



# Water Watcher Water Safety Workshop

The role of a "Water Watcher" is NOT that of a lifeguard. Watchers assist the lifeguard with swimmer observation and enforcing safety rules. This workshop provides general water safety tips that will help your girls stay safe in, on, and around the water.

The workshop includes direction from the Safety-Wise book and guidelines from the American Red Cross. Please review Chapter 10 of the Safety-Wise for all Girl Scout regulations regarding water activities. This workshop is required in order to take your Troop swimming, boating, or other water activities. For more information on American Red Cross Water Safety, go to [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org).

To ensure that you receive credit for taking this workshop, please fill out the information on this page, along with the questions, and send it to:

Girl Scouts of Shagbark Council  
Attn: Dir. of Adult Development and Training  
4102 S. Water Tower Place  
Mt. Vernon IL 62864

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Troop #: \_\_\_\_\_

- I would like to receive a copy of the questionnaire packet after you review it.

If you have questions regarding this workshop, please contact the Director of Adult Development and Training at the Council Service Center (618)242-5079.



# Swimming

## General water safety tips:

- ALWAYS SWIM IN AREAS SUPERVISED BY A LIFEGUARD.
- Read and obey all rules and posted signs.
- Pay attention to local weather conditions and forecasts. Stop swimming at the first indication of bad weather (thunder, lightning, high winds, etc...)
- Use a feet-first entry when entering the water.
- Enter headfirst only when the area is clearly marked for diving and has no obstructions.
- Watch out for the dangerous "too's" - too tired, too cold, too far from safety, too much sun, too much strenuous activity.

Like all things in Girl Scouting, there is an adult/girl ratio.

**The following chart is the required number of watcher/lifeguard/swimmer ratio.** This information can be found on page 120 of Safety-Wise. A trained lifeguard is someone who is at least 16 years of age and has American Red Cross Lifeguard Training certification or the equivalent.

Number of Swimmers	Lifeguards	Watchers
1–10	1 adult, 18 yrs or older	1
11–25	1 adult, 18 yrs or older	2
26–35	2 persons, at least 1 an adult. Others may be 16 years of age.	3
36–50	2 persons, at least 1 an adult. Others may be 16 years of age.	4

Please note: You still need to follow the Safety-Wise guidelines on adult/girl ratios for Girl Scout events on Page 69.

## Lifeguard Ratio Planning

The ratio of lifeguards and watcher to swimmers may need to be increased depending on: number of girls in one area, swimming level/ability, girls with disabilities, type of swimming area and rescue equipment available.

## The role of the Watcher

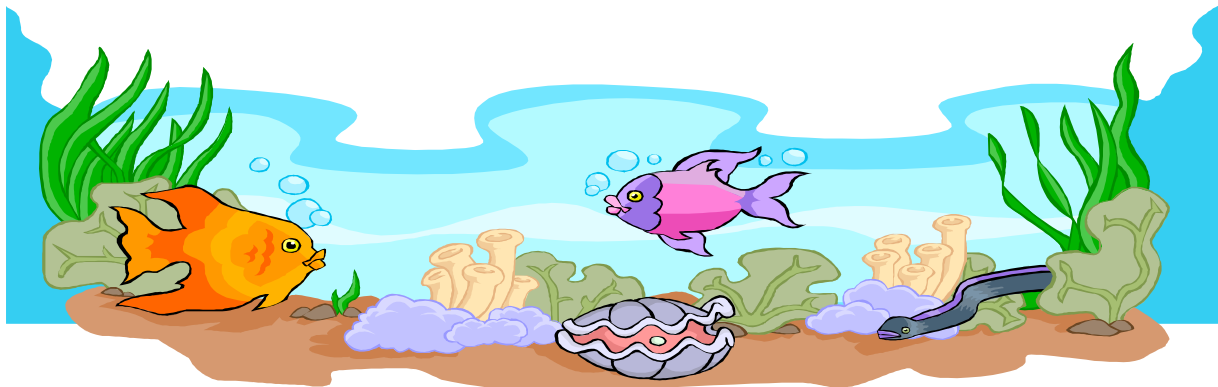
As mentioned before, you are not expected to be a lifeguard. Your role is to assist the lifeguard by observation.

- Find out the facility rules and review them with your Troop/group BEFORE swimming.
- All girls must be swim tested for ability before being allowed to go into the deep end.
  - Untested and weaker swimmers must stay in the shallow end.
  - Identify tested swimmers. A good example would be to pin a strip of red material on the shallow swimmers and yellow on the girls allowed in the deep end.
- Let the lifeguard know that you are a watcher, and what your role is.
- Make sure the girls know where to find help.
- Each Watcher is assigned an area—stand or walk in your area. Do not enter the water while watching.
- Know how many girls are in your area.
- Make sure every girl has a swim buddy, and they are responsible for watching each other.
- Actively watch and keep watching your area—avoid unnecessary conversation.
- Assist with “crowd control”.
- Assist in an emergency situation as directed by swimming facility staff.
- Wear swim suit (and if outside, wear a hat and/or sunglasses—don't forget the sunscreen).



### Tip:

Establish a prearranged signal that lets your girls know “get out of the water” and to meet you at a designated area. (Ex. Wave arm and point at self).



# Q and A



Please refer back to the pages you just read and answer each question.

1. Name the 5 dangerous "too's".

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.
- E.

