

Swimming Rescues

The next step in the order of methods of rescue, following reach, throw, and row, is go. As your final option, it can mean two different actions. Either you go for help because the rescue is too difficult or dangerous to attempt alone, or you *go* into the water to perform a swimming assist, ideally using a floating aid.

Swimming assists can be divided into two classes depending on the need to touch, or contact, the victim. In noncontact swimming assists, the *victim* grasps the rescue aid you give him. In contact rescues, you grasp the victim and the aid. Noncontact rescues are the first choice for active victims. Contact rescues are normally used only for unconscious victims.

Each type of rescue technique discussed in this pamphlet has been more complicated and has required more skill than the one discussed before it. Because several factors are involved in a swimming assist, you need an overview before studying each part in detail. Similar actions are needed for both noncontact and contact rescues. Those steps are *assessment*, *equipment selection*, *entry*, *approach*, *ready position*, *assist*, *landing*, and *aftercare*.

Assessment. You already should have determined the victim's condition while looking for ways to make the rescue from shore. Now that you are thinking about entering the water yourself, concentrate on the condition of the water. Judge the depth, temperature, currents, and any obstacles, such as weeds. Make sure there is a safe place to get out. Decide if you need to remove any clothing to make the rescue easier and quicker. Don't enter the water until you have a plan that is safe for both you and the victim. Seek help from others as needed. Proceed only if you appear to be the most qualified rescuer available.

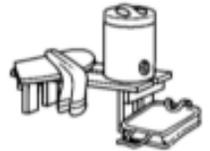
Equipment Selection. A buoyant aid—that is, one that floats is best, but any object you can use between you and the victim is better than no object. Examples include rescue tubes, life jackets, ring buoys, inner tubes, air mattresses, surfboards, shirts, and towels. These are the same items you should have considered reaching with, throwing, or shoving to the victim from shore.

Entry. The best way to enter the water depends on the type of shore, the water depth, the condition of the victim, and the aid being used. Choices include a walking or running beach entry, sliding into the water from a sitting position, a stride jump, or a feetfirst jump. Dives are seldom used. Remove bulky clothes before you enter the water. If wearing a PFD is part of your plan, put it on before you go in.

Approach. Shout encouragement and instructions to the victim using short phrases. Use a breaststroke or crawl modified to transport equipment. Observe the victim often. For noncontact rescues, you should approach facing the victim. Balance the need for speed against the energy you will need on the return. Approach a victim of spinal injury with care.

STEPS IN A SWIMMING ASSIST

- Assessment.** Don't enter the water until you have a plan that is safe for both you and the victim.
- Equipment selection.** Buoyant aids are best, but even a shirt is better than no aid.



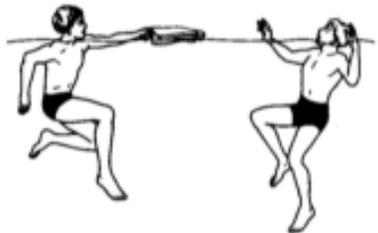
- Entry.** The entry depends on water clarity and depth, condition of subject, and aid.



- Approach.** Shout encouragement to the victim. Keep the victim's location pinpointed. Modify breaststroke or crawl to carry aid.



- Ready position.** Reevaluate the victim's condition. Instruct the victim in what to do. Present aid.



- Assist.** Either escort the victim to safety or tow him with the aid. Only make contact if the victim is unconscious or injured.



- Landing.** Assist the subject from the water, getting help from bystanders if needed.

- Aftercare.** Arrange appropriate medical aid.



Ready Position. On arriving close to the victim (6 to 10 feet), stop in front of him and be ready to back up if necessary. Talk to the victim, reevaluate the situation, and present your aid.

Assist. Decide on the method that best suits your equipment, the victim, and water conditions. If you have a buoyant aid that will support the victim, float it to him. Assure him that he will be all right if he holds onto it. After he has a secure grip and realizes that he is no longer in immediate danger, instruct him to kick. Stay nearby, within his vision, as both of you move to shore. Continue to encourage his movements.

This procedure, in which you escort the victim rather than tow him, is sometimes called an *accompanied rescue*. It puts the victim in control of the device. He can arrange it for maximum support and readjust his grip as he needs to, without the fear of you pulling it from his grasp. The victim is not in a position where he can, or would, grab you. You can think of this as a throwing rescue in which you reduce the distance by swimming, then shove the float rather than heave it. Make sure that the float comes into contact with his hands; he may not be able to reach for it.

