

Boat Smart, Boat Safe

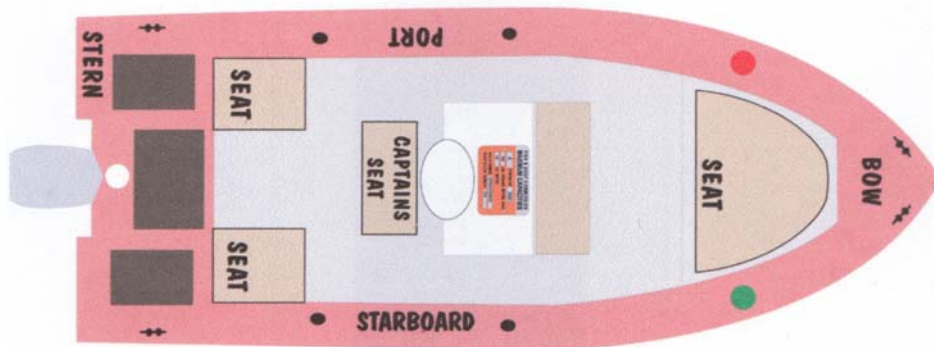
One of six Stations in the Passport Program: an Introduction to Fishing and Boating

Read before the Event

Objectives:

At the end of this station participants will:

- ✓ Be able to choose a life jacket of the proper size and fit,
- ✓ Know what to do in emergency situations near the water,
- ✓ Know how to be a responsible passenger on a boat.



Background for the Volunteer:

People love water. Boating and fishing bond families together in the pursuit of relaxation and pleasure. In all activities, being safe and having fun go hand in hand. This station gives participants some basics to help them enjoy and be safe while playing in or around water.

Like seat belts in your car, life jackets bring security and add to carefree relaxation on the water. Some of us remember the bulky and uncomfortable styles of life jackets from the past, but manufacturers have made great strides in the last 20 years in designing and producing attractive and easy to wear life jackets. You should wear a life jacket as part of this program because it models the desired behavior for the participants and opens up an opportunity to stress that activity close to the water, like fishing from a pier, requires a life jacket too. If the life jackets are clean, comfortable, and attractive, more people will wear them. You might want to show the range of easy to wear styles by having each Presenter of the Passport to Fishing and Boating Program wear a different style of life jacket.

Requirements for life jacket wear vary from state to state. Before you present this program, check your local law so you can accurately talk about requirements. But, regardless of the requirements, participants should be encouraged to wear life jackets at all times around water.

Although learning to swim is an important skill for water safety, it does not take the place of a good life jacket. In an accident it is impossible to swim while unconscious. We wouldn't think that we should wear a seat belt in the car only when we are expecting to have a car accident! It also makes no sense to wear a life jacket only while we are enjoying the speed and thrill of a moving boat. The newer designs are meant to be worn all of the time and have made it easier to be safe on the water.

Life jackets come in a variety of sizes and types for children and adults. The proper size depends on the weight of the person it will keep afloat. Weight categories are: 0 to 30 pounds, 30 to 50 pounds, 50 to 90 pounds, and more than 90 pounds. Adult life jackets are all rated 90+ pounds. Some of the newer styles for both adults and kids resemble suspenders that inflate into a life jacket when needed. Not only is the right size important but proper fit of the proper type is also necessary.

Type I is an offshore style designed for extended survival in rough open water and turns an unconscious person face up.

Type II is a near shore model that sometimes can turn an unconscious person face up out of the water, and is less buoyant and less bulky than Type I.

Type III is a flotation aid of the same buoyancy as Type II but is not designed to keep an unconscious person face up. These are generally considered to be the most comfortable jacket. They are styled for water sports and are recommended only for calm inland waters.

Type IV is a throwable ring or cushion that is designed for rescue, not to be worn.

Type V is a life jacket designed for a specific activity. Some Type V's include hypothermia protection, inflatable sections, or other features to make them work in their special situations. Some of these Type V's are designed for whitewater rafting, board sailing, working at a marina. The label tells you what they have been designed to do and where they may be used.

