



Lifeguards

ON THE BEACH

Your guide to a safe
and fun time at the seaside



RNLI LIFEBOATS, LIFEGUARDS *LIFE FIRST.*

LIFE FIRST

Hello!

Our aim at the RNLI is to always put life first. You'll be pleased to hear that our lifeboat crews will be looking out for your safety while you have your well-deserved break at the beach. You might be lucky enough to have RNLI lifeguards right there with you too.

You can find out more about our lifesavers in this booklet and read about a couple of real-life rescues – but mostly this guide is about making your day at the seaside even more enjoyable. It's full of hints and tips from us and our friends at the Eden Project to help you put life first too. For more information on beach safety visit: rnli.org.uk/beachsafety. Enjoy!



From the BBC's *Seaside rescue*, narrator Caroline Quentin says:

'As a mother to two children, I always consider safety when visiting a beach and whenever possible go to a lifeguard patrolled beach.

Having RNLI lifeguards nearby is reassuring. We can get on with our fun, knowing they are on hand just in case we need to ask for advice, help with first aid or even missing children.

And should there be a real emergency, you know that with their professional training, fitness and above all courage, they will be there for you.

I would urge people to take a moment to read this invaluable guide from the RNLI.'

In this guide you will see two types of warning symbol:



this is a hazard to watch out for – take care!



this is a prohibition sign – don't do it!

WHICH BEACH?

Do you have a favourite beach or are you looking for somewhere new? How do you choose? Most people consider the:

- ★ ease of transport/parking
- ★ toilets
- ★ sand or stones
- ★ cleanliness
- ★ access to fresh water/showers
- ★ refreshment facilities
- ★ attractions nearby.

The seaside isn't most people's usual environment so it's easy to miss some of its hazards. Try and plan for the following points too before you set out and look for the safety signs when you get to your beach:

ON THE BEACH

- ★ high and low tides – will the beach be there?!
- ★ sharp objects/litter hidden in the sand
- ★ slippery rocks/big drops from cliffs and harbour walls.

AND IN THE WATER

- ★ rip currents/dumping waves – they could drag you out of your depth
- ★ jellyfish and weeverfish, which can sting
- ★ offshore winds – don't get blown out to sea
- ★ man-made structures like piers and groynes
- ★ other water users – swimmers don't mix well with powerboats!

LIFEGUARDED

- ★ Most of all, try to choose a lifeguarded beach.
- To find your nearest, go online and visit:

www.goodbeachguide.co.uk



DON'T FORGET TO READ
THE SAFETY SIGNS

TRUE STORY

Carolyne Yard will never forget her holiday in June 2007

'It was our last day and I was relaxing on the beach with my daughter and friend Mark. My sons, Angus and Will, were swimming in the sea. But Mark noticed that the boys had been swept towards some rocks, and they started shouting for help. They're big teenagers who don't usually call for their mum so I knew something was seriously wrong.

'They were caught in a strong rip current, and they couldn't swim back to shore. The water was like a whirlpool. They were so close, and yet in so much trouble.

'Mark and a surfer called Mike got in the water to help while I dialled 999 for the Coastguard on my mobile phone. They called the RNLI lifeguards from the neighbouring beach. It only took minutes for the rescue boat to arrive, but when you think your boys are going to drown, it seems to take a lifetime. I lost sight of them, which was terrifying.

'One of the lifeguards, Bernadette, jumped into the water. Mike had helped Angus to get to one side of the current, and Bernadette helped them both up onto a rock. Then she guided Mark and Will out of the current and between the rocks.

'Angus and Will were shaking with shock. I was crying, and just so relieved that we were all back together safely. It still makes me cry when I think about it.

'I'll certainly always go to a lifeguard-patrolled beach in future, and I know the boys will too. I will be eternally grateful to the lifeguards - if they hadn't been there that day, my boys would have drowned.'



