

Be River Safe

Survival Swimming

Notes for Teachers & Leaders

Survival Swimming is a self-rescue technique.

Everyone in, or on a river should have practised Survival Swimming and be able to get themselves out of the river current and to the river bank.

To Survival Swim you:

- float on your back
- face downstream with your feet and toes just at the surface
- have your arms by your side free to scull if required
- keep your head up.

This position is called the Whitewater Position.

When you see a safe spot to get out of the water, use your arms to propel you toward the exit point then change to swimming or side swimming to get you to the river bank

Survival Swimming is a skill people learn in stages:

1. obtaining a theoretical understanding of Survival Swimming
2. practising Survival Swimming in a swimming pool
3. practising Survival Swimming in a river wearing a PFD (personal flotation device)
4. practising Survival Swimming in a river when not wearing a PFD.

You may wish to teach all of these stages yourself or you could contract pool staff to teach the technique in a pool and/or outdoor education providers to teach Survival Swimming in a river.

There is a valid argument to educate all New Zealanders about Survival Swimming, even if they only gain a theoretical understanding of Survival Swimming. Every year people who do not intend to be in the river find themselves in a river current and do not know what to do. Some of these people drown.

People who get into the Survival Swimming position increase their chances of being able to survive and either reach the river bank themselves or stay afloat until they can be rescued.



Be River Safe

Survival Swimming

Notes for Teachers & Leaders

The **Be River Safe** DVD section **Survival Swimming** demonstrates students from Paraparaumu College learning Survival Swimming in a river with:

- leadership from their teacher
- instruction from a qualified, competent and experienced outdoor education provider
- safety management provided by a designated safety officer.

This footage demonstrates current best practice and provides information about the Survival Swimming technique and when, how and why to use it.

Resources

- **Be River Safe** DVD section **Survival Swimming**
- Factsheet: SURVIVAL SWIMMING
- Survival Swimming activities



Discussion

Discussion with students and learners about Survival Swimming should focus on:

- why we need to learn Survival Swimming
- how to Survival Swim
- when we use Survival Swimming
- why Survival Swimming using the Whitewater Position is the best method to get out of the river if you are not wearing a pack.

Note: Survival Swimming if you are wearing a pack

If you are a trumper and end up in the river wearing your pack you may either adopt the Whitewater Position or choose to float down the river head first with your pack providing buoyancy.

*The **Be River Safe** DVD section **River Crossing** has a segment **Pack Float** that demonstrates floating down the river head first, then locating a safe exit point and sculling to the river bank and getting ashore with a pack.*