F.D. or lifejacket at all times.
- Diving is only permitted where there is sufficient water depth (2.75m [9'] minimum) and safe water conditions.

## Non-Designated Swim Area

- All students must swim with a P.F.D. or lifejacket at all times.
- Diving is not permitted

## Emergency Procedures

- Lifeguards/water safety supervisors must be readily identifiable to all swimmers at all times.
- In a water emergency situation, the lifeguard/water safety supervisor is in charge. Where an emergency 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 lifeguard/water safety supervisor 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, 3 loud whistle blasts).

## Supervision

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- All activities must be supervised.
- The level 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.
- On-site supervision is required.
- A teacher must accompany students to the swimming area and be present at the swimming area during the activity.
- Teachers, supervisors, and trip guides who are not supervising the swimming area will supervise onshore student activities, equipment, behaviour, and group management issues.
- Lifeguards or water safety supervisors must not swim while guarding/supervising swimming activities.

## Supervision Ratios

Refer to the [Swim Test](#) section for the swim test supervision ratios.



## Designated Swim Area

- The minimum ratio of lifeguards to students at the swimming area and in the water is:
  - 2 lifeguards: up to 25 students
  - 3 lifeguards: from 26 to 100 students
- 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).
- In addition to the lifeguards, there must be at least one adult with knowledge of aquatic emergency procedures (for example, location of first aid kit and phone; emergency action plan).

## Non-Designated Swim Area

- The minimum ratio of water safety supervisors to students at the swimming area and in the water is:
  - 2 supervisors for up to 10 students.
    - 1 supervisor must be a certified water safety supervisor.
    - 1 supervisor must be trained in waterfront emergency procedures, (water safety supervision certification is not required).
  - 2 water safety supervisors for 11 to 20 students.
  - 3 water safety supervisors for 21 to 30 students.
  - The maximum number of students in the water at one time must not exceed 30.

## Qualifications

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### Lifeguard Qualifications

#### Designated Swim Area

- 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
- Lifeguard certification is the only acceptable standard in a recreational camp waterfront scenario.
- Verified copies of certification must be available in the swimming area.
- A student may not act as a lifeguard if they are participating in the activity.

## Water Safety Supervisor Qualifications

### Non-Designated Swim Area

- A water safety supervisor must be 18 years of age or older and possess a current (the date on the certificate must not be older than two years) certification issued by one of the following organizations:
  - Lifesaving Society - Bronze Cross
  - Wilderness Water Safety
  - Whitewater Rescue Technician (WRT)
  - Swiftwater Rescue Technician (SRT)
- Verified copies of certification must be provided prior to the activity.
- Copies of certification must be available to the teacher in charge of the group and/or the school administration and/or the school board for verification prior to the activity.
- A student may not act as a water safety supervisor if they are participating in the activity.

Refer to the [Swim Test](#) section for the swim test lifeguard qualification requirements.

## First Aid

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A fully stocked first aid kit must be readily accessible. (Consult [Sample First Aid Kit](#))

- 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 lifeguard/water safety supervisor must have or be accompanied at the swim area, by an instructor who has a minimum of a current (not more than three years prior to the day on which the holder is on duty) first aid certificate (standard or higher) 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 local medical officer of health.
- 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 lock downs must be followed and communicated to students.

## Swim Test

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- Consult [Swimming](#) if the swim test occurs in a pool.

### Swim Test for Shallow and Deep Water – Designated Swim Area

- An initial screening/testing of swimming ability must be done in shallow water (equal or less than 1.35m) prior to the activity.
- Students must successfully complete the following swim test in its entirety, in sequence and without any aids or stops:
  - tread water for 1 minute
  - swim 50m (164') continuously any stroke
- The test must be administered by a certified aquatic instructor or a certified lifeguard (the test is based on the Lifesaving Society's Swim to Survive™ Standard).

- The swim test must be completed within the school year in which the activity is taking place.
- In lieu of completing the swim test, students may provide proof of Bronze Star certification or higher.
- Results of the swim test 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 provider [if applicable]).
- Identified non-swimmers and those who do not successfully complete the swim test must wear a properly fastened Personal Flotation Device (P.F.D.) or lifejacket when in, or near water.

## Swim Test for Shallow and Deep Water – Non-Designated Swim Areas

- Prior to the activity, students must successfully complete the following swim test in its entirety, with or without a personal flotation device (P.F.D.), in sequence and without any stops:
  - rolling entry (backwards or forward) into deep water at 2.75m (9') minimum depth
  - tread water for 1 minute
  - swim 50m (164') continuously any stroke
- The test must be administered by a certified aquatic instructor or a certified lifeguard (the test is based on the Lifesaving Society's Swim to Survive™ Standard).
- The swim test must be completed within the school year in which the activity is taking place.
- In lieu of completing the swim test, students may provide proof of Bronze Star certification or higher.
- Results of the swim test 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 provider [if applicable]).
- All teachers and parent/guardian/volunteers must be aware of those students who required a P.F.D./lifejacket to complete the swim test.

