

Some Scouts were sledding during a winter campout when one lost control and landed a creek. The others threw him a rope pulled him to the side helped get him dry, and took him back to camp

Throwing Rescues

if a victim is beyond your reach, try to throw him an aid. A floating aid with a line attached is best because the float provides support and the line lets you pull the victim in. Throwing rescues can be used for any type of active victim but not for unconscious victims. Throwing rescues are not needed much around pools, particularly small private ones, because reach poles alone can reach anywhere in the pool. For river float trips, however, a throw line is the main rescue aid.

The farther a victim is from shore, the more important it becomes to keep track of his location, particularly if the water is not clear. If the victim submerges before you can help, then you will need to know where he went down, and that is hard unless you watch him closely. In this and all other rescues, keep your eye on the subject as much as possible while you look for equipment and get in position. The task is easier if you work with someone else in the rescue. One person can act as spotter while the other gathers equipment.

A throwing rescue device need not have a line attached. Different types of PFDs, including life jackets, ring buoys, and flotation cushions, are often found around the water and serve as good throwing devices that float. Anything can be used that will float well enough to support the victim, is something the victim can hang onto, and is small enough for you to throw or shove the victim from shore. Examples include inner tubes, air mattresses, kickboards, empty water jugs, coolers, and even wooden benches. You also can try beach balls or volleyballs, but they may be difficult for the victim to grasp.

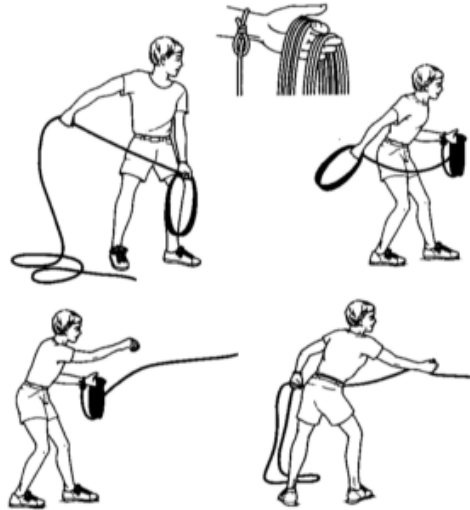
Aim carefully before you toss the device. The float should land within reach without hitting the victim's head. Be sure to allow for wind and current; generally the device should hit the water upstream of the victim. If the victim can support himself with a loose float, he probably will be able to paddle himself to shore. Shout encouragement and have him travel with the current rather than against it.



if you miss, or if the victim fails to grasp the item, try again, either with another device or by pulling in on the line. If repeated attempts fail, you will need to consider other options in the reach-throw-row-go progression. You may need to switch to a boat to get closer. You might need to enter the water to retrieve your throwing device, swim closer to the victim, or push it to him.

Throw Lines

Coil an unweighted rope, or *heaving line*, before you toss it. Tie a small bowline loop in one end and place the loop on your wrist so you won't accidentally toss the entire line into the water. The loop should be loose enough that you can easily slip your hand free if needed. To coil the line for a right-handed throw, place your left hand on your left knee and stretch the line to the full reach of your right arm. Then return the line from your right hand to your left hand to form the first coil. If you leave your left hand fixed to your knee and reach as far as possible each time with your right hand, all of the coils will be the same size and less likely to tangle when thrown. Reverse the directions for a left-handed toss. This technique is better than wrapping short coils on your forearm or moving both hands apart and then together.



When about half the line is coiled, gather the loops with the index finger of the hand holding the coils, and coil the rest of the line on your remaining fingers. This will let you separate the rope into two coils, one from which the line feeds and one that is thrown. You need the weight of the second coil to make an accurate toss.

With one coil in each hand, step back with the leg on your throwing side, swing back the arm with the free coil, and throw the coil underhand to the victim. Release the coil when your throwing arm is about level and still moving. If you release too soon, the rope will land just in front of you. If you wait too long, the line will go up rather than out. After the release, the rest of the line plays off the open palm of your other hand. The line should fall over the victim's shoulder, in reach of his hands. If there is a crosswind or current, throw to the upwind or upstream side of the victim. If you miss, recoil quickly and try again. Watch the victim not the line when you're recoiling.

When the victim grasps the line, drop the remaining coil, if any, and reach out with one hand to grip the rope with your thumb inward. Pull in the line with that

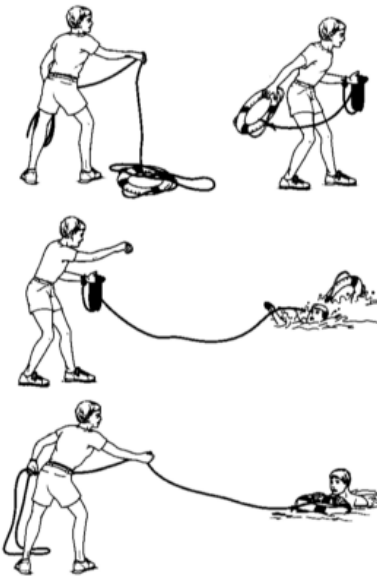
hand while you reach out with the other. Continue to alternate pulling and reaching with each hand until the victim is at the side or stands in shallow water. Pull fast enough to keep the victim afloat, but do not jerk the line from his hands. Give the victim instructions and encouragement.

You may need to improvise, depending on the type of line you use. For instance, you don't need to take the time to untie both ends of an anchor line on a small boat. Instead, drop the anchor at your feet, step on the line, and proceed with coiling. You also may step on the handle of a ski rope. If you water-ski often and can accurately throw a ski rope in a different manner than described here, use the technique you know best. Hoses and unplugged electrical extension cords also can be used.

