



# Open Water Safety Checklist

Tips for Families When Visiting Oceans, Lakes, and Rivers



## ✓ Teach children how to swim and the basic knowledge of water



Enroll children into swim lessons at the appropriate time depending on their age, development level, and occurrence with water. Express that open water is very different from pool water. Hidden hazards in open water include low visibility, sudden drop-offs, uneven surfaces, and much more.

## ✓ Wear a U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket when in water

Choose a life jacket that is right for your child's weight and water activity. Weak swimmers and children who cannot swim should wear life jackets when they are in or near water.



## ✓ Make sure children learn water survival skills

Children should be able to do these five things:

1. Step or jump into water over their head and return to the surface
2. Turn around in the water and orient to safety
3. Float or tread water
4. Combine breathing with forward movement in the water
5. Exit the water



## ✓ Choose a Water Watcher for children when they are in or around water

Young children or weak swimmers should always be within arms reach of an adult. When there are several adults present, designate one to watch over children for a period of time. When the time is up, designate a different adult to be the Water Watcher. Always make sure older children have a swimming partner.

### WATER WATCHER



## ✓ Use designated swimming areas when possible

Look for posted signs about open water hazards. Also look for signs that say when lifeguards are present to ensure safety.

## ✓ Learn basic water rescue skills and CPR

It is important to know how to respond to an emergency without putting yourself at risk of drowning. Take a CPR class to become certified.