

**A ski boat hit a small sailboat knocking the occupant unconscious and cutting a gash in his back Two Scouts in another sailboat pulled him aboard and began rescue breathing on the way to shore**

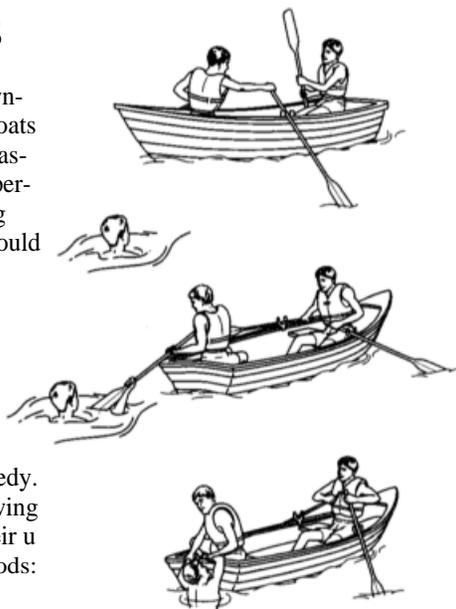
## Rowing Rescues

Boating incidents account for many drownings. Most happen in small open motorboats on inland waters due to capsizing or to passengers falling overboard. More than 80 percent of those who drowned while boating did not wear PFDs; unfortunately, they could not swim well enough at the time to save themselves.

If you are often around boats and boaters, you may need to aid someone in distress. Just as improper use of boats can lead to accidents, the proper use of a boat as a rescue device can keep an accident from turning into a tragedy. Boats let you perform reaching and throwing distances you can't get to from shore, their use is the next step in the order of rescue methods: throw, row.

Rowing rescues are appropriate for any type of victim. A boat rescue can be both faster and safer than a swimming assist. It's the best way to reach multiple victims who are far from shore. A boat may provide a platform for rescue breathing or CPR without having to bring the victim all the way to shore. It offers support for both victim and rescuer in currents or waves and provides protection from cold water.

In most lifesaving programs, including this one, small-boat skills are not included in the requirements. That is not because boat rescues are unimportant to the lifesaver. They are omitted only because the skills for each craft vary enough that it would take too long for you to master them all. Scouting offers additional opportunities to learn boat rescue skills for the Canoeing, Whitewater, Rowing, Motorboating, and Small-Boat Sailing merit badges. Consider earning any or all of these merit badges, both for your own enjoyment and to complete your training in lifesaving.



If you already have learned some of those boating skills, you should recognize some of the following material. If you haven't, study the material carefully and be alert to any demonstrations or exercises your counselor provides. In an emergency, you should still consider a boat an important piece of equipment. It may be that someone else at the scene can help. Even if you are expert with a particular boat, two competent rescuers are better than one.

It's best to have two rescuers in a rowboat: one to row and one to watch the victim. Plan ahead. Take a few seconds to throw extra gear, such as PFDs, into the boat. Send someone to find a phone (cell phone or land line) in case EMS needs to be contacted. If no one is handy, call out for help. Don't be timid; shout as loud as you can. Wear a PFD. Be alert for currents or waves.

As the boat approaches, the rescuer in the stern can throw the victim an extra PFD or reach to him with a pole or extra oar. If more than one victim is in the water, move to help the one most in need, but try to throw the others some type of support. Tell the victims what you will do and how they should respond. Bring them to the stern of the boat and hold them there until they grow calm. If the distance to shore is short and a victim is not injured, you can leave him in the water and tow him to shore. If he is not breathing, is suffering from hypothermia, or needs other first aid, carefully bring him aboard over the transom.

If you are alone in a rowboat, you will have to both row and watch the victim. If the distance is short, backwater. Otherwise, row out looking over your shoulder and pivot as you get close. Throw the victim a flotation device as you approach with the stern. If the victim is unconscious or otherwise needs help, be careful to secure your oars before moving to the stern. If you drop them in haste, they will probably slide into the water away from the boat.

The use of other craft is similar. In a canoe, the best paddler should be in the back, but both rescuers paddle on the way out. Throw the victim a float as you approach, giving clear instructions. While one rescuer kneels to steady the canoe with his paddle, the other keeps his weight low, reaches out to the victim with his paddle, and swings the victim to one end of the craft.

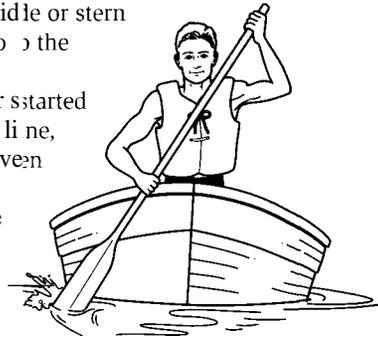
Don't get close enough for a struggling victim to grab the side of the canoe. He could capsize the boat in his effort to gain support. Try to approach the victim in such a way that the canoe doesn't turn broadside to the current or waves. If the canoe does capsize during the rescue, rescuers and victim should stay with the boat and swim it to shore. The rescue of a swamped canoe is covered in the Canoeing merit badge pamphlet.