If the victim can't make progress toward shore, perhaps because of current, waves, or exhaustion, you can take hold of the float and tow the victim. Be sure you tell the victim what you intend. It also will be necessary to tow the victim if you use a nonbuoyant aid such as a shirt or towel. More detail on how to tow the victim will be given later. Note that the requirements ask you to perform both accompanied rescues and noncontact tows. Contact tows for unconscious victims and in-line stabilization for victims of spinal injury will be discussed later.

Landing. Direct the victim to the closest point where you can safely leave the water. In noncontact rescues, the victim probably can help himself onto dry land. You may need to provide a shallow-water assist by letting the victim put an arm around your shoulder. In contact rescues for unconscious victims, the victim may be removed from the water using a *beach drag* on a sloping bottom or a *vertical lift* at the edge of a pool or dock. Special expertise and equipment are needed to safely move a victim of spinal injury. These procedures are explained in a later section of this pamphlet.

Aftercare. Make sure those who need medical aid get it, particularly if a medical condition led to the problem in the water. You may need to give first aid for shock or hypothermia while waiting for more advanced aid. Unconscious victims will probably need immediate CPR. Note that a victim of near drowning (that is anyone who has been unconscious or inhaled water) needs medical evaluation. Insist that they seek medical care even if they seem fine. If the incident involved family or friends, you will want to offer positive suggestions to prevent future situations. People will be more open to your advice if you offer it in private after the initial excitement is over.

Equipment Selection

Equipment choices will depend on the situation and location. State laws often require owners to post rescue aids at unguarded hotel and apartment pools. Shepherd's crooks and ring buoys are the most common. Home pools also should have dedicated rescue devices close at hand. Recreational swimmers often use a variety of buoyant toys and relaxation aids. Those include swim tubes, air and foam mattresses, kickboards, and foam rods. There should be many flotation devices such as life jackets, ring buoys, and cushions around marinas and on float trips.

Your choices may be fewer on hiking trails near rivers and canals. Look for picnickers with ice chests and water jugs that can be quickly emptied, or even tablecloths. in a pinch, use the clothes you are wearing.

You may have a choice of aids. If time is critical, weigh the time needed to reach a distant aid against your ability to use a **less-suitable** object that is nearby.

If you are already wearing a PFD, leave it on and carry a second flotation device. If you have only one PFD, carefully consider the victim's condition. If the victim is active, it's probably best to carry the PFD and push it to him for support. If the victim is unconscious, it will be easier for you to make a contact tow if you wear the PFD.

Entries

Carefully consider the best location before you enter the water. If you can get closer to the victim sooner by running along the shoreline or edge of a pool, then do so. Take care not to trip or fall. Also keep watch on the victim. If the bank is irregular or covered by dense vegetation, swimming from your present location might be best. The edges of lakes often have patches of weeds or submerged trees in the water. You may need to move along the bank until you have a clear approach to the victim. In a river, allow for the current and enter upstream of the victim.



Rescue devices

Disrobing for Rescues

A swimming rescue may require a lot of energy. Swimming while supporting another person, even with a floating aid, can be exhausting, and speed is needed if the victim is not breathing. If you are dressed in heavy clothing, such as a jacket and boots, discard the unnecessary weight before you enter the water. The few seconds it takes to remove your clothing will be regained easily through your increased ease of swimming. The weight of wet clothing combined with the victim's weight can lead to exhaustion and an unsuccessful rescue.

How much clothing you discard depends on the situation. Boots, heavy jeans, and bulky sweaters probably need to be removed. Thin summer clothes often aren't that heavy. If an unconscious victim is floating in a small pool, time is critical and the distance to safety may be only 6 feet or so. In that case, you may decide not to remove shorts, T-shirt, and tennis shoes. If the water bottom and shore are rough or cluttered, it might be better to leave your shoes on. Coral beaches are one such example.

If the weather and water are cold, you may wish to leave on some clothing to help conserve body heat, particularly if you have a buoyant aid as a rescue device. In isolated areas, it also would be useful in cold weather to leave at least some dry clothes, such as a jacket, waiting on shore. (**Note:** You should not attempt a swimming assist if the air and water are very cold.)

Such decisions are part of the planning process. If you are in doubt, it's probably best to disrobe at least partially. If you wait until you're in the water to find that your clothes are weighing you down, they will be much harder to remove. You will lose the time you meant to gain and waste energy in the process. (How to remove clothing is discussed under "Shirttail Rescue" later in the text.)