**WILL AND
HIS MUM
REUNITED**

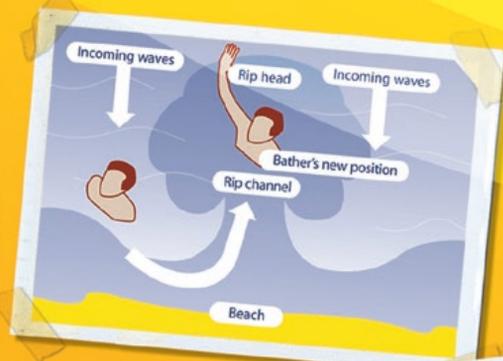
RIPS



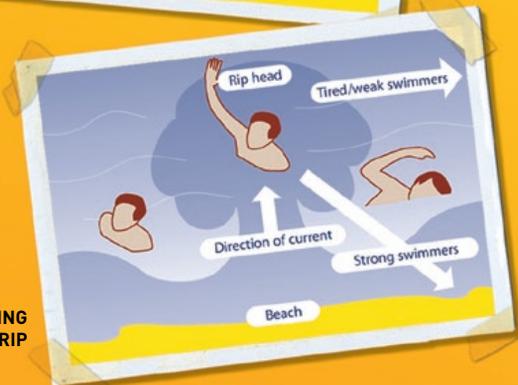
Rips are strong currents that can quickly take swimmers from the shallows out beyond their depth.

Lifeguards will show you where you can avoid rips but if you do get caught in one:

- ★ Stay calm - don't panic.
- ★ If you can stand, wade don't swim.
- ★ Keep hold of your board or inflatable to help you float.
- ★ Raise your hand and shout for help.
- ★ Never try to swim directly against the rip or you'll get exhausted.
- ★ Swim parallel to the beach until free of the rip, then make for shore.
- ★ If you see anyone else in trouble, alert the lifeguards or call **999** or **112** and ask for the Coastguard.



**CAUGHT
IN A RIP**



**ESCAPING
A RIP**

BE PREPARED

Once you've checked your route, don't forget you might have quite a trek to the beach itself, even if you're travelling by car, so don't overdo the packing!

You may find a checklist is helpful, to ensure you don't forget the obvious: food, drink, sunscreen ...

PICNIC TIME

While you'll probably take cold food with you or buy refreshments on site, you may fancy a cook-up instead. Some beaches have clearly marked barbeque areas set aside for this. If you are unsure whether you can light a barbeque where you are, best don't. Remember that a disposable barbeque stays very hot for a long time, so don't bury it for someone else to burn their feet on.

Always dispose of your rubbish in the bin or take it home so the beach is clean for other users and the local wildlife doesn't get injured.

DRINKS

Fluid is vital. Cooler weather can mean a flask of tea or soup, but on any day make sure there is plenty of water for everyone, as the wind and sun can easily dehydrate you even when it isn't very hot.

Alcohol is a poor idea at the beach. It affects judgement, leading to greater risk-taking behaviour. Never enter the water when you've been drinking, especially in the evening when lifeguards are no longer patrolling.

Alcohol also contributes to dehydration, increasing the danger of heat stroke. Be moderate, or better still, leave this kind of partying until after you've left the beach.



SUNSCREEN



Sunburn can ruin your holiday. Protect yourself by using a high factor sunscreen – 40+ for young children.

It is always a good idea to avoid direct exposure to the sun during the hottest part of the day and to take advantage of shade where you can. Remember the slogan ...

- ★ *SLIP on a T-shirt*
- ★ *SLAP on a hat*
- ★ *SLOP on some sunscreen*



FAMILY FUN

The RNLI's friends at the Eden Project in Cornwall hope that people of all ages and nationwide can enjoy the great outdoors. They love to encourage children's creativity, particularly when that means getting them to use their ideas in outdoor play, for example as part of their 'Mud between your toes' programme. We've got together to think up some activities that will encourage this creativity on a day at the beach.

It's a theme that runs right through the Eden Project's Summer activities for families too, with the return of their popular den building workshops which take place throughout the Summer holidays.

eden project

SANDCASTLES COMPETITION



The old favourite! Beware of digging down, though – it's much safer to pile up!

Our exclusive online competition lets you show off your architectural and construction skills to the full. Take your best photo of your creation and text it with the word CASTLE to 07786 207756 (standard network charges apply). The winner will enjoy a 3-night break for four staying at The Lifeboat College at RNLI Headquarters in Poole, Dorset, including breakfast and evening meals.

For a virtual tour of what you could win, go to rnli.org.uk and follow **The Lifeboat College** link.

Please be aware that you will be expected to make your own travel arrangements and the stay will be on a mutually agreed date. Full T&Cs available at rnli.org.uk/sandcastlecomp.