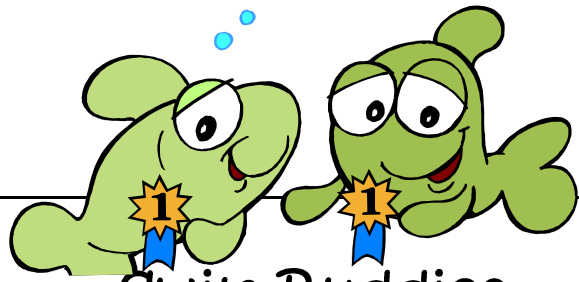
2. List at least 3 roles of a Water Watcher.

3. If you are taking a group of 18 Girl Scouts to a pool, how many of the following will you need?

\_\_\_\_\_ lifeguards \_\_\_\_\_ trained Watchers

4. Your Troop of 15 girls wants to go swimming at a pool and one of the girl's older sisters is a 17 year-old licensed lifeguard. Can she lifeguard for your Troop according to Safety-Wise? Why?

5. If you don't swim test your girls before a swimming activity, can the girls go in deep water?



## Swim Buddies

### Rules for Safe Swimming

- Always swim with a buddy
- Stay out of the water when you're tired, cold or overheated.
- Avoid swimming at night in unlighted areas.
- Do not chew gum or eat while swimming. You could choke.
- Get out of the water if you see lightning or hear thunder.
- Swim a safe distance away from diving boards and slides.  
Never swim under them.
- Never swim near a dam or boat ramp.
- Avoid swimming in river currents.

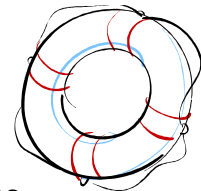


### In an emergency situation:

- **Alert lifeguards to possible emergency situation.**
- Follow directions of the facility staff and assist with rescue and emergency care as directed.
- Make call to emergency medical system or ambulance as directed.
- Get rescue/first aid supplies as directed/needed.

If no specific directions are given from the staff:

- Assist with clearing swimmers from water quickly and quietly.
- Move swimmers away from water and away from the scene.
- Group your girls and count heads.
- Keep girls calm and quiet.
- After the situation is under control, contact the Council Service Center toll free (888)317-6353, or after hours the Emergency Phone number is (618)521-2480.



All public relations is handled through the Council Service Center.

## Girl Scouts of Shagbark Council Policies

Aside from Safety-Wise, the Council has specific policies regarding water activities. A girl must be a registered Girl Scout in order to attend any Girl Scout function and "Leaders must obtain the written permission of a custodial parent or legal guardian for each girl wishing to participate in an activity ... held at a different place or time from the regular troop meeting."

Council policies also state that the facility which you attend must be on the Council's approved list.

Please refer to the Girl Scouts of Shagbark Council Policies and Standards, Amended October 24, 2004.



## For Swimming Pools and Water Parks ...

Wear  
Sunscreen!

Drink lots of water  
to avoid  
dehydration

For Slides:  
A Watcher signals  
that the next  
person may slide  
when the landing  
area is clear

EVERYONE  
Must read and  
obey the facility's  
rules before  
entering the water

Girls must slide in  
a seated position—  
never head first

No running  
or diving  
at water parks.

When sliding or diving,  
girls must clear the area  
as soon as possible to  
make way for the next  
person

Watch out for  
peer pressure.  
Girls should watch  
before they try.

If swimming in a back-  
yard or hotel pool, the  
lifeguard to girl ratio  
MUST be followed

If girls split up in groups  
at water parks there  
should be enough  
Watchers for each group  
according to Safety-Wise

If girls are wading in  
water more than knee-  
deep, there must be a  
lifeguard.

Water in the  
slide landing  
area is at  
least four  
feet deep

In wave  
pools -  
stay away  
from the  
walls.



# more Q & A

Please answer the following questions.

6. What is the Buddy System and how does it apply to water activities?
  
7. If there is an emergency, and you are not given directions—what should you do?
  
8. Can you go to any swimming pool or water park with Girl Scouts?
  
9. If you are swimming in a hotel or backyard pool—do you need a lifeguard?
  
10. Name a few things to look out for at water parks.
  
11. If you go to a water park, how many Watchers do you need? (trick question)  
Please give an example.
  
12. If girls are just going wading in water that is more than knee deep, do you have to have a person watching/guarding?
  
13. After diving into a pool, a girl must do what?



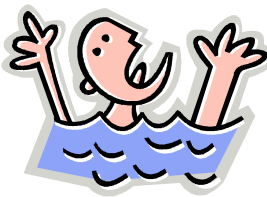
# Recognizing a Swimmer in Trouble

Sometimes it is difficult to recognize a swimmer in trouble vs. a child just playing. Here are some quick tips to help you identify a distressed swimmer.

- You may notice the child is not making any progress moving forward or backward.
- The child may be shivering uncontrollably or lips may be slightly blue in color.
- A child may be "bobbing" up and down with arms flailing.
- Child is struggling to breathe or gulping water, cannot call out for help.

In many cases a child is having too much fun to notice that she/he is in trouble. If you notice any of the above signs, have the child dry off and take a break.

Note: If a child has "lost" her swimming buddy in the water. Everyone needs to do an immediate "buddy check", a lifeguard must be notified and a search **MUST** be conducted.



## final Q and A

14. Name a sign of a distressed swimmer. What should you do?

15. You have a Troop of 27 Brownie Girl Scouts and you are going to a swimming pool. You will need how many of each:

Lifeguards: \_\_\_\_\_

Watchers: \_\_\_\_\_

Total Adults (according to P. 69 of Safety-Wise) \_\_\_\_\_