

Canadian Swim-to-Survive Standard *A Lifesaving Society Position Statement*

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Oral Abstract



SWIM TO SURVIVE

Theme: Child and Adolescent Drowning Prevention

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In pursuit of its mission to eliminate drowning and water-related injury in Canada, the Lifesaving Society launched the Swim to Survive program which outlines the minimum standard of swimming ability necessary for survival in Canada. The Swim to Survive program has been designed to be easy to learn but effective in preventing drowning in Canada-especially among children.

It is simple, straightforward and focused. It defines the essential minimum skills required to survive an unexpected fall in to deep water. The program teaches 3 skills, in 3 lessons in 3 hours and is targeted at grade 3 students. The goal is ensure that all children in Canada achieve the Swim to Survive Standard before graduation from elementary school.

The program was launched with great success in June 2005. School boards and municipalities work together to deliver the program during school hours. This drowning prevention program aims to reduce drownings by 50 percent within 10 years.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Why learning basic swimming survival skills is integral to reducing drownings.
2. The benefits of delivering the program during schools hours.
3. How to implement the Swim to Survive program in your community.

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Lifesaving Society Position

Acquisition of basic swimming ability is a fundamental requirement in any meaningful attempt to eliminate drowning in Canada.

All Canadian children deserve the chance to learn basic swimming skills.

The acquisition of basic swim survival skills by Canadian children is worthy of public and government support.

Affordable training should be available for all children to the level of the *Canadian Swim to Survive Standard*.

Swim to Survive™ Standard

The Canadian Swim to Survive standards is a minimum national standard of swimming skills for all children.

The standard is simple, straightforward and focused. It defines the essential minimum skills required to survive an unexpected fall into deep water. It is recognized that there is a wide range of aquatic training well beyond this minimum.

Essential skill	Task
Orient oneself at the surface after and unexpected entry.	Roll into deep water.
Support oneself at the surface.	Tread water for 1 minute.
Swim to safety.	Swim 50 metres.

Rationale for the Swim to Survive Standard

- ***High participation in swimming as a recreational activity.*** Among school-aged children between 5 and 12 years of age, swimming is the second most popular activity in Canada after bicycling.

Among those over 18 years of age, swimming is the third most popular activity (after walking and gardening/yard work). Source: *1998 Physical Activity Monitor*, Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute.

- ***Drowning is a leading cause of death:*** Drowning is the third leading cause of accidental death in Canada for people 60 years of age and under.

And drowning is second only to automobile injuries as the leading cause of accidental death among children under five, according to a recent study by the Canadian Institute for Health Information.

Kids aged five to nine are the second most-at-risk group for drowning or near-

drowning in Ontario.

Year after year, the majority of people who drown have no intention of going into the water. Immersion is sudden and unexpected.

- ***Need for instruction:*** Swim skills need to be taught. Swim skills are not innate: they are acquired. Swim skills are very difficult to self-teach.

During the 1990s, school boards of education withdrew from providing basic swim instruction to elementary school children. This instruction needs to be replaced at the community level.

For detailed information on drowning and water-related injuries, consult the Lifesaving Society's ***Drowning Report*** – available online at www.lifesavingsociety.com

Swim to Survive™ Program

The Swim to Survive program is an organized way to achieve the Canadian Swim to Survive standard. It can be offered as a stand-alone program or as part of the Lifesaving Society's Swim Program continuum. The program is ideal for groups from school, camps, Girl Guides and Boy Scouts and others that need a focused program for participants who have limited time and diverse abilities. The program might be used in the following ways:

- ***Skill screening.***
 - Test individuals as a safety activity for school and youth group trips to waterfronts or to qualify for aquatic training such as canoe or kayak courses, canoe trips
 - Use the Swim to Survive standard as the basic “swim test” for aquatic facility owners/operators in determining admission of unaccompanied young children
- ***For groups with minimal swimming skills***
 - Teach them to achieve the Swim to Survive standard independent of other traditional swimming skills.
- ***Non-swimmers***
 - Ideal for learners or groups with limited time to accomplish a critical set of personal self-rescue skills (e.g., school groups). The use of personal flotation devices can be used to teach non-swimmers to accomplish the skills and standard in the shortest time possible without using traditional strokes or beginner progressions.
- ***Instruction during school time.***
 - Swim to Survive School Grant Program whereby the government (education and health promotion departments) provide funding for lifesaving organizations to administer the program.

- Comprised of a parent handout, 2 in-water survival training lessons and 3 in classroom water safety lessons.
- Schools/school boards in partnership with pool owners/operators apply for financial assistance to make this possible.

Evaluating the Swim to Survive Standard

The program focuses on achieving a single skill sequence:

Roll into deep water – tread 1 minute – swim 50 metres

Any method that allows the learner to achieve the standard is acceptable. There is no single, “right” solution. A key component of the teaching strategy is a problem-solving approach to help the learner find an effective solution.

Purpose (of the skill sequence)

To develop the minimum skills required to survive an unexpected fall into deep water.

Must See (Evaluation Criteria)

- All 3 skills completed as a continuous sequence in the following order:

Entry

- Rolling entry from the front or back or sideways into deep water.

Tread water

- Ability to breathe while supporting self at surface (any method of support)
- Time requirement met or bettered

Swim 50 metres

- Minimum distance completed (without use of aids, standing on the bottom or stopping to hold onto wall or other support)
- Any method of swim movement is acceptable – on front, or back or side – or in the any combination.

Notes

- Roll entries must be performed in a minimum water depth of 2.75 m
- Swim to Survive evaluation criteria do not attempt to describe the ideal appearance of the skills in the sequence. Any method that gets the head out of the water and supports the mouth above the surface while treading, and some form of forward

progress for the required distance is acceptable. Swimmers may pause and tread water during the swim.

- Swim to Survive does not replace traditional swimming lessons. Rather, it provides the essential minimum to enable a child to survive and unexpected fall into deep water by focusing on a single skill sequence; roll into deep water, tread water for one minute and swim 50 metres.