Beach Entry

The water is often shallow at the edge of a lake, river, or ocean. If the shoreline is clear and sandy, enter at a run, lifting your legs high to avoid tripping and holding your rescue aid out of the water. If your aid is awkward but buoyant, such as a large inner tube, you might throw it ahead of you, if current or waves won't sweep it away. As the water deepens and running becomes difficult, kick off the bottom into a shallow dive.



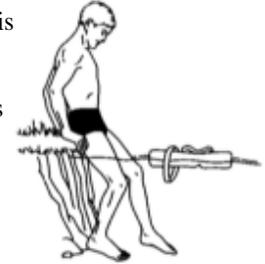
Beach entry

Be careful to stay near the surface and to keep contact with your aid. If the bottom is rocky, so that your footing is unsure, or muddy, such that your feet sink deeply, you will need to proceed more slowly and cautiously. If there are no waves, you may wish to start swimming in fairly shallow water, especially if your aid is such that you can rest on it for example, an air mattress. If the victim is a small child, don't overlook the possibility of standing nearby and performing a reaching assist.

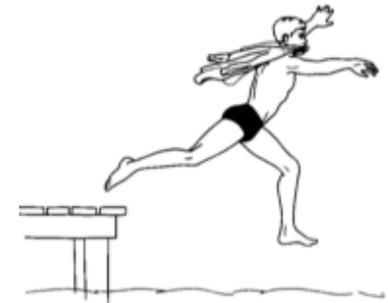
Ease-in Entry

There are several ways to enter deep water from the edge of a pool, dock, or low bank. Any time the bank is irregular, the water is murky, the depth is shallow, or you are unsure how deep it is, you must carefully slip into the water, no matter how quickly the victim needs help. If the water is over your head at the entry site, begin swimming immediately. If the water is shallow, you're generally better off wading until the water is around waist deep.

Be alert for sudden drop-offs, hidden obstacles, or changes in the current. If the bottom is rocky and irregular, weedy, or soft enough to sink in, you may wish to crouch and begin swimming in fairly shallow water. If weeds are present, lie on your float and keep your legs near the surface. Slow, wide movements in weeds are more effective than quick, choppy ones.



Ease-in entry



Leaping Entry

The leaping entry, or stride jump, lets you keep the victim in sight as you enter deep water. It can be used from low heights, less than 3 feet, into unobstructed water at least 5 feet deep. Begin as if you were trying to reach the victim in one giant step. You want to move out, not up. Spring outward while leaning slightly forward with your legs spread front and back in a scissors position and your arms outstretched. Snap your legs together and push down with your arms as each enters the water. If you do the stride jump right, your head will stay above the water.

It might take several practice tries until you learn the proper timing for the downward thrust of the arms. Generally, if you use a buoyant aid, you can throw it ahead of you before you leap in. However, be aware that wind, waves, or current could carry it away. If the aid has a shoulder loop, hold the float and excess line to the side as you jump and release it in midair. You can place a rescue tube under your arms and hold it to your chest. The flotation of the



Leaping entry

tube makes up for the lack of arm movement. If you use a garment or towel as an aid, loop it around your neck with the free ends over your shoulders. You also can hold one end in your teeth and dangle the other over one shoulder.

Feetfirst Entry

The feetfirst entry is useful when you are wearing a PFD or when the height is too great for a comfortable stride jump (3 to 5 feet). Do it only in deep, unobstructed water and from heights less than 5 feet. If you are more than 5 feet above the water, find a place to climb lower.

The feetfirst entry is done in a vertical position with your legs together, your knees bent slightly, and your feet relaxed. Do not point your toes or lock your knees in case you misjudge the depth and hit the bottom. This entry is also known as a compact jump if you bend your legs as if you were sitting in a chair.

Keep your head erect and your eyes on the victim, but be ready for your head to plunge beneath the surface. If you have thrown your equipment ahead of you, your arms should be at your sides. If you are wearing a PFD, fold your arms tightly across your chest and grasp the shoulders or sides of the PFD to hold it in place. If you are carrying a rescue tube or other soft buoyant device, squeeze it tightly to your chest under your arms. Secure any lines so they do not entangle your legs or snag anything on the bank. Do not hold a rigid rescue device close to your chest.

You also may use the feetfirst entry when you see a victim on the bottom in deep water close to the side. Enter the water with your arms at your sides and scoop them to the surface, as in a feetfirst surface dive, if you need to reach deeper.

Do not use a headfirst dive from the side to recover a victim from the bottom unless you are absolutely sure that the water is more than 7 feet deep. That is seldom the case in small backyard or hotel pools.



