

Outdoor Education (Swimming - on Watercraft and Land-based Trips)

Swimming At Non-Designated Swim Areas In Lakes, Ponds And Rivers During Single Day Or Multi-Day Watercraft Trips (for Example, Canoe, Kayak, Stand Up Paddleboard) And Single Day Or Multi-Day Land-Based Trips (for Example, Backpacking/Hiking, Camping)

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- 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](#).
- Also consult [Outdoor Education \(General Procedures\)](#).
- Consult [Swimming](#) if the activity is to take place in a pool.
- Consult [Outdoor Education \(Swimming - Instructional\)](#) for a definition of, and safety standards for Instructional swimming, which can only occur at designated swim areas.
- Consult [Outdoor Education \(Swimming - Leisure\)](#) for a definition of, and safety standards for leisure swimming in Designated and Non-Designated swim areas (for example, at camps or municipal swim areas) when not on a watercraft or land-based trip.

Equipment

- 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.

Watercraft Trips

- A correctly fitting **Transport Canada** approved personal flotation device (P.F.D.) or lifejacket must be worn at all times by all swimmers.

Land-based Trips

- A correctly fitting Transport Canada approved personal flotation device (P.F.D.) or lifejacket must be worn at all times by identified non-swimmers and those students that did not successfully complete the Swim Test for Land-based trips.

Non-Designated Swim Areas for Watercraft and Land-Based Trips

- Accessibility to the following safety equipment is required:
 - One or more buoyant rescue aids (for example, a spare P.F.D./lifejacket/self-inflating P.F.D).
 - One or more Transport Canada approved throw bags or 15m buoyant heaving line with float.
 - Water Safety Supervisors/Lifeguards 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.

Refer to the **First Aid** section for first aid equipment requirements.

Clothing/Footwear/Jewellery

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.
- Water Safety Supervisors/Lifeguards 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

- Swimming in moving water up to Class I (for example, Flat gentle moving water that may have small waves or riffles with very few [if any] rocks or significant obstacles) can occur with school/school board approval.
- Determine that all facilities are safe for use. Students must be encouraged to report facility problems to the Teacher.
- Prior to swimming on the trip, the Teacher must check with local authorities to determine whether water is safe for swimming (for example, location, water quality and distance from fast moving water).

Non-Designated Swim Areas for Watercraft and Land-Based Trips

- Must have boundaries clearly defined by the Water Safety Supervisors/Lifeguards 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 Teacher/Monitor, 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

- 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/Qualified 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

- 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.
- Activities must be based on skills that are taught.

- 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.
- 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.
- Watercraft trips: All students must swim with a P.F.D. or lifejacket.
- Land-based trips: Students that did not successfully complete the Swim Test for land-based trips and all identified non-swimmers must swim with a P.F.D. or lifejacket when in the water.
- Students must swim with a partner.
- Students must swim within the defined swim area boundaries.
- Water toys that go outside the defined swim area boundaries can only be retrieved when safe to do so via watercraft, (approved by a Trip Guide or Assistant Trip Guide), and not by the acting Water Safety Supervisor/Lifeguard while supervising.
- No swimming after sunset or before sunrise.
- A student 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.
- Duration of swim must depend on:
 - the capability of students;

- the weather conditions;
- the conditions of water; and
- the time of day.
- Diving is not permitted.
- Students must be made aware of all rules and regulations associated with the swimming area.
- Students must be informed of acceptable standards of behaviour.

Emergency Procedures

- Water Safety Supervisors/Lifeguards must be readily identifiable to all swimmers at all times.
- In a water emergency situation, the Water Safety Supervisor/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 Water Safety Supervisor/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, Qualified 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

- 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.
- Watercraft Trips - Non-Designated Swim Areas:

- On-Site Supervision is required by the Teacher when a Water Safety Supervisor (s) is providing safety and initial skill instruction, and monitoring.
 - 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.
- Land-based Trips - Non-Designated Swim Areas:
 - On-Site Supervision is required by the Teacher when a Lifeguard is providing safety and initial skill instruction, and monitoring.
 - 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.
- 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.
 - A Teacher must accompany students to the swimming area and be present at the swimming area during the activity.
 - Teachers, Monitors, and Trip Guides who are not supervising the swimming area will supervise/monitor onshore student activities, equipment, behaviour, and group management issues.
 - Water Safety Supervisors/Lifeguards must not swim while supervising swimming activities.

Supervision Ratios

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

Watercraft Trips - Non-Designated Swim Areas

- The minimum ratio at the swimming area and in the water is:
 - 2 Teachers/Monitors for up to 10 students:
 - 1 Teacher/Monitor must be a certified Water Safety Supervisor.
 - 1 Teacher/Monitor must be trained in waterfront emergency procedures (water safety supervision certification is not required).
 - 2 Water Safety Supervisors for 11 to 20 students.
- The maximum number of students in the water at one time must not exceed 20.

Land-Based Trips - Non-Designated Swim Areas

- The minimum ratio of Lifeguards to students at the swimming area and in the water is 1 Lifeguard for up to 10 students with a second Monitor (certified with Standard First Aid or equivalent) present to assist in a waterfront emergency.
- The maximum number of students in the water at one time must not exceed 10.

Qualifications

Water Safety Supervisor Qualifications for Watercraft Trips

Non-Designated Swim Areas

- 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 Standard

- Whitewater Rescue Technician (WRT)
- Swiftwater Rescue Technician (SRT)
- Verified copies of certification must be provided prior to the activity.
- A student may not act as a Water Safety Supervisor if they are participating in the activity.

Lifeguard Qualifications for Land-Based Trips

Non-Designated Swim Areas

- 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
- Verified copies of certification must be available.
- 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

- 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 lock downs must be followed and communicated to students.

Swim Test

- Pre-trip swim tests that are administered at a waterfront must use a Designated Swim area. Consult Outdoor Education (Swimming - Leisure) for a definition of, and safety standards for Designated Swim areas.
- Consult [Swimming](#) if pre-trip swim tests are to be administered in a pool.
- The swim test is classified as an instructional swimming component.

Swim Test for Non-Designated Swim Areas (Watercraft Trips)

- Prior to the activity, students must successfully complete the following swim test in its entirety, without any stops, in sequence, with or without a personal flotation device (P.F.D.):
 - 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, Trip guides and Monitors must be aware of those students who required a P.F.D./lifejacket to complete the swim test.

Swim Test for Non-Designated Swim Areas (Land-Based Trips)

- Prior to the activity, students must successfully complete the following swim test in its entirety, in sequence and without any aids or 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]).
- Students who cannot successfully complete the swim test, must wear a properly fastened P.F.D./lifejacket at all times when in the water, or near the water. All Teachers, Trip Guides and Monitors must be aware of these students.

Clothing/Footwear/Jewellery for the Swim Test

- Appropriate swimwear must be worn.

Aquatic Instructor Qualifications for the Swim Test

- 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

- 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

- 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

- **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

- **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.

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