Proper fit of the life jacket is critical. It should fit snugly and have all of the straps buckled or fastened. Usually someone in distress in the water reaches up trying to grab something, with arms in the air; a loose life jacket floats off over the person's head. You can test the fit on a child by having him hold his arms up as you tug upward on the shoulders: it should not come off. Practice putting a life jacket on and floating in the water gives users confidence and familiarity with the equipment.

Remember, it won't work if you don't wear it.

Boaters abide by a traditional "unwritten code" to look out for the safety of not only yourself, but also others. Few drivers on the freeway help others who are having trouble, but on the water everyone helps everyone else. Whether your boat is stranded or you are having other problems, you can expect that others will offer their assistance. In the same way, if you notice something is wrong for others, you should offer help.

In a drowning emergency there are four things you can safely do to help someone in trouble in the water. To remember them repeat, "**Reach, Throw, Row, Go.**"

"**Reach**" helps you remember to hold onto the end of something and let the person in trouble reach to get hold of the other end. Fishing rods, an oar, a branch and even a shirt or towel can help you pull someone to safety. If the victim is close and you can't find anything to reach with, lie down, hold onto something solid with your arms and reach with your leg.

"**Throw**" is to remind you to throw anything that floats to the victim. A small plastic beverage cooler (soft or hard) or a life jacket are good floating objects. People who perform rescues at sea say that many victims are found clinging to

their ice chests. If you are in a boat, it may be equipped with a special throwable device, a flat boat cushion or round ring buoy are both designed to be held onto, not worn. Tying a rope to the cushion or ring buoy **before** you have an emergency saves time and lives if you ever need to use it.

“**Row**” reminds you that you can get a boat, a raft, a log or anything that can be safely floated to a person in trouble and take them back to shore. Getting them into a boat over the stern (back) however might require great strength. The victim may be able to hold on to the boat as you either head for shore or hold them until more help arrives.

“**Go**” means go for help. Time is critical but, unless you have been trained as a lifeguard, it is better to go for help than try to swim to rescue anyone. Dialing 9-1-1 can also bring help if you have a cell phone.

Boating safety includes acting sensibly while in a boat. A responsible Captain is required for your safety but passengers have responsibilities too. This station stresses that wearing a life jacket is like wearing a seat belt in a car: if a life jacket is not offered, then asking for one is not only polite but necessary. While the boat is underway, passengers sit in a boat seat, keeping arms (and legs) inside the boat. Passengers moving about or leaning out can be thrown around or out of the boat when it hits a wake from another craft. As part of the responsibility to look out for yourself and others, a **responsible passenger** also is able to recognize a safety hazard, say something about it and help correct it.

Fishing and boating instructors tell us that even small children understand that a drunken boat Captain is a sign of danger. Since the responsibility of being the Captain of the boat is no less important than being the Driver of a car, we have provided a small poster to display with a “**Don’t Drink and Boat**” message. Younger children may misunderstand, thinking that “Don’t Drink” means you should not have water, milk or a soda. Take along plenty of drinking water when boating because it is easy to become dehydrated in the sun and the wind. Please use your judgment to tailor the presentation to the age group of your audience.

The program to be presented follows the Materials section below. It appears in two forms, a script and an outline, so you can choose the one that will help you most with your presentation. If you feel more comfortable using a script, the part directly following the Materials section is for you. Those presenters who would rather read through the script and then use an outline as a guide will find a suggested outline following the script.

Teaching Tips for Boat Smart, Boat Safe:

Make sure all of the needed teaching tools and equipment are handy. The life jackets for the Virtual Boat Ride get rough treatment. You might want to visit a thrift store to buy some substandard “life jackets” that would help make the activity even more educational. If you can, get one that is way too big, one that is way too small, one that is some kind of swim assist, like arm bubbles or a pool toy, or one that is another substandard device like a doggie life jacket, and one that is a boat cushion. Even though the boat cushion is a legitimate lifesaving device, the kids will often put the straps around their arms and the cushion on their backs so, in an emergency, they would find themselves floating with their faces in the water.

