

**Basic Water Hazard Safety**  
**Rip currents (Rips)**

Rips are strong currents running out to sea that can easily take swimmers from shallow water out beyond their depth. They are especially powerful in larger surf, but are also found around river mouths, estuaries and man-made structures like piers and groynes.

**1. How to spot a rip current**

- a) discoloured, brown water (caused by sand being stirred up from the seabed)
- b) foam on the water's surface
- c) debris floating out to sea
- d) a rippled patch of sea, when the water around is generally calm.

**2. How to get out of trouble**

If you are caught in a rip or strong current, obey the three Rs:

- a) Relax – Stay calm and float. Do not swim against the current, swim across it.
- b) Raise – Raise an arm to signal for help. If possible shout to shore for help.
- c) Rescue – Float and wait for assistance. Do not panic, people drown in rips because they panic. Obey directions from the lifeguard.

If you think you are able to swim in, swim parallel to the beach until out of the effects of the rip and then make your way to shore.

For more info go to [http://www.surfhiresafety.co.uk/site/347/surfing\\_safety\\_info.aspx](http://www.surfhiresafety.co.uk/site/347/surfing_safety_info.aspx)

**3. Surfing Safety and Good Practice**

- a) Respect the environment. We depend on a clean and healthy ocean, so always properly dispose of any trash you encounter on the beach.
- b) Maintain a positive attitude! Surfing should be fun for you and everyone else in the line-up. Respect others and share waves.
- c) Follow the local laws at the beach you visit. Different beaches maintain different sets of laws (i.e. surf zones, surfing near jetties and piers etc.).
- d) Wear a leash. Wearing a leash is an important way to keep your board close to you and to keep it from becoming a hazard to other surfers.
- e) Always aid a fellow surfer or swimmer if he/she encounters trouble in the water.
- f) Keep an eye out for changing weather conditions and always be aware of the dangers of sun exposure.
- g) Never surf in conditions above your ability level, if you are uncomfortable you will have a greater risk of injury
- h) If you are a beginner, avoid surfing in crowded areas while you are learning.

- i) When paddling out and while in the line-up, always be aware of other surfers and swimmers in your area. Knowing roughly where bathers and surfers are located will help you determine when it is safe to paddle into a wave.
- j) Avoid paddling directly into the area where the waves are breaking (the impact zone). This is important for several reasons. First, if you choose to paddle out in a channel or in a rip current, you will spend less energy. Second, you will less likely encounter a surfer riding the face of a wave.
- k) When paddling out, be aware that a surfer actively riding a wave has the right of way. As a paddler, it is your obligation to avoid a surfer on a wave.
- l) When two surfers paddle for the same wave, the surfer closer to the peak has the "right of way".
- m) Do not snake! Snaking is where someone who aggressively positions him/herself in front of another surfer who otherwise would be in position to catch the wave. Remember to always respect other more experienced surfers and share waves.
- n) Call out "left" or "right" to designate which way you will turn as you drop in. This is especially important when two surfers positioned close together near the peak of the wave.
- o) Duck dive when possible. ONLY abandon your surf board if no one is around.
- p) Do not drop in!

#### **4. Kite Surfing safety and good practice**

- a) Opposite tack rule: A wave sailor coming in (surfing the wave in) shall keep clear of a wave sailor heading out (jumping the wave).
- b) Same tack rule (on the wave): All wave sailors shall keep clear of a wave sailor in front of or nearest to the peak of the wave (the breaking part of the wave).
- c) All kite surfers shall keep clear of all surfers (surfers are less manoeuvrable than kite surfers).
- d) All common sense, traditional flat water and wave sailing rules should be applied to kite surfers.
- e) If the kite surfer is upwind, the distance to be kept clear is dependent on the highest point of the downwind water-craft (as described in the table above).
- f) If a kite surfer is not upwind, the distance to be kept clear is the rule-of-thumb two-hull-length distance.
- g) When two kite surfers approaching each other, the upwind kite surfer should fly the kite high, the downwind kite surfer should fly the kite low and a minimum clearing distance of 7.5
  - m. Click [http://www.kitefilm.com/video/passing\\_other\\_riders.wmv](http://www.kitefilm.com/video/passing_other_riders.wmv) to view a video regarding this rule.
- h) Without the presence of large boats, the minimum clearing distance is about 15 m. This is about 2.5 times the rule-of-thumb clearing distance of 6 m for windsurfers. This would allow up to 40 kite surfers in the same space that normally accommodates 100 windsurfers.
- i) A kite surfer should only jump if there is no obstacle within the 1.5 line length (40 m) radius semi-circle down wind.

More information can be found at <http://www.kitesurfingschool.org/rules.htm>

## **5. The Windsurfing Safety Code**

- a) Consider local weather and tidal forecasts.
- b) Always advise someone of where you plan to sail and when you expect to return.
- c) Wear clothing that suits the conditions.
- d) Wear an approved life jacket with a whistle attached.
- e) In hot, sunny, humid conditions, drink plenty of water.
- f) Check your equipment for signs of damage or fatigue.
- g) Sail with a buddy.
- h) When the winds are offshore, sail no more.
- i) Cold can kill. The first time you shiver, return to shore and warm up.
- j) Always stay with your board--never try to swim ashore.

## **6. Before Launching**

- a) Double check your safety leash.
- b) Be wary of dark clouds on the horizon--storms strike fast
- c) If in doubt, don't go out.
- d) A smart sailor will always try to take the safest course of action before rescue is the only way out.

More information can be found at <http://www.rya.org.uk/startboating/Pages/Windsurf.aspx>