



Swimming

Scouts BSA · Aquatics · Eagle-required

Name

Started

Completed

Swimming is a skill for life and a great way to stay fit. You will practice several strokes, learn how to help someone in trouble, and build confidence in the water. Always swim where a trained lifeguard is on duty.

Requirements

Every official requirement, in plain language. Check the official wording when you sign off (scouting.org/merit-badges/swimming/). Tips and examples are ideas, not extra requirements.

1 Water safety and health

Tips for this section: Go over the safety rules for group swims and talk about staying healthy in and around the water.

Example for this section: Walk through the points of Safe Swim Defense using your troop's last swim as the example: who supervised, how the buddy system worked, and how the swim area was checked. Then talk about health concerns like sunburn, dehydration, and ear infections.

- ☐ **1a** Review with your counselor how Safe Swim Defense prevents and handles common drowning risks, such as unfenced home pools, nonswimmers in deep water, risky behavior, medical problems in the water, drop-offs, cold or murky water, river and rip currents, and surf

- ☐ **1b** Discuss preventing and treating swimming health problems: sunburn, dehydration, hypothermia, heat exhaustion, heatstroke, cramps, hyperventilation, spinal injury, cuts and scrapes, and stings and bites

- ☐ **2** Pass the Scouting America swimmer test (described in the Swimming merit badge pamphlet) before starting the remaining requirements

Tip: Practice at a pool with a lifeguard, then ask your camp's aquatics staff when you can take the test.

3 Swimming strokes

Tips for this section: Work on one stroke at a time with a coach or instructor until each feels smooth.

Example for this section: Work on one stroke per session. For the front crawl, focus on rotating to breathe instead of lifting your head. For breaststroke, practice the kick holding a kickboard, then add the arms.

- ☐ **3a** Show the front crawl or trudgen with good form

- ☐ **3b** Show the back crawl with good form

- ☐ **3c** Show the sidestroke with good form

- ☐ **3d** Show the breaststroke with good form

- ☐ **3e** Show the elementary backstroke with good form

- ☐ **4** Swim 150 yards strongly without stopping, in any order: 25 yards each of front crawl or trudgen, back crawl, sidestroke, and breaststroke, plus 50 yards of elementary backstroke

Tip: Build up slowly, adding a few more laps each practice, switching strokes as you go.

5 Water rescue

Tips for this section: Practice reaching rescues with a pole or towel and line rescues with a throw rope, with a lifeguard watching.

Example for this section: Practice a reaching rescue with a pole or towel, staying low and leaning back so you can't be pulled in. Then throw a line to a buddy acting as a swimmer in trouble, aiming past them so the line falls within reach.

- ☐ **5a** Show reaching rescues with an arm or leg and with a suitable object, and throwing rescues with lines and objects. Explain why not to swim out when you can reach or throw, and why and how a rescue swimmer avoids contact with the victim

- ☐ **5b** With a helper and a practice victim about 30 feet out in deep water, show a line rescue as both tender and rescuer

6 Floating and survival

Tips for this section: Practice floating calmly, and practice the HELP and huddle positions in a life jacket, with an instructor nearby.

Example for this section: Show how you float face-up while staying relaxed, then demonstrate survival floating with slow, steady breathing. In a life jacket, show the HELP position on your own and the huddle position with buddies, and explain how each keeps you warmer in cold water.

- ☐ **6a** Float faceup and resting for at least three minutes, moving as little as possible

- ☐ **6b** Show survival floating for at least five minutes

- ☐ **6c** Wearing a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket that fits properly, show the HELP and huddle positions and explain what each is for

- ☐ **6d** Explain why swimming or survival floating speeds up hypothermia in cold water

7 Surface dives in water over your head, max 10 feet deep

Tips for this section: Learn surface dives in water deep enough and with an instructor's guidance.

- ☐ **7a** Do a feetfirst surface dive and bring up an object from the bottom

- ☐ **7b** Do a headfirst surface dive (pike or tuck style) and retrieve the object again

- ☐ **7c** Do a headfirst surface dive to at least 5 feet and swim three strokes underwater, then surface, breathe, and repeat the sequence twice more

- ☐ **8** Following Safe Swim Defense, in water at least 7 feet deep (or deeper if local rules require), show a standing headfirst dive and a long shallow dive from a dock or pool deck

Tip: Only dive in water an instructor has checked for safe depth.

- ☐ **9** Explain how regular aerobic exercise benefits health, and discuss why swimming is valued for both fitness and therapy

Tip: Talk about how swimming helps your heart, lungs, and muscles.

Example: Explain how swimming works your heart and lungs, builds muscle without pounding your joints, and is something people of any age can do. Share how you felt after a few weeks of regular laps.