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Keine Stimmen

Planning a water activity



This article describes various water activities and explains how to plan them correctly. The safety instructions of the SLRG and Jugend und Sport are taken into account.

Important note

Water activities are very popular, especially in camps. However, even simple activities can quickly become dangerous if not properly prepared. For this reason, good preparation and a well thought-out safety concept are essential. Such water activities should also only be carried out by experienced, trained leaders (especially open water activities).

Checking the swimming ability of participants

Before a water activity, it is important to find out the swimming ability of participants. This can be done by asking the parents or, even better, through a pre-swim. One child at a time has to swim a distance of about 25 meters. This gives you the best overview of the children's ability.

Children who cannot swim well or at all must be supervised at all times!

Rules

Rules must be defined before every activity in the water. If a participant does not comply with a rule, they must leave the water immediately.

In principle, at least the bathing rules apply. These can be found here.

Lake and river rules

A few more rules apply to sea and river activities. The following rules should also be communicated:

- The life jacket is not to be taken off.
- The instructions of the leader must always be followed.
- The whistles on the lifejacket are only used in an emergency.

The SLRG river rules can also be found here.

If a participant repeatedly fails to comply with the rules, he/she must leave the water.

Visit to a supervised indoor/outdoor pool

A visit to an indoor pool requires the least preparation. Nevertheless, it is advisable to check swimming skills to find out which children require constant supervision.

Before visiting an indoor pool, it is advisable to do the following:

- Inform the indoor swimming pool about the group's visit (if possible, notify the number of children and leaders)
- If possible, visit the indoor pool beforehand

It is generally recommended to visit the indoor pool once before the group's visit in order to get an overview of the situation there. The following things should be considered:

- Where are the danger spots?
- Where is an (emergency) telephone?
- Where is there a defibrillator (usually with the lifeguard)?
- Where is the access road for the ambulance?
- Where is the pharmacy in the indoor pool (usually by the lifeguard)?
- Where are the SOS buttons?
- Where is the rescue equipment?

The pool attendant will be happy to answer any questions you may have! The document below can help you to record the above information.

When visiting the indoor pool, it is advisable to have at least one leader per 12 children with the SLRG Brevet Basis Pool training.

Tools for preparing a visit to an indoor swimming pool

Worksheet_Plus_Pool_e[1]

Visiting an unsupervised indoor/outdoor pool

When visiting an unsupervised pool, you must be aware that there is no lifeguard to assist in an emergency.

It is essential that the group has visited the pool at least once before going there. Here too, the focus should be on the following things:

- Where are there danger spots?
- Where is an (emergency) telephone?
- Where is there a defibrillator (if available)?
- Where is the access road for the ambulance?

- Where is the pharmacy (if available)?
- Where are the SOS buttons?
- Where is the rescue equipment?

The document below can help you to record these things.

When visiting an unsupervised pool, it is necessary to have at least one leader per 12 children with the SLRG Brevet Plus Pool training with the addition of BLS/AED (CPR).