Engage the parents and the kids in your activity. Adults generally need to be invited to participate. A talking group of parents in the background is very distracting and these activities are designed to include all members of the family.

Give positive reinforcement. The Virtual Boat Ride is set up so the participants will make mistakes that you will point out. Do so with humor and affirm that they will be able to make better decisions after they complete the Passport activities.

Really involve the kids in the action and the questions. If you see their eyes start to wander, ask a question to get them back on track.

We strongly suggest you avoid scare tactics as part of the sinking Virtual Boat Ride activity. Stay positive with an emphasis on “staying alive” and having fun rather than “dying as a result of making poor choices.” Avoid using the words “drown” and “dead” as part of this presentation.

Use the participants to act out the actions for Reach, Throw, Row, Go. It is much more memorable for them to do the actions themselves than to watch you do it. Each action becomes a “skit.” Let them throw the boat cushion or reach with the paddle to someone simulating being in trouble.

Prepare in advance. Organize your script, outline or notes. Once you have given it a couple of times you will only need prompting occasionally. If you need the script at the beginning, you might consider putting it on a clipboard with a rubber band to keep it from flapping in the wind. Have some rocks or weights on hand to anchor your teaching tools in case a breeze comes up.

Seat your audience on the ground or on a tarp, facing you. Make sure they are not looking in the direction of some other interesting and distracting activity.

Watch your timing. Take as long as the activity needs to make your points and to let the participants have fun while doing the activities. If you have time left over at the end then go on to an Extension. Extensions are provided at the end of each station script but you need to prepare them and collect materials for them ahead of time.

If you are running out of time and have not been able to include everything specified in the script, then switch to a demonstration so everyone can see what you are trying to teach even though they may not get a chance to try it.

Encourage your audience to participate. Respond to wrong answers with, "Can you think of something else?"

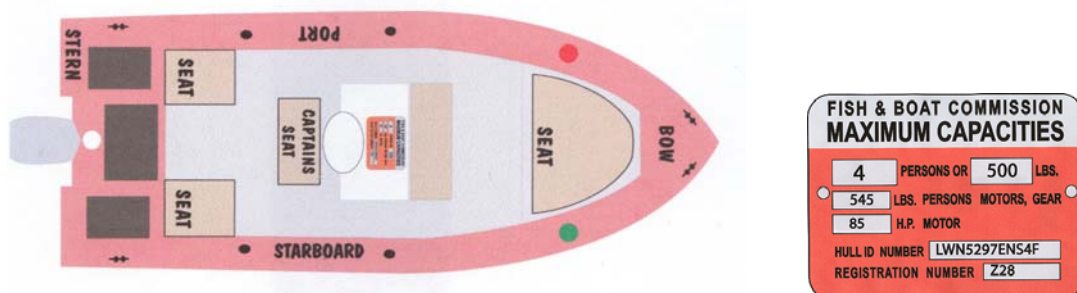
If one child is distracting the others by being wiggly or talkative, give him a task to help you in some way. Make sure it is a task that requires him to be still. You might have him hold a poster or prop so everyone can see. If the child is too young for the group, let him/her play with one of the teaching tools.

Materials Needed:

- Comfortable and attractive life jacket for the presenter to wear throughout the program

Virtual Boat Ride:

- Boat Mat from the *Passport Materials Kit* or downloaded and printed from our website (www.NationalFishingandBoatingWeek.org) or mark off an area with duct tape in the shape of a boat, about 10 feet long and 4 feet wide. Bring the area to a point in the middle of the front so participants can tell where the bow is. Square off the back. If you are outside, cut a boat shape out of black plastic to spread on the ground. A real boat or an old rubber raft is even better. Mark four seats. The Boat Mat with capacity plate looks like this:



- Have kids sit directly on the marked seats on the Boat Mat. If you do not have a boat mat use 4 small chairs as seats, placed inside your boat outline.
- 4 life jackets with straps tangled and tied in unusable fashion, too big or too small for the passengers, fastened inside out, tied in knots or otherwise unkempt and disabled; placed under the chairs or tangled and buckled together in a pile. You may be able to find substandard life jackets at a thrift store that will work well for this activity.
- Pile of assorted life jackets, enough for whole group, various sizes and styles including the newer ones that are both comfortable and attractive; should be jackets people would want to wear, not dirty or frayed. A set of 5 new life jackets for this activity may be ordered through our website: www.NationalFishingandBoatingWeek.org.
- Stopwatch or wristwatch with second hand to time 15 second interval

- Small “Don’t Drink and Boat” poster to display:



Reach, Throw, Row, Go (rescue techniques):

- Branch, oar, towel, fishing rod or other things to “reach” a victim
- Small plastic beverage cooler (hard or soft plastic)
- Ring buoy or boat cushion to “throw” to a victim

SCRIPT STARTS HERE

Estimated time for the **Virtual Boat Ride** section: 9 minutes

Presenter says words in bold; participants give answers in italics;
Presenter and participants do the actions in the boxes.

Watch for check marked “**√ Objectives**” in the left column to see that you are covering the essential information. Left column also has room for your notes.

**Tips, Objectives,
Your Notes, etc.:**

► **Teaching Tip:**

Sit everyone down in front of you. Engage the adults as well as the kids.

SCRIPT:

My name is (fill in). How can we have more fun in the water? We can catch more fish and have more fun if we are sure we're safe. Boat Smart, Boat Safe. To have fun right now, we are going on a virtual boat ride.

Who wants to be my boaters today? Somebody needs to be the captain and sit here. You others will be passengers.

Choose 4 children to sit in the chairs or the seats on the Boat Mat. Identify one as the “Captain.” Have them take their seats on the “boat.”

We are going to pretend we forgot to make our boat safe today. Imagine that:

- **You are cruising and enjoying yourselves**
- **It is a great day on the water**
- **All of a sudden something happens and the boat is sinking!**
- **I notice none of you are wearing life jackets.**

You have 15 seconds to find a life jacket and get it on before the boat sinks.

► Teaching Tip:

We strongly suggest you **avoid scare tactics.**

Avoid saying either “drown” or “dead.” Keep it light and the participants will get the intended message that they should have a comfortable life jacket for every family member.

- Participants scramble for life jackets that are the wrong sizes, substandard types, tied in knots, fastened together.
- None should be able to get the life jacket on in 15 seconds.
- If anyone does, check to see that it is properly fastened and that they cannot slip out of it when their arms are up.

(15 seconds) STOP! Freeze in that position while we analyze our situation.

This could be serious, right?

- It isn't fun if you need a life jacket and can't find one or get it on.
- You may be a good swimmer but if you are knocked unconscious in an accident you cannot swim.

How could this scramble have been avoided?

- Most states have laws about wearing life jackets but let's say you don't know what our state law says.
- If you were on a boat what would you do in this situation? *Should have been wearing their life jackets all of the time*

Yes, that's right! Wearing your life jacket would have made this much better.

- So, the first problem was that our boaters were not wearing their life jackets already.

●But there is another problem. Let's look at the life jackets and figure out what was wrong with them.

- Take each boater separately and talk about what was wrong with each life jacket.
- Pull the adults into the act to analyze size problems.

What's wrong with this one? *Too big, too small, couldn't get unbuckled, jackets were stowed instead of worn, child wasn't familiar with how it goes on, used the straps on the boat cushion to wear it so your face is in the water, "life jacket" was really a pool toy, etc.*

► **Teaching Tip:**

Life jackets should be snugly fit and also the correct size for the child's weight (see inside label).

Let's find the right kind of life jackets so we can all be safe boaters. Boat Smart, Boat Safe.

- Life jackets come in different sizes and styles.
- It should fit you right.
- It should match your weight. Read the label on the inside to see.
- It shouldn't be loose.
- It should have all of the buckles fastened snugly so it won't come off.