By submitting your photo you consent to the RNLI using it on the RNLI website, in RNLI publicity, literature and publications and you confirm that you have consent from all readily identifiable persons to submit the photo. You confirm that you are over 18 years of age and if the photo includes under 18s you are the parent or guardian.



MISSING CHILDREN



Children are safest when supervised.

As soon as you get to the beach, agree a meeting point in case of separation. If the beach runs a kids' safety scheme, using wristbands, tickets etc, take part. They're free and they work.

If you are on an RNLI lifeguarded beach, pay a visit to the lifeguard hut on arrival and they can give you special wristbands on which you can put your contact details. **If a child does go missing:**

- ★ calmly check your surroundings first, ensuring other children remain monitored
- ★ contact the lifeguards or police and keep them informed
- ★ let all searchers know once the child is found.

INFLATABLES



Blow-up toys and airbeds are designed for pools, not the sea where they can easily be swept out. If you must use them at the beach, then:

- ★ ensure children are closely supervised
- ★ keep nearby
- ★ only use between the red and yellow flags
- ★ follow the lifeguard's advice
- ★ **never** take out in big waves
- ★ **never** use when orange windsock is flying, as this indicates offshore winds.

FLAGS GAME

The 'flags' are sticks (blunt!) with something tied to the top, or proper sandcastle flags, poked into the sand. Lie on the sand, face down and heads away from the flags. At a given signal, leap up and run to grab a flag. Make sure there are always one or two fewer flags than people playing, so the slowest are eliminated, just as in musical chairs. This goes on until only one person remains.

This game is used by lifesaving clubs with small children, but is also an international competitive lifesaving sport and is used as part of lifeguard fitness training.



SCAVENGER HUNT

Choose a theme to make your collection more exciting. Focus on natural objects or man-made but keep away from the sharp and spiky. Try finding something on the beach beginning with each letter of the alphabet. Or make a collection of particular colours – you could build a rainbow with your finds!

If you've collected litter – thank you! Otherwise, make sure you leave your finds on the beach at the end of the day, as they are part of the natural environment.



MINI-DENS AND MICRO RAFTS

Mini-dens are just brilliant, especially if you take along some dolls or action figures that need a beach home. Collect sticks and seaweed to create the main structure and then use shells, sea-glass and your beachcombing finds to go mad on the interior design – try driftwood chairs, stone tables and seaweed carpets. Then build a miniature twig boat or two and hold boat races across a rockpool.



BEACH OLYMPICS

Wet sand makes a great olympic arena! Draw some lines in the sand to mark out your own tracks, courts and pitches. As well as all the athletic events – running, jumping, throwing – how about inventing some variations of your own?

- ★ Human obstacle course. Each person becomes an obstacle for the rest of the family to climb over or jump across. When you've completed your go, form a new obstacle, and the line continues. The 'obstacles' can give the 'racers' instructions on how the obstacle is to be negotiated.
- ★ Blanket volleyball. You'll need a beach ball or football and picnic rug for this one. Everyone holds the edges of the blanket with the ball in the middle. You have to work together to move the ball – see how high or how far you can throw it only using the blanket.



TREATING A STING



Weeverfish

Place the affected area in water as hot as is comfortable. Test the water first so as not to scald the person who has been stung.



Jellyfish

Do not rub, as this will cause the pain to intensify. Lightly spray the area with sea water and apply a cold compress or ice if available.



If severe or life-threatening symptoms are present, seek medical attention immediately.

KNOW YOUR FLAGS



RED AND YELLOW FLAGS

These show the lifeguarded area, the safest place to swim, bodyboard and use inflatables.



BLACK AND WHITE CHEQUERED FLAGS

For surfboards, kayaks and other non-powered craft. Never swim or bodyboard here.



ORANGE WINDSOCK

Shows offshore winds so never use an inflatable when the sock is flying.



RED FLAG

Danger! Never go in the water when the red flag is up, under any circumstances.

If you see anyone else in trouble, alert the lifeguards or call **999** or **112** and ask for the Coastguard.



TRUE STORY

Lifeguard Giles Woodward was patrolling on a busy Summer weekend ...

'A young lad was splashing about in waist-high water while his Dad looked on from the shoreline. I was maybe 100m away in the lifeguard hut, watching – nothing much else was going on.