## Clothing/Footwear/Jewellery for the Swim Test for Shallow and Deep Water

- Appropriate swimwear must be worn.

## Aquatic Instructor Qualifications for the Swim Test for Shallow and Deep Water

- 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 swim test.
- 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 for the Swim Test for Shallow and Deep Water

- 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.

## Supervision Ratios for the Swim Test for Shallow and Deep Water - Waterfronts

- There must be a minimum of 2 certified aquatic instructors or lifeguards at the waterfront or in the water.
- Supervision ratio is 2 certified aquatic instructors or lifeguards per 1 to 25 students.
- For every additional 25 students, an additional certified aquatic instructor or lifeguard is required.

## Definitions

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- **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

- **Instructor:**

- An individual who provides instruction on skills and possesses the required certifications. This role could be fulfilled by a teacher, parent/guardian/volunteer or an employee of an outside provider.

- **Leisure time:**

- Leisure time is defined as time during which there are swimming activities that are not instructional and may include games and ‘free’ swims.

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

- Refer to the Qualification section.

- **Outside Activity Provider:**

- An outside facility contracted by the school/board to provide activity services.

- **Parent/guardian/volunteer:**

- An adult who has been approved by the principal and has been instructed on responsibilities (for example, monitoring [supervision]).

- **Personal Flotation Device (PFD):**

- According to [Canadian Red Cross](#), “A Canadian approved PFD is designed to keep you afloat in the water. PFDs were designed for use in recreational boating and are generally smaller, less bulky and more comfortable than lifejackets. They have less flotation than lifejackets, and have limited turning capacity, but are available in a variety of styles and colours.”

- **Supervision:**

- The vigilant overseeing of an activity for regulation 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 designate three categories of supervision, Constant visual supervision, On-site supervision, and In-the-area supervision. The categories take into consideration the risk level of the activity, the participants' skill level and the participants' maturity. The three levels of supervision described are not hierarchical but represent the type of supervision that an activity requires and the type of supervision that is inherently possible.

- **Supervisor:**

- A supervisor is a teacher, parent/guardian/volunteer, or trip guide. This term is used only in relation to supervision ratios.

- **Teacher:**

- A person with a current certification from the Ontario College of Teachers, under contract by the school/board. This person is legally responsible for the students.

- **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 parent/guardian/volunteer or an employee of an outside provider, and must be approved by the school/board.

- **Types of Supervision:**

- **Constant Visual Supervision:**

- Constant visual supervision means that the teacher is physically present, watching the activity in question. Only one activity requiring "Constant visual" supervision may take place while other activities are going on.

- Curricular example: During a track and field session, some students are involved in high jump, some are practising relay passing on the track while a third group is distance running around the school. For high jump, the teacher is at the high jump area and is observing the activity.
- Intramural example: During a school outdoor special events day, some students are involved in parachute games, some in relay games, and others in a team scavenger hunt around the school. For parachute, the intramural supervisor is at the event and is observing activity.

○ **In-the-area Supervision:**

- In-the-area supervision means that the teacher could be in the gymnasium while another activity is taking place in an area adjacent to the gymnasium. In-the-area supervision requires the teacher to be readily accessible.
- In-the-area supervision occurs:
  - in activities in which students may be out of sight for periods of time and the location of the teacher is not nearby (for example, alpine skiing, cross-country running). At least one of the following criteria must be in place:
    - The teacher is circulating
    - The location of teacher has been communicated to students and volunteers
  - in single activities and those that may be combined (for example, other in- the- area activities such as badminton, table tennis, handball – wall) with the following criteria in place:
    - The teacher must be circulating between the activities and readily accessible
    - The teacher informs students of the location of the activities
- Curricular example: During a track and field session, some students are involved in high jump, some are practising relay passing on the track while a third group is distance running around the school. For distance running, the students are running around the school and at



times may be out of sight.

- Intramural example: During a school outdoor special events day, some students are involved in parachute games, some in relay games, and others in a team scavenger hunt around the school. For a scavenger hunt, the students are running around the school grounds and at times may be out of sight.

- **On-site Supervision:**

- On-site supervision entails teacher presence but not necessarily constantly viewing one specific activity. Momentary presence in adjoining rooms (for example, equipment room) to the gym is considered part of “on-site supervision”.
- Curricular example: During a track and field session, some students are involved in high jump, some are practising relay passing on the track while a third group is distance running around the school. For a relay, the students are practising on the track and can be seen by the teacher who is with the high jumpers.
- Intramural example: During a school outdoor special events day, some students are involved in parachute games, some in relay games, and others in a team scavenger hunt around the school. For relay games, the students are participating on the playground and can be seen by the intramural supervisor.

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