Feetfirst entry

Long Shallow Dive

A long shallow dive is occasionally useful in deep, unobstructed water when speed is critical—after a victim has already submerged some distance away, for instance. It is not well-suited for use with equipment.

Begin with your feet on the edge of the deck, your knees flexed, your arms down, and your head up. Your back should be nearly parallel with the deck. Swing your arms back while leaning forward. Then immediately swing your arms forward while thrusting outward with your legs. This will drive your body out over the water almost flat to the surface. Drop your head in flight so that you enter the water at a slight angle.

Maintain a prone position until your glide slows. Then, depending on the victim's location, either begin swimming or perform a headfirst surface dive.

Approaches

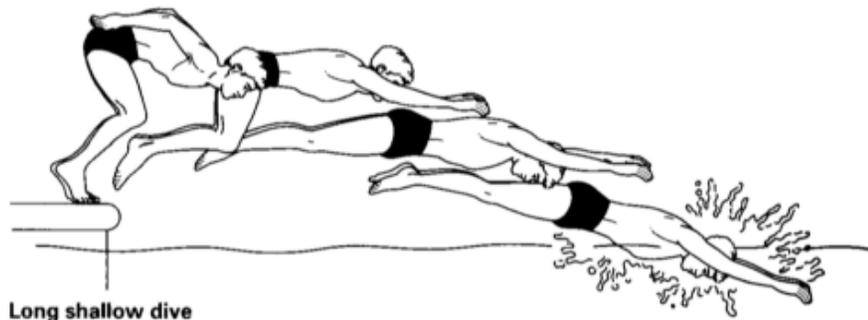
The approach will generally be in a straight line from the entry point to the victim. Always watch the victim closely. When approaching a conscious victim, give instructions and encouragement.

Adapt your swimming stroke to the victim's condition, the condition of the water, the type of aid you're carrying, and the distance. If the distance is fairly short, as it will be in most pools, then a head-up breaststroke is most versatile. You can swim with a buoyant aid, such as a rescue tube, beneath your arms. If that is too awkward, push the rescue device with one hand extended while using the other arm for power. Another alternative is to tow the aid using a sidestroke. You can ride a large object such as a surfboard or air mattress and propel it with your arms.

You can use a crawl if the rescue device can be carried under the arms or is equipped with a shoulder strap and tow line. A crawl with the rescue device trailed behind is generally the fastest approach over an extended distance. If speed is critical (for example, the victim is unconscious), you can increase your speed by doing the crawl head down. But even then, be sure to look ahead frequently.

You can use either the breaststroke or the crawl if the only available rescue aid is a shirt or towel. Loop the garment around your neck or hold one end of it in your teeth. You can use either stroke if you have decided to wear a PFD as the best option to rescue an unconscious victim.

At times the details of the approach stroke will be unimportant. For example, many backyard, apartment, and hotel pools are so small that the approach and entry are simultaneous. But over a great distance in open water, you may need to pace yourself to save energy you'll need for the assist. Flexibility, common sense, due caution, training, and practice are more critical in lifesaving than hard-and-fast rules.



Long shallow dive

Ready Position for Final Assessment

Before you make a final approach to help the victim, stop well out of reach, prepare to reverse direction, speak to the victim, and reevaluate the situation. Decisions you made earlier will influence your options now, but you may still have important choices to make. For instance, the victim could have lost consciousness during your approach, or he might tell you that he hit his head and can no longer feel his legs.



Responding to cries for help coming from a lake the darkness a Scout put on a PFD and towed a second PFD toward the cries He found a man who couldn't caught a trotline and clinging to a stump. The Scout calmed him, helped him into the extra PFD and freed him from the fishhooks Finding a second victim holding onto a capsized boat, he gave the man his own PFD Then he escorted them to shore.