'The surf was picking up to over half a metre, and I could see one of the boy's fins or jelly shoes must have come off. He headed out about 5m after it ... then as he turned to look for his Dad again, I could see the panic in his face when he realised he was out of his depth. There may have been a slight rip current – he was being carried further out. By now he was shouting for his Dad. I thought: "Here we go".

'I went to the edge, but there's a big flint reef there and the boy was on the other side. I had to hobble over it before I could use the rescueboard – my feet got cut. Anyway, I got him on it and brought him in. From start to finish it was done in about 3 minutes.

'I checked him over and he was fine, although his Mum was annoyed that Dad hadn't seen what was going on.

'What was really good was that the next time I was on duty there, the boy found me and had drawn a picture of the rescue which he gave to me. Nice kid!'



TELL US YOURS...

Have you been involved in a rescue in which RNLI lifeboats or lifeguards took part? Did you witness them do something amazing? Or can you tell us of an incident at a beach that was not lifeguarded? Let us know! Send us your story, with any photos, to:

**Beach Safety, RNLI, West Quay Road,
Poole, Dorset, BH15 1HZ**
or beachsafety@rnli.org.uk

SWIMMING, SURFING & BODYBOARDING

Swimming is one of the best all-round activities you can do, but the sea is very different from being in a pool – even small waves can take you by surprise and disorientate you.

Surfing and bodyboarding are the most fantastic fun, but are very demanding, so you need to be a good swimmer. Experience of swimming at surf beaches is a great start, as it will help you develop an understanding of the behaviour of waves.

If you're new to the sport, we suggest you get some proper training from an approved British Surf Association school. Visit britsurf.co.uk for further information.

ALL BOARDERS

Always:

- ★ follow the advice of the lifeguards
- ★ check your board for damage before use
- ★ wear your leash
- ★ stay with your board and shout for help if in difficulty

Never:

- ★ go alone
- ★ ditch your board as it will keep you afloat.

SURFBOARDERS ONLY

Always:

- ★ surf between the black and white flags (if present)

Never:

- ★ surf between the red and yellow flags
- ★ never drop in on another surfer

BODYBOARDERS ONLY

Always:

- ★ bodyboard between the red and yellow flags
- ★ wear short fins

If you get into difficulties, stick up your hand and shout for help – but never abandon your board.



SURF HIRE SAFETY SCHEME

In recent years, over 40% of RNLI lifeguard assistance was boarding-related. This joint venture between the RNLI and the British Surfing Association aims to reduce such incidents. Sadly many surf shops supply potentially dangerous goods for hire, but scheme members have agreed:

- ★ to only rent out equipment suitable to your ability
- ★ to provide safety information to all customers
- ★ to check equipment regularly for damage
- ★ to maintain adequate insurance.



So look out for the logo and choose a scheme member when hiring your board. For more information visit surfhiresafety.co.uk.

TIDES & WAVES



A beach can seem like a vast playground, but the tide can come in surprisingly quickly. Many lifeboat and lifeguard rescues are to people getting cut off by the rising water. To prevent this happening to you, get local tidal information from the Harbour Master, the Tourist information centre and some seaside retail outlets, or visit: bbc.co.uk/weather/coast/tides.

Always keep a look out for the tide's direction while on the beach. Just be aware ... and if in doubt, move out!

TOMBSTONING



Jumping from heights into water is **dangerous** because:

- ★ water depth alters with the tide – it might be shallower than you think
- ★ submerged objects like rocks may not be visible
- ★ it can be really cold and the shock makes it difficult to swim
- ★ there can be strong currents that might sweep you away.

Many people have been seriously hurt or even killed due to tombstoning. Our advice is **not** to do it at all.

AT HOME

Perhaps it's a bit rainy today and you can't make it to the beach. Don't worry – here are a couple of seaside puzzles to keep you busy.

QUIZ

1. How many crew are there usually in a lifeguard's inshore rescue boat?
2. What is a 'mermaid's purse'?
3. Which is the biggest ocean?
4. What does 'submerge' mean?
5. What does the red flag mean at a beach?
6. What do you call a collection of jellyfish?
7. What is a 'neap' tide?
8. What does an orange sock on the beach mean?
9. What is 'bladder wrack'?
10. What colours are the RNLI lifeguards' uniforms?

