

Water sports and coastal activities: safety advice



Beaches and coastlines are great places to enjoy a range of water sports and other activities.

This guidance will help you take responsibility for your safety, by making sure you're prepared for the conditions and properly trained.

General safety in or on the water

All sports have their own rules, but there are some general safety tips that apply to all water activities:

- get trained - take part in any safety training needed for your sport or activity
- check the weather and tides before setting out
- wear a lifejacket - make sure it's the right one for the activity
- keep in touch - take some means of communication with you, like a mobile phone or a whistle
- tell someone where you're going and when you'll be back
- don't drink alcohol before going in or on the water
- [check UK marine weather forecasts \(Met Office\)](#)
- visit the [Royal National Lifeboat Institution \(RNLI\) site](#) for advice on choosing your lifejacket, and understanding waves, tides and currents
- make sure you understand and obey any safety flags at the beach
- pay attention to the lifeguard, if there's one on duty

 **If you see someone in difficulty:**

Don't attempt a rescue - tell a lifeguard, or dial 999/112 and ask for the coastguard.

Get the right training for your water activity

You'll need to take different safety precautions depending on which activity you're taking part in. You can get specialist advice about the training and safety gear you'll need for each activity from a professional or governing body.

You might also consider joining a local club for qualified support and advice.

Angling and fishing

Although there are no safety regulations for recreational angling, it's a good idea to have membership in an organisation like the Angling Trust. [Contact them for more details on local clubs.](#)

Canoeing and kayaking

If you're new to canoeing and kayaking, you should join a club or get training from an approved centre.

Visit [British Canoe Union](#) for clubs and centres near you, and [Paddleability](#) for information about canoeing for disabled people

Cliff climbing

It's important to have training for cliff climbing so you understand climbing techniques and how to use the right gear and safety equipment.

For advice about safety, training and where to climb, contact the [British Mountaineering Council](#).

Kite surfing

Kite surfing is an extreme sport where a kite pulls you through the water on a small surfboard.

Don't try to kite surf without proper instruction. You can get lessons at an approved school, like one run by the [British Kite Surfing Association \(BKSA\)](#).

Personal watercraft

A personal water craft (PWC) is a water vehicle that the rider sits or stands on. They are commonly known by brand names like Jet Ski, Wave Runner, or Sea Doo.

Riding a PWC can be risky if you're inexperienced or unprepared.

It's a good idea to become a member of a PWC club or organisation, as they organise training days.

The [Royal Yachting Association \(RYA\)](#) and the [Personal Watercraft Partnership](#) can give you more advice on safety, training and where to launch.

The RNLI also has a good guide on using a PWC safely.

Sailing

The national governing body for sailing is the [Royal Yachting Association \(RYA\)](#). RYA has a sailing with a disability programme called 'Sailability'.

[Information for sail or motorboat owners on GOV.UK](#)

Scuba diving

All beginner divers are recommended to enrol in a recognised training course that will lead to a scuba diving certificate.

The 4 main agencies that offer training are:

- [British Sub-Aqua Club \(BSAC\)](#)
- [Professional Association of Diving Instructors \(PADI\)](#)
- [Sub-Aqua Association \(SAA\)](#)
- [Scottish Sub-Aqua Club \(SSAC\)](#)

Surfing

[Surfing GB](#) (formerly the British Surfing Association) has a list of approved surfing schools in your area.

Water safety and life-saving training

For training in water safety and lifesaving, contact the [Royal Life Saving Society](#).

Join HM Coastguard's voluntary safety identification scheme

You can [register your pleasure craft or leisure vessel \(like a canoe or PWC\) with the coastguard](#) through the voluntary safety identification scheme (CG66).

This means that if you get into difficulty, the coastguard has information about your vessel that will help to identify you.

Further information

Find out more about fishing from the [Environment Agency](#)

Visit [GOV.UK](#) for more information on:

- using pleasure craft safely
- what to do if you find wreck material
- getting a navigational licence if you use your canoe or kayak on inland waterways