Noncontact Swimming Assists

Accompanied Rescue

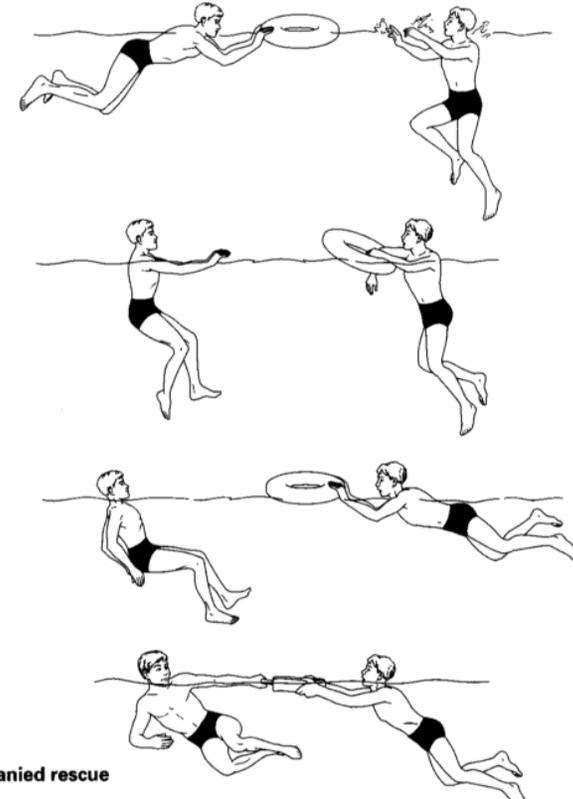
In an accompanied rescue, the rescuer provides a flotation device and lets the victim control it. There is little risk of the victim grasping you, and the victim has the maximum support of the aid. The victim must be conscious, cooperative, and able to assist. The aid must be buoyant enough to support the victim. This technique is suitable for a tired swimmer and should be attempted for all active victims.

From a ready position, tell the victim that help is here, that you will give him a float, and that he should grasp it firmly. If the victim begins to move toward you, gently push the float toward him while you back up. Keep a safe distance between yourself and the victim and be ready at all times to duck beneath the water and move away.

Don't assume that all victims will reach for the aid. You may need to push the float under the victim's arms or into contact with his hands. Some devices, such as cushions or ring buoys, can be pushed directly into the victim's chest and released. If the float is long and narrow, such as a rescue tube, air mattress, foam rod, or surfboard, swing it from one end into the victim's reach or push it to him sideways. A victim is more stable with his arms draped over the center of such a device than he is trying to hold it to his chest in line with his body.*

After the victim has become stable on the float, reassure him that he is all right and ask if he can kick himself toward shore. If he can, patiently escort him to the closest point of safety. That might not be the same place you entered the water.

*Note to the counselor: Some lifeguards are taught to "drive" a rescue tube into the victim; that is, to keep hold of the tube and push the victim with it. That is a different procedure from the one presented here.



Accompanied rescue

If the victim can't make progress toward the shore but can support himself with the aid, wait for him to become calm and decide how best to tow him to shore. Always tell the victim in advance what you intend to do.

Noncontact Tow

A noncontact tow is used when the equipment aid will not support the victim or the victim cannot propel himself to shore. The victim must still be conscious and able to hold onto the aid.

Suppose you have reached a ready position and decided that a noncontact tow fits the situation. Grasp one end of the rescue aid, push or flip the other end to the victim, and tell him to grab hold with both hands. When the victim has a firm grasp on the aid, extend your towing arm and begin stroking away from the victim while holding onto the aid. Use either a sidestroke or backstroke for the tow.

Once the victim is moving, tell him either to stretch out and keep his head up or to turn over on his back and hold the aid close to his chest. The faceup Position is probably more natural for the victim and can be used with both buoyant and nonbuoyant aids. It may be easier to tow the victim with a shirt or towel if you can have him turn onto his back.

Because you approach facing the victim, you may not be headed for shore when you begin your tow. If not, after you are under way, gradually turn in the direction of the nearest safe landing. Continue to reassure the victim while watching for signs of panic or exhaustion and encourage him to kick. If the victim panics and tries to reach you, release the aid, quickly move away, and reassess the situation. Resume the tow only when it is safe to do so.

Shirrtail Rescue

A shirrtail rescue is one example of a noncontact tow for a conscious victim using a device, such as a piece of clothing, that does not float. It may not work for all actively drowning victims, so you'll consider it only when a floating aid is not at hand. Here's a review of how it all fits together, assuming you encounter a rescue situation while fully clothed.

First evaluate the condition of the victim and plan the rescue. Consider a swimming rescue only after you have decided that reaching, throwing, wading, and rowing rescues are not practical. Next, look for a floating aid. If none is available, determine if the victim is still conscious. A shirrtail rescue will not work if the victim is floating facedown.

Decide if conditions are such that you can safely enter the water. Do not do so if the water is very cold, a strong current is carrying the victim into danger, or there are pounding waves.

Move to the location where you have decided to enter the water and determine how much clothing to remove. It should take less than 20 seconds to take off everything, so time isn't normally a consideration. Shout encouragement to the victim.