✓ **Objective:**
Be able to choose a life jacket of the proper size and fit

Everyone, go to that pile of life jackets and find one that's right for you. Check the poundage limits on the inside label to make sure it is right for you.

- Help them select the right life jacket for each participant according to their weight.
- Include all children and adults, not just the ones in the skit.
- After a life jacket is on, check the buckles and have parents lift at the shoulders to check fit.

- Pass the life jacket along to the next person to try.

Time:

Watch the clock. This section should take only 9 minutes. You should be near the 7 minute mark now.

Practice putting it on. Buckle all of the straps. Make sure it fits you snugly.

Everyone practices selecting and putting on the right jacket. Adults help when necessary. Adults should be encouraged to try on life jackets too if there are any adult sizes.

Great! So, what did you learn? *Have a snugly fitting life jacket and wear it.*

Now let's pretend we are going on another boat ride:

- You are going to get into a friend's boat.
- You should always ask the skipper for permission to get into his/her boat.

✓ **Objective:**
Know how to be a responsible passenger on a boat.

If he/she says its okay, what is the first question you ask after you step onto the boat? *Where is my life jacket?*

Sure, it's just like a seat belt in a car that can save your life in a car accident; life jackets can save your life in a water accident.

You should wear one all of the time around water, even if you can swim.

You also have some responsibilities as a passenger on a boat. You need to look out for yourself and others. How do you think you should act on a boat? Where is a good place to sit?

On a seat (not perched on the sides or on the bow or on the back of the seat)

What if you see a safety hazard? What if you see the gas can with the lid off? Looking out for yourself and others means what?

Say something about it. Help fix it so it is safe.

What can you do to be a safe boater? We have already talked about some things. What?

Wear a life jacket

Look for safety hazards and say something about them

Sit in a seat

What should you do while the boat is moving? I'll try to demonstrate some of the things we see on the water. Tell me what you think I should do instead of this.

Sit on the edge of the Boat Mat, dangling your hand in the water; get up and run around the boat.

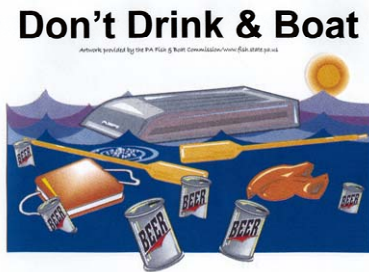
► Teaching Tip:

Younger children may not know how a "wake" is formed as a boat moves through the water. Explain.

Sit down and stay in one place.

Sure. Stay in one place because hitting the wave formed by another boat can throw you around, maybe even overboard.

Display small poster:



Is there drinking water on your boat? Sodas? Beer? Drinking water and juices will help you keep hydrated while you play in the sun and the wind on a boat. Alcohol and boating, just like alcohol and driving, do not go together. Adults should drink alcohol responsibly.

Are there enough life jackets for everybody on your boat? **YES!**

You did really well with that situation. You can take off the life jackets and put them back into the pile.

Participants remove life jackets and place them back in the pile.

Continue: Estimated time for this section (**Reach, Throw, Row, Go**): 6 minutes

Tips, Objectives,
Your Notes, etc.:

SCRIPT:

We talked about some of the things you can do to be safe around water. But, there are other things that are expected of you too.

- Like, if you have trouble with your boat you can expect that someone will stop and ask if you need some help. When you are in a boat on the water everyone helps anyone having trouble.

•What could happen in a boat? Why would you need help?

(Lots of answers!)

Someone could have a medical emergency.

The motor could fail.

Someone could fall out.

Yes, if you are near someone who falls in the water and is in trouble

- It is important to know how to help.
- Never swim out and try to help someone unless you have lifeguard training. Many people die every year trying to help others in the water. So, Don't Swim out to help someone who has fallen in the water.

But what can you do? There are 4 ways to help. You can:

“Reach, Throw, Row or Go.”

✓ **Objective:**
Know what to do in emergency situations near the water.

Remember to Reach, Throw, Row, Go. Let's try some of them.

I need two volunteers. Pretend that:

- You are on a dock, either fishing or getting ready to boat.
- One of you falls into the water and is thrashing about.

