



# All children should learn to swim

The Lifesaving Society believes that in Canada's water rich environment, basic swimming ability is a required life skill for survival. Learning to swim is the most immediate and effective way to prevent drowning and water-related injury. All Canadians deserve the chance to learn basic swim skills.

The Society is committed to providing Canadians with the opportunity to achieve a minimum swimming ability as a life skill for survival. The Society defines this minimum in its Canadian Swim to Survive Standard and promotes it in the Society's Swim to Survive Program and Swim to Survive Challenge. Communities can implement their own Swim to Survive Campaign by adding Swim to Survive into their community recreation and safety plans.

### Consider Swim to Survive for your community:

- Swim to Survive is an important first step to being safe around water. If every child in Canada could pass the Canadian Swim to Survive standard, we would reduce the number of drownings by half.
- Swimming is a life skill that all children need to learn. It's no different than fire safety or streetproofing.
- People are not born with having swimming skills – they need to be taught – and all children deserve the chance to learn.
- Lifesaving Society research shows that most drownings occur close to safety. Year after year, the majority of people who drown have no intention of going into the water. Immersion is sudden, unexpected and often silent. They did not have the necessary self rescue skills to survive the incident.
  - After bicycling, swimming is the second most popular activity in Canada among school-age children between five and 12 years of age. The Lifesaving Society wants to make sure they each have the basic skills to survive.

### Canadian Swim to Survive Standard

The Canadian Swim to Survive Standard is a simple, straightforward and focused national standard that defines the minimum swimming skills needed to survive an unexpected fall into deep water.

**Canadian Swim to Survive Standard = ROLL** into deep water + **TREAD** water (1 min.) + **SWIM** 50m

Essential skill & rationale Task	Task
<b>Orient yourself at the surface after an unexpected entry.</b> A fall into water is disorienting and a threat to normal respiration.	<b>Roll into deep water</b> Minimum safe depth for teaching is 2.5m or 8ft. 4in.
<b>Support yourself at the surface.</b> Canadian waters are generally cold enough year-round to trigger a gasping reflex or unexpected immersion. The ability to tread water allows you to protect your airway while regaining control of your breathing.	<b>Tread water for 1 minute</b>
<b>Swim to safety</b> Lifesaving Society research shows most drownings occur within 3 to 15 metres of safety (dock, shoreline, pool edge). Because your ability may be impaired by cold water, clothing, etc., we use a 50m distance as a reasonable standard.	<b>Swim 50 metres</b>



## **Make Swim to Survive a part of your community!**

Swim to Survive is a great way to help make your community a safer place to play, learn, and work in. Challenge your community to ensure that everyone can pass the Canadian Swim to Survive Standard. By having everyone capable of surviving an unexpected fall into deep water is a great step towards reducing the number of people who drown each year. There are two easy ways to use Swim to Survive:

- Host a Swim to Survive Challenge
- Teach the Swim to Survive Program

### **Host a Swim to Survive Challenge**

The Lifesaving Society's Swim to Survive Challenge asks, "Can you pass the Lifesaving Society's Swim to Survive Standard?" Youth and school groups, service organizations and swimming pools can host the challenge to encourage their community members to learn these valuable self-rescue skills. The Swim to Survive Challenge can be used as a screening tool: passing Swim to Survive can give a person access to the deep end, or used to qualify for kayak courses or canoe trips.

### **Offer the Swim to Survive Program**

The Swim to Survive Program teaches the essential self-rescue skills contained within the Canadian Swim to Survive Standard. The program is designed to teach non-swimmers and weak swimmers to achieve these critical skills within the shortest time possible. Swim to Survive is ideal for groups that need a simple program option, have limited time or budget or contain diverse skill levels within their group. Making this program very accessible and affordable for all Canadians, especially those vulnerable groups that can not afford traditional swim programs.

### **Is it just a new standard for swimming lessons?**

Not at all. Swim to Survive is different from swimming lessons. Swim to Survive teaches the basics needed to survive an unexpected fall into deep water. Any movement that allows the learner to achieve the standard is acceptable – there is no "right" solution. It is recognized that there is a wide range of aquatic training well beyond Swim to Survive.

### **Isn't it better to be a strong swimmer?**

Yes, Swim to Survive deals with the basics. The Society strongly encourages parents to enroll their children in a full range of swimming and lifesaving lessons. In fact, the Society's swim program, Swim for Life teaches strong foundational skills, leading to smooth and efficient swimming strokes. The development of Swim to Survive skills are an integral part of this process.



## **Launch Swim to Survive in your community today!**

Almost anybody can teach the Swim to Survive Program or host a Swim to Survive Challenge. The **Swim to Survive Activity Guide** is available to support families, youth groups and school teachers who want to offer the Swim to Survive Program. Contact the Lifesaving Society to get a copy of the activity guide.

- **All swimming instructors and lifeguards** can run Swim to Survive classes, or host a Swim to Survive Challenge at the local community pool.
- **Teachers** can use Swim to Survive to meet curriculum requirements. The nature of this program allows it to accommodate the limited time frames and budgets that schools need to operate in. Specific teaching aids and methods are used to safely teach a class which has a wide range of swimming ability.
- **Youth groups/leaders** can use the Swim to Survive Challenge as a screening tool. Passing the standard can give a member access to more challenging water based activities such as canoeing.
- **Employers** can use Swim to Survive as workplace training to ensure the safety of their staff when working near water.
- **Parents** can follow the Swim to Survive Activity Guide to safely teach their own children.

### **Swim to Survive - A Success Story:**

2000 – Lifesaving Society established the Canadian Swim to Survive Standard. Society experts meet to analyze drowning and water-related injury statistics. They conclude that a vast majority of the drowning could have been avoided if victims knew three essential self rescue skills: Roll into deep water, tread water (1 min.) and Swim 50m.

2001 – Swim to Survive Program Development Pilot (Alberta):

Test sites looked at best teaching practices to use to teach the Swim to Survive skills.

Instructors endorse the use of floatation devices as a key teaching tool, stating that it was:

- easier to keep them moving, quickly developing skill and endurance
- easier to keep the whole group safe, when participants have a wide variety in skill levels
- easier to introduce deep water skills, as the PFD supplied the buoyancy while the learned the necessary skills (i.e. roll in and treading water)

2001-2005 – Lifesaving Society swim program, Swim for Life established:

Success within the 2001 pilots prompted the Society to develop a learn-to-swim program.

Swim to Survive skills becomes the primary focus of the preschool program and is incorporated into the school aged swim program.

2005 – School board pilot of Swim to Survive Program (Ontario):

The Mississauga School Board scheduled 3 x 30 minute Swim to Survive classes for Grade 3 students (approx. 800 students in schools servicing low income families). They experienced a 75% pass rate, and are expanding the program to include all schools. Their success has encouraged other Greater Toronto Area school boards to pilot the program.



The Lifesaving Society is an internationally recognized standard setter for drowning prevention and aquatic safety. As Canada's Lifeguarding Expert, the Society is a National, volunteer-based charitable organization working to prevent drowning and water-related injury through its training programs, drowning research, Water Smart® public education and aquatic safety management services.

The Society believes every Canadian needs to know how to swim and has established the Canadian Swim to Survive Standard and a national swim program standard for Canadians of all ages and ability. The Lifesaving Society's programs and services address all three dimensions of drowning prevention education:

1. Personal self-rescue skills to survive an incident
2. Water Smart® choices to reduce risks
3. Lifesaving skills to rescue others

For more information,  
Call the Lifesaving Society (709-576-1953 or email [lifeguard@nl.rogers.com](mailto:lifeguard@nl.rogers.com))