Remove your shoes while unfastening your pants. Low shoes can be removed by stepping on the heels; you may have to stoop to remove boots or high-laced shoes. Run in place to work your pants down while removing your shirt. Watch the victim rather than the buttons. Hold the shirt in your teeth if it is the only equipment available. Step out of your pants one leg at a time. If they are tight about the ankles, reach down, hook your thumb between pants and ankle, and pull your foot free. Your socks will probably come off at the same time. If they don't, you need not make special effort to remove them. They weigh little and will probably work their way off while you are swimming.

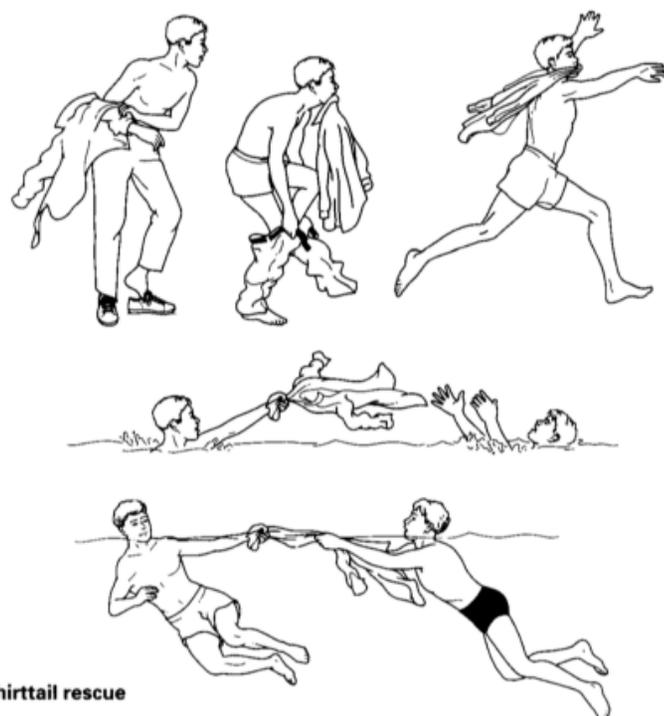
Consider next whether to use your pants or your shirt as the rescue aid. A stout, long-sleeved shirt is probably easier to handle and just as long as a pair of pants. Jeans are probably better than a flimsy T-shirt, while a short-sleeved shirt is longer than a pair of shorts.

Hold the clothing in your hand or between your teeth and make a safe entry into the water. Carefully avoid any obstacles, both those you can see ahead and any just below the surface, as you approach the victim.

Stop just before reaching the victim and prepare to reverse direction. Tell the victim what to do. Keep your voice firm and use short phrases; for example, "I'll help," "Grab this," "Hold on," "That's it," "You're OK," "Almost there."

Grab one end of your garment and flip the other end to the victim. Aim for his shoulder—remember, he may not be able to reach for it. When he has hold of it, pull firmly enough to support the victim, but do not jerk the aid out of his hands. A sidestroke with your towing arm extended is probably best. Tell the victim to keep his head up and to lie flat on the surface. If the victim is calm enough, you may have him turn over on his back with the aid clutched to his chest. Continue to give him encouragement as you head for shore.

If the victim tries to grab you at any time while you are handing him the garment or pulling him to shore, let go of the aid, back off, and reconsider your options. Don't forget that you may be able to lead him in under his own power. Consider a contact rescue as a last resort only after the victim is exhausted.



Shirrtail rescue

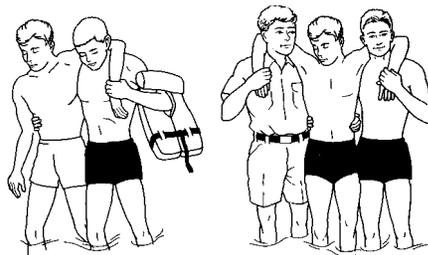
Landing a Conscious Victim

A conscious victim probably can remove himself from the water once he has sure footing on the bottom or a firm hold on a ladder. You should already have chosen a safe landing site before entering the water. In exceptional cases, such as in a steep-sided quarry, both you and the victim may need help from others on shore. Ideally, you should request such aid before the rescue.

When landing a conscious victim, using a float can help you lower your legs to check the water depth without causing the victim to lose support. Natural bodies of water can be shallow for long distances from shore. If the bottom is suitable, it probably will be easier to walk through water waist-deep or less than it will be to swim with the victim.

