



Water Sports

Scouts BSA · Aquatics

Name

Started

Completed

Water Sports is about having fun on the water with skis or a wakeboard while staying safe. You will learn safety rules, signals, and skills for getting up and recovering after a fall. All of this is done with trained adults, a boat driver, and an observer.

Requirements

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

1 Safety and first aid

Tips for this section: Learn the main hazards of towed water sports and how Safety Afloat applies.

Example for this section: Talk through hazards like getting hit by the skis or board, colliding with docks or other boats, cold water, and the propeller. For each, explain prevention and first aid, and how Safety Afloat applies to towed activities.

- ☐ **1a** Explain to your counselor the hazards you're most likely to face in water sports and how to anticipate, help prevent, reduce, and respond to them

- ☐ **1b** Review how to prevent, recognize, and give first aid for water sports injuries and illnesses: sunburn, blisters, dehydration, heat illnesses, cold-water shock and hypothermia, sprains and strains, spinal injury, concussions and head trauma, and minor cuts and bruises

- ☐ **1c** Review Scouting America's Safety Afloat policy and explain how it applies to water sports

2 Life jackets and the safety code

Tips for this section: Try on life jackets made for water sports and go over the safety code with your counselor.

Example for this section: Try on a few life jackets made for water sports and show how one should fit snugly. Then go through the Water Sports Safety Code with an example for each point, like always having an observer in the boat.

- ☐ **2a** Discuss with your counselor which life jacket features are best for water sports and why one must always be worn for waterskiing or wakeboarding. Show how to choose and fit one

- ☐ **2b** Go over the Water Sports Safety Code and discuss it with your counselor, promising to obey it during all water activities for this badge. Review the safety steps a boat operator must take when towing skiers and wakeboarders

- ☐ **3** Pass the Scouting America swimmer test (see the Swimming merit badge pamphlet) before starting requirements 4-6

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

- ☐ **4** Show the boat's safety observer these skier signals: faster, slower, turns, skier safe, skier in water, cut motor, and back to dock

Tip: Practice hand signals on land with a buddy before you get in the water.

Example: Practice the signals on land with a buddy playing the observer: faster, slower, turns, skier safe, skier in water, cut motor, and back to dock. Then use them on the water.

5 Skills on skis or a wakeboard, with reasonable control

Tips for this section: Start in calm water with an experienced driver and observer. Learn to fall safely before trying wake crossings.

Example for this section: In calm water, crouch with knees bent, arms straight, and ski or board tips up, and let the boat pull you up. Practice falling by letting go of the handle and falling backward or to the side before you try crossing the wake.

- ☐ **5a** From a boat, get into the water and make a deepwater start without help

- ☐ **5b** Starting outside the wakes, cross both wakes four times without falling, coming back to wake center after each crossing

- ☐ **5c** Show how to fall correctly to avoid an obstacle, and how to drop the handle and glide to a stop without losing balance

- ☐ **6** On shore, show how to adjust your ski or wakeboard bindings to fit you, then do it again in deep water. Recover and put back on a ski or wakeboard that came off in a fall

Tip: Have an instructor show you how to adjust bindings, then practice recovering in deep water.