Pick two volunteers to help you demonstrate. Let them act out Reaching for a rescue.

You can “Reach” to help this person stay above water. Put something out there for him to hang onto. Do we have anything here that you could use?

Discuss oar, towel, fishing rod, branch, shirt

Don’t reach with your hand. It is too easy for the victim to pull you in.

If you can’t find something else, lie down like this, holding onto something with your hands, and let them grab onto your feet. Thank you volunteers

Lie down as a demonstration or position your volunteers so they can demonstrate

Now I need two more volunteers.

Select two new volunteers.

What was the second thing you can do? After Reach?
Throw

If the victim is too far away to “Reach” then “Throw” them something that floats so they can hang onto it.

Hold up the ring buoy or boat cushion.

Many boats have special throwable things like this ring buoy or boat cushion but you can also use something else that we have here. Does anyone see something here that might float and you could throw it to someone in the water? *Small plastic beverage cooler, life jacket*

Stand the volunteers about 20 feet apart.

Now pretend that:

- Volunteer #1 is on a boat.
- Volunteer #2 fell overboard in the rough water.

Volunteer #1, what will you do? *Get the cushion and throw it to him.* Try it. See if you can throw it to our person in trouble.

Volunteer tries to get cushion to victim. Let others try too if you have time.

► **Teaching Tip:**
Keep repeating
Throw, Row, Go

Reach,

So that's "Throw." Can you remember that? Yes

What was the other thing we did that you could do?
Reach

So we have Reach, Throw . . . What's the next one?
Row

"Row" is to remind you that you can get into a boat, a raft, or a log or anything that floats and get to the victim. When you get out there you might not be able to get him into the boat or onto whatever else you might have, so what do you think you would do then?

Hang onto him until more help arrives or let him hang onto the boat until help arrives

So, now we have “Reach, Throw, Row.” What is the last one? Go

That means Go For Help but not GO into the water. Time is important, but it is better to run to others yelling “HELP” than to swim and then drown yourself. If you have a cell phone what number do you call?

9-1-1

So let’s review. How can you help rescue someone? Reach, Throw, Row, Go

Good. You can be safe around the water now. It’s time to wrap this up so you can go on to the next station. Your Group Guide will ask you some questions before you go. It’s been nice seeing you. Bye.

Group Guide’s Questions

Ask these questions before taking the group to the next station:

How can you tell your life jacket fits properly? *Jacket fits snugly against your body and all buckles or fasteners are latched, your weight matches the label on the inside.*

What can you do to help someone who is in trouble in the water?
Reach, Throw, Row, Go

OUTLINE STARTS HERE:

Introduce yourself and program: Boat Smart, Boat Safe
Catch more fish, Have more fun if we are safe

Virtual Boat Ride - Choose 4 participants, one is Captain
Pretend that today:

- We forgot to make our boat safe
- We are having a great day on the water, cruising and enjoying
- Something happens suddenly and the boat is sinking
- I see that none of you have a life jacket on so . . .

You have 15 seconds to find a life jacket and get it on before the boat sinks

(15 seconds) STOP. Freeze in that position while we analyze our situation.

✓ **Objective:**
Be able to choose a life jacket of the proper size and fit.

This could be serious

- It isn't fun if you need a life jacket and you can't get one
- Being able to swim might not help – you might be unconscious
- How could this scramble be avoided? (*Wear life jacket all of the time.*)

Look at life jackets and find out what is wrong with each

- Too big?
- Too small?
- Couldn't get unbuckled?
- Jackets stowed instead of worn
- Substandard life jacket
- Wearer's weight does not match label on life jacket

Find the right kind of jacket for you. Practice putting on

- Fit snug
- All buckled
- Won't come off over head
- Your weight matches the weight on the label

What did you learn?