Shallow-Water Assist

If the victim is exhausted, cold, or has trouble with his footing because of rocks, waves, or current, you can help him ashore using a shallow-water assist. While standing at his side, help him to stand and to place one arm across your shoulder. Grasp the wrist of that arm with your outside hand, and wrap your free arm around his back. Then walk slowly together to shore. If the victim is much larger than you are, you may need help. Don't hesitate to ask others for aid. A second person can help from the other side.



Shallow-water assists

Aftercare for a Conscious Victim

Perhaps the victim is someone you know and you both are with friends. If you don't know the victim, it's still likely that the victim's friends or relatives will be waiting for you at the side or in shallow water, if so, turn the victim over to their care, but stick around long enough to see that he gets appropriate first aid. Even though the victim has been conscious throughout, he may need treatment for shock.

A medical condition, such as an asthma attack, may have led to the incident. If so, strongly suggest that the victim get medical attention as soon as practical. If the victim shows signs of hypothermia, suggest that he be moved quickly to a warm place. Small children may be scared and will need reassurance, not scolding. A child's parent might be upset because of their own fright or panic. Try tactfully to be a calming influence on all those around.

If the victim was alone and is unknown to you, look for an adult in a position of authority a hotel manager, park employee, or your parent, for example. Ask that person to see that the victim has access to care, can notify others, and has adequate transportation home.

Don't forget yourself. Wait for your own adrenaline rush to subside before going off on your own or doing anything that requires concentration, even crossing a busy street on foot. If you are cold, take the time to get dry and warm.



A mother found her 9 month old floating facedown in their backyard pool and ran into the front yard screaming for help. A Scout responded jumped in pulled the child out and performed CPR. The baby recovered.

Contact Rescues for Unconscious Victims Without Spinal Injury

Planning

Rescue planning for an unconscious victim is only slightly different from other types. Your options will be more limited because several of the techniques previously discussed, including throwing rescues and noncontact tows, won't work. Speed also is critical, but don't forget the basics. Call out for or assign someone to call EMS immediately. Consider the possibility of a wading assist. See if appropriate equipment is at hand. Check the water for hazards and decide how and where you will enter and exit the water. Look for signs of spinal injury. As always, only attempt a rescue if it is safe to do so and if you are the best-qualified person.

The rescue of an unconscious victim will always require contact. That is, you will be forced to grab the victim, even if it is at the side of a pool after you have pulled him in with a shepherd's crook. When the victim is in deep water, a contact tow will be necessary. You can do that with or without a flotation aid. Because some aids will be more useful than others, study the following material so you know what choice to make before you enter the water. Note that all of the techniques, except recovery from the bottom, can be done more easily if the rescuer wears a PFD.

Entry and Approach

Entries and approaches for an unconscious victim are the same as those used for noncontact swimming assists. It is essential to keep the victim in sight because unconscious victims often submerge. If the victim is at the surface, call out and splash water on him to confirm he is unconscious. For noncontact tows, you generally hand the victim an aid while facing the victim; that is, from the front. Assists for an unconscious victim may be done from either the front or the rear. The choice should be whichever is quicker and/or better suited to a particular aid. It may be best to use the technique that you remember and perform the best.

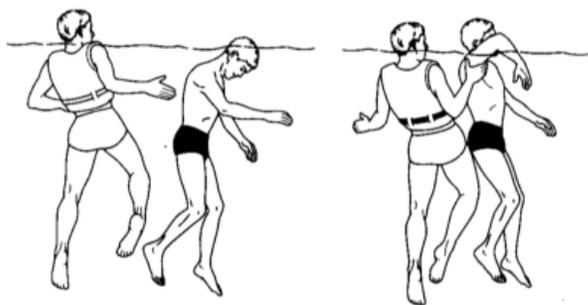
Armpit Tow (For Rear Approach)

An armpit tow is begun from the rear for an unconscious victim at or very near the surface. Reach out with one hand and grasp the victim under his armpit with your thumb up and on the outside. (Your right hand goes to the right armpit or your left hand to the left armpit.) Pull back with your arm and immediately begin swimming to shift the victim from a facedown to a faceup position. It may take a few strong strokes using both your legs and free arm to pull the victim onto his back. Once you have the victim fairly level, continue to shore with your towing arm extended. It is important to keep the victim's face out of the water.

If the victim is large, you may find it easier to pull him onto his back if you grasp both his armpits and lean backward while using a whip kick. If safety is only a short distance away, you can continue with a *double armpit tow*. Such a tow requires a strong, well-developed kick. Once the victim is level and under way, you may find it quicker and less tiring to shift back to the single armpit tow.