Canoe rescue

A motorboat should head into the wind when approaching a victim to prevent the boat from being blown into him. Disengage the prop as you approach and ease up to the victim. As you cover the last few feet, throw him a PFD and give him clear instructions. Extend a boat hook or paddle and pull the victim to the side or stern (with the motor off), where he can be helped into the boat when calm.

If you have never rowed a boat, have never started an outboard, or can't steer a canoe in a straight line, you still may be able to use a boat in a rescue even if you are by yourself. In an emergency, correct form is important only because it lets you move quickly with the least waste of energy. But forget about form if you have trouble reaching a victim the "correct" way. Get in the front of the boat and paddle, stroking first on one side and then on the other. This will work with rowboats, canoes, small powerboats, and even small sailboats if the sail is down. It will let you make headway in a wind or current when you might otherwise be shoved off course.



Watch the victim at all times as you approach. The farther a victim is from shore, the harder it will be to find his exact position if he goes under before you arrive. If the victim does submerge, you may be able to enter the water under the right circumstances and bring him back to the boat. Such techniques are discussed later under "Swimming Rescues."

For now, consider what will happen if you leave the boat. Even in a gentle breeze, a light boat such as a canoe will drift away faster than you can swim, especially if you have a victim in tow. The problem is made worse if you kick the boat away when you enter the water. Not only will it drift faster, but you will lose your orientation if you do not recover the victim on the first dive.

The best way to beat this problem is to have two rescuers in the boat. One can hold the boat's position while guarding the other rescuer's safety. If two rescuers are not available, you can use an anchor if there's one in the boat. Make sure the end of the line is attached to the boat. You also can hold onto a tie line, or painter, if the water is not too deep.

Again, plan ahead. If a coil of rope is nearby, throw it in the boat before you head out. It's also possible that someone heard your earlier cries for help and has now arrived at the scene. If you're alone and the victim submerges, call out again for someone to bring another boat.

If you recover someone who has stopped breathing, then start mouth-to-mouth resuscitation as soon as possible. Don't wait until you return to shore. Begin at the boat. You may be able to support a victim at the stern, particularly if you're on a larger boat with a swimming platform. Otherwise, bring him aboard. If the victim's

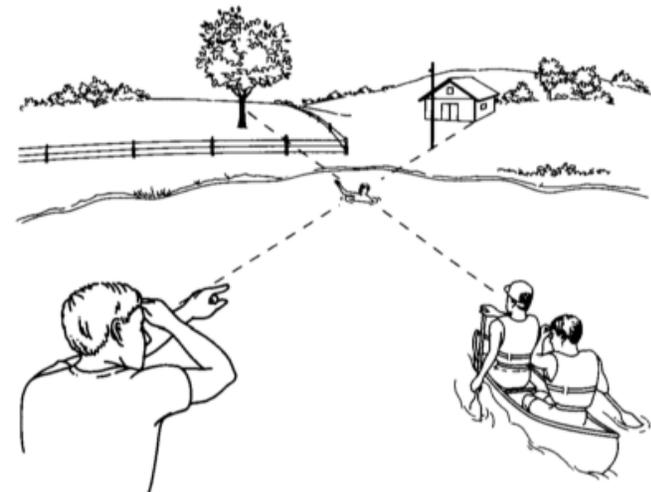
condition is further complicated by a lack of circulation, then a rigid support will be needed for complete CPR. You will have to use your judgment as to the best course of action, depending on the type of boat, the number of rescuers, and the distance to shore.

## Pinpointing a Victim's Location

It's important to watch the victim as you approach, in case he submerges. Even if the water is clear, a random search from the surface could take more time than the victim has left. The farther you are from the victim, the harder it will be to keep track of where he went down. As you approach, line up the victim with two marks on the shore, a shorter one in front of a taller one. If you later become confused about the victim's location, you at least know he was near the line defined by the two objects.

Note that two fixed points are required to define the line. If you only line up the victim with the boat and one object on shore, you can travel in a circle after the victim disappears. The two points can be part of the same object the front and back of a car, for example. You know you are off course if you start facing the side.

The only sure way to pinpoint a location on the water is for two or more people to align objects with the victim from different locations. The spot where the lines of sight cross is where the person went down. You should serve as a second spotter if someone else has already begun a rescue. Pinpointing the victim's location is also one of the jobs of the lookout at a troop swim or the camp boating area.



How to take a bearing