Another boat ride on a friend's boat:

- How can you be a good passenger? What can you do to be a safe boater?
 - Ask for permission to board
 - Ask for life jacket (like seat belt can save your life)
 - Look out for yourself and others. (Everyone helps in an emergency)
 - Look around for safety problems, if you see one, say something and help fix it
- How do you think you should act on a boat while it is moving?
 - Demonstrate sitting on edge of boat
 - Dangling feet and hands in the water
 - Getting up and moving around
- Sit down in a seat when the boat is moving
 - Hitting another boat's wake may throw you around or overboard
- Is there drinking water or soda on board?
- Are there enough life jackets for everybody?

✓ **Objective:**
Know how to be a responsible passenger on a boat.

Remove life jackets and put back into pile.

If you have trouble on the water then you can expect others to stop and help you.

What kind of emergency do you think might happen on or near the water? (medical emergency, mechanical emergency, someone could fall into the water)

What can you do to help if someone falls in the water? Reach, Throw, Row, Go

Reach with something or with your leg (demonstrate with volunteers)

Throw the throwable device or small plastic beverage cooler (demonstrate with volunteers)

Row anything that floats to the person, get them to hold on or hold them until help arrives

Go (for help) or call 9-1-1

End: Presenter says "goodbye" and Group Guide asks questions

✓ **Objective:**
Know what to do in emergency situations near the water.

Extensions: (If you have more time . . .)

This section works best for participants aged 14 and above. Insert it between the Virtual Boat Ride and Reach, Throw, Row, Go so the participants are still wearing the life jackets while they are doing this activity.

Hypothermia: Estimated time for this section: 5 minutes

Most of the water in North America is significantly colder than your body temperature. A short time in the water can lower your core body temperature quickly because it takes away body heat 25 times faster than air of the same temperature. Lowering the core body temperature to below 95 degrees reduces the victim's ability to both think and move and is called "hypothermia."

To avoid hypothermia as long as possible victims should pull their bodies into a ball to reduce heat loss. Hugging yourself (just like you would if you are cold and waiting for the school bus) keeps your elbows close to your sides, protecting your underarms where your blood is close to the skin surface. Knees should be drawn up to touch your arms. Cross your feet so your legs touch together. This posture is only effective if you are wearing a life jacket and so do not need to swim or move about. Without a life jacket, victims must use energy to stay afloat, shortening the survival time significantly.

Materials:

- Bucket of cold water (Find out the normal temperature of your river [or lake, or ocean] and adjust the temperature of water in the bucket so it is the same.) You can make it fairly cold because almost all of the water in the US is cold during the fishing and boating season.
- Thermometer to measure temperature of the water
- Ice to adjust the temperature of the water if necessary

Tips, Objectives,
Your Notes, etc.:

SCRIPT:

✓ **Objective:**
**Know what to do if
you fall into cold
water and are not
rescued right away**

Put your hand into this bucket of water and hold it there for a while. I made this water the temperature of our (lake, river, ocean).

Show bucket of water that is the temperature of your lake, stream, ocean, etc.
Everyone tests the water with their hands

Let's think about what to do if your whole body fell into cold water.

If you happen to fall into deep water and can't get out,

- The cold water could chill your body down until you cannot think clearly or move well. When your body temperature falls below 95 degrees you cannot think or move as you usually do.
- In order to survive until someone comes to the rescue you must preserve your energy and body heat as much as possible.

How do you stand when you are waiting for the school bus on a cold morning?

Hug yourself

Yes! Try to put yourself into a ball and keep the middle of you warm because that is where your vital organs are.

Put hands in armpits

Yes! And you don't wave your arms around because it exposes the armpits and

blood is close to the surface there. You protect that area from the cold.

Pick a partner:

- Try to put one of you into a position that will help preserve as much body heat as possible.
- Talk it over. Decide what is best.
- Since you are wearing your life jacket you do not need to spend energy trying to float. You can let your body use all of that energy keeping warm.
- I will come around and see how you are doing.



Help each group individually find the position that pulls the body into as tight a ball as possible by asking questions. The position should:

- Cross the legs at the ankles
- Pull knees to chest
- Keep the arms crossed and down over the armpits

When each group has found the proper position praise them and move to the next activity