The double armpit tow also can be modified for use with some buoyant aids, particularly if they are soft and relatively long and narrow, such as rescue tubes, foam rods, or air mattresses. Approach the victim from the rear with the float across your chest and under your arms. Use both your hands to scoop under the victim's arms, lean back, and pull him against the float as you kick backward.

Depending on the width of the aid, you can grasp the victim's armpits, reach all the way under his arms to grasp his shoulders, or wrap your arms across his chest. Once under way, you may be able to let go of the victim with one hand so you can swim better. Because available flotation aids will vary, it is important to



Single armpit tow



Double armpit tow

find a stable position that works. You should practice with several items found around the water rather than mastering only a single device.

Although several types of flotation aids may be useful for rescuing an unconscious victim, others, such as a water jug, may not be. If you have trouble controlling the victim's position and/or making progress to shore, you should seriously consider whether the float is an aid or a hindrance. If the distance is short and the victim's size is such that you can move him quickly through the water, you may decide to drop your aid and get the victim to shore as soon as possible. That will generally apply in small pools.

indeed, if you happen upon a toddler floating facedown in a small hotel pool, you may decide to enter the water immediately rather than run to the other side of the pool to fetch a rescue tube. However, if the victim is some distance from shore or drifting with an ocean or river current, it will be better for both the victim and yourself if you take a few seconds to fetch and put on a PFD.

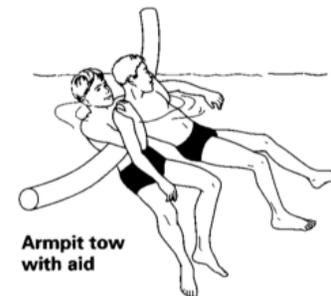
The lifesaver needs to be flexible and realistic. Common sense and training support one another. That is why the first step is always to plan a safe, effective rescue before taking action.

Wrist Tow (For Front Approach)

The wrist tow may be used if you approach a facedown victim from the front. It will work if the victim is at the surface, floating beneath the surface, or resting facedown on the bottom.

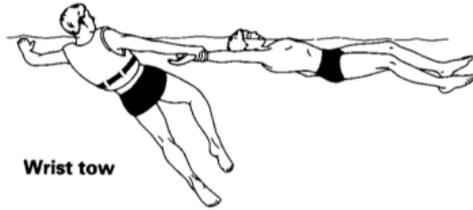
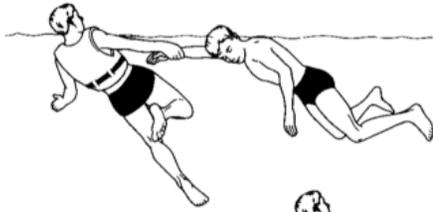
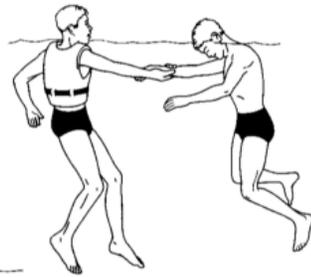
After you confirm that the victim is unconscious, come within an arm's length. Reach across to the victim's opposite wrist as if you were shaking hands, and take hold under his wrist with your palm up. Hold firmly and roll your wrist by turning your thumb up and over as you begin your tow. That twist in your wrist will turn the victim onto his back. Maintain the same grip as you tow the victim to safety with a sidestroke. A slight tension in your arm is needed to keep the victim faceup. Both your towing arm and the victim's arm should remain straight.

It also is possible to use the wrist tow to place a flotation aid under the victim's shoulders. Hold the aid with one hand while you reach across it with the other to grasp the victim's wrist. Lift up slightly as you twist the victim onto his back and

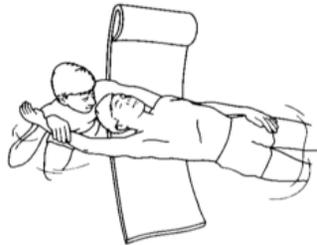
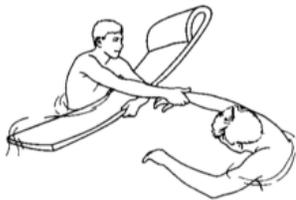


Armpit tow with aid

shove the float beneath him as he turns. You will then need to change your grip so that you can keep him on the float. You may be able to place one arm over his shoulder and reach across his chest to grasp the aid with your hand. That should steady him on the float and leave your other arm free for swimming.



Wrist tow



Wrist tow with flotation