A *ring buoy* is coiled and thrown in the same fashion as a heaving line, except that there is no need to separate the line into two coils. The buoy provides sufficient weight for an accurate throw. You may find a ring buoy stored with the line already coiled. If so, give it a try as is, but be prepared for the line to tangle. If it does, recoil the line with your hand on your knee as you would for a heaving line. Throw the buoy beyond the victim with the line falling over his shoulder. Then pull the buoy to him. Tell him to get a good grip on the buoy before you pull him in.

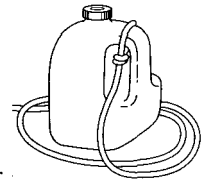
If the line plays out cleanly but your aim is off, you do not have to recoil the line for a second try as you would for a heaving line. Instead, drop the line at your feet as you pull in the buoy and then try again.

You may find a ring buoy with a large wood bead, or "lemon," on the free end of the line rather than a wrist loop. If that's



the case, you're meant to stand on the line with the lemon behind your foot. The wrist loop is easier to use, particularly if you're moving with the ring buoy to get to a better position or throwing it from a boat, but the lemon also works. One reason for placing a lemon on the line is to keep a nonswimming rescuer using the buoy from getting jerked into deep water. Because you know to brace yourself in anticipation of a pull and can swim well, a loop on your wrist shouldn't be a concern for a calm-water rescue. As you'll see, conditions change if the victim is caught in a strong current.

An excellent makeshift buoy for a home pool, boat, or troop swim kit can be made from a gallon plastic jug with about an inch of water inside. Attach about 50 feet (at least enough to reach across your



pool) of light line to the handle and tie a wrist bowline in the other end. Solid-core woven line that floats is best, but nylon will work. Ski rope can be used in a pinch. The jug is thrown underhand like a regular buoy.

The thru) bag, or rescue bag, is a common throwing device often carried on paddle craft such as canoes. A floating line with a wrist loop is stuffed into a small nylon tube with a float at the bottom. The float isn't large enough to support a son but does keep the bag on the surface. You hold the loop in one hand and throw the bag underhand with the other. You also may use an overhand toss to give you more distance and to throw over bushes along the bank. The line plays out of the bag as it travels through the air. A rescue bag is probably the easiest way to throw a line. It has the advantage of always being ready for use. You don't have to worry about the line tangling during storage or transport. If you miss your first toss, then use the rope as a regular heaving line. It's not easy to quickly restuff a wet line for a second throw.

Although heaving lines, ring buoys, and rescue bags are extremely useful in some situations, it takes practice to use them correctly. Coiling a line quickly and throwing it accurately are skills that must be learned, like swimming. Also like swimming, once the skill is mastered, you'll retain the ability for a long time. Practice until you can repeatedly hit near a stationary target. The best equipment is worthless unless you can use it.

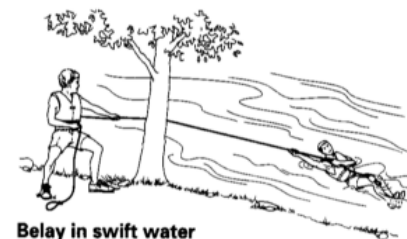
Use of Throw Lines for Swift-Water Rescue

To make a throwing rescue in swift water, you need to take the current into account. If the victim is moving, not hanging on a rock, an accurate throw will be more difficult. Ideally, you should be downstream of the victim and make your throw just before the victim comes abreast. If the victim is already farther downstream than the rope is long, you should hurry downstream with the hope that the swimmer will find an eddy or other slow portion of the river.

Try to get the victim's attention before you throw the line, so he can be watching for it. Make the toss as near the victim as possible, but if you miss, it is better to miss slightly upstream. When the victim grabs the line, he should roll on his back rather than get a faceful of water looking back toward you. The victim shouldn't



try to stand unless the water is too shallow for him to float. Normally you shouldn't pull the victim to shore, but instead let the taut line and current sweep the swimmer in an arc toward the bank. If the length of the line is such that the victim will swing into an obstacle, you need to either shorten the line or move downstream with



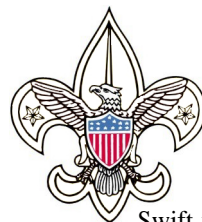
Belay in swift water

the line slack until a better landing site appears. (If rescuers are being placed in anticipation of a capsized, then each line handler should be positioned above a safe landing spot.)

Be prepared for considerable force once the line becomes taut. If possible, belay the line by pulling it halfway around a stout tree or large rock. Take a full turn if needed. If you can't belay the line around a stationary object, then sit down after throwing the line, run it around your back, and brace your feet. If other people are present, you may instruct them to help hold the line. You should be able to release the line at any time, both from yourself if you are about to be pulled in and from the belay if the victim gets tangled in the line and needs it slacked.

If the victim is not swimming but has reached a spot of relative safety within the river, then you can consider the issue of a safe landing site more carefully. If the water is deep and free of hazards, the victim can swing to safety after he has caught the line. You may move upstream after throwing the line to establish a better belay or to adjust where the swimmer will land. Clearly instruct the victim not to make any movements until told to do so.

If danger exists immediately downstream of where the victim has gained a temporary refuge, then a simple throwing rescue may not be enough. It may be better to establish a second line across the river.



Three Scouts in a raft heard screams for help from another raft. They stretched a rope across the river downstream of the troubled party and were able to help the victims to shore.

Swift-water rescues can be complex, and the victim may be at great risk if the assist is not well-executed. You should plan carefully and be reasonably confident that your course of action will improve the situation. Otherwise, seek help from a team trained in river rescue, even if that means temporarily abandoning the victim.