(See the bottom of the page for the answers)

WORDSEARCH

Hidden words can go forwards or backwards, up or down, or diagonal - but these are all to do with the sea or the work of the RNLI.



Finding up to 25 is so-so, 25-35 good, 35-45 clever, 45-55 genius!

BODYBOARD BEACH
LIFEJACKET HELM
RNLI FLOTSAM WAVE
CREW SURF
LIFEGUARD FLAG
RESCUE LIMPET
GALE SWIM
PEBBLE SAND
FLOAT HARBOURMASTER
STORMY MOOR
RAZORBILL REEL
ZONE FISH
BARNACLE HAUL
SPLASH KELP
LAUNCH CLAM
SKIPPER EMERGENCY
BOOM EEL
LIFEBOAT SAFE
SLIPWAY SHIP
RIP TIDAL
SEA NAVY
ICY TOWER
YACHT ROW
GULL LINER
WIND OAR
KIT CREST
BUOY PIER



SHORETHING!



You might also like to have a look at our website designed especially for children, Shorething! It's full of amazing games, downloads – and materials a teacher might like too. See rnli.org.uk/shorething.

The RNLI also has several impressive museums and over 200 lifeboat stations around the UK and RoI – see our website rnli.org.uk or call 0800 328 0600 to find out which ones you can visit near you.



1. Two, the driver and one other crew person
2. An egg case of a type of fish related to sharks
3. The Pacific
4. To go under water
5. Danger – do not enter the water
6. A smack of jellyfish
7. When the difference between high and low tides is smallest
8. Offshore wind conditions. Never use an inflatable when the orange windssock is flying
9. A type of seaweed
10. Red and yellow

THE RNLI

The Royal National Lifeboat Institution is the charity that saves lives at sea.

LIFEBOATS AND LIFEGUARDS

We operate over 230 lifeboat stations in the UK and RoI and have over 330 lifeboats in service, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Since the RNLI was founded in 1824, our volunteer lifeboat crews have saved more than 137,000 lives – rescuing around 8,000 people every year.

Our seasonal lifeguard service now operates on more than 100 beaches in the UK. It responds to more than 9,000 incidents a year and is planned to double its coverage by 2010.

FUNDED BY YOU

As a charity, the RNLI relies on voluntary financial support including legacies, which help fund 6 out of 10 launches. With more people using our beaches and seas, the demand on our services is greater than ever and our running costs average over £335,000 a day.

LIFESAVING ADVICE AND INFORMATION

A range of free resources and practical advice is available to promote sea, beach and commercial fishing safety and to support primary and secondary school teachers. For further information call **0800 543210** or visit rnli.org.uk.

ORDINARY PEOPLE, EXTRAORDINARY ACTS

People from all walks of life help the RNLI to save lives at sea. Thousands of volunteer crew members, shorehelpers, committee members and fundraisers give their time, skill and commitment. They are strongly supported by specialist staff.

Training is vital – it turns volunteers into lifesavers. Every year the RNLI delivers the highest quality of training at The Lifeboat College in Poole and at its lifeboat stations.



BEACHES NEED LIFEGUARDS

Our lifeguards work with lifeboat crews to provide a seamless rescue service from the beach to the open sea.

When someone is drowning in the surf seconds count, so we need expert lifesavers on the beach ready to act.

As much as 95% of our lifeguards' work is preventative – that is, they look out for potential problems before they develop into something worse, and give proactive advice and information to beachgoers.

The RNLI aims to continue expanding its lifeguard service across the whole country – but we can't achieve this without support from the public.

Every year it costs at least £450 to equip and £900 to train each lifeguard – will you help us meet that need?

Phone 0800 543210 or go to rnli.org.uk to donate now and help save lives at sea. Thank you.

Whether we're rescuing an offshore fisherman or a child swept out to sea, the RNLI exists to save **Life first.**

RNLI LIFEBOATS,
LIFEGUARDS
LIFE FIRST.



Lifeguards

If you see someone in difficulty, never attempt a rescue. Tell a lifeguard or, if you can't see a lifeguard, call **999** or **112** and ask for the Coastguard



Royal National Lifeboat Institution
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Tel: 0845 122 6999
email: beachsafety@rnli.org.uk
rnli.org.uk/beachsafety

A charity registered in England, Scotland and the Republic of Ireland

RNLI LIFEBOATS, LIFEGUARDS *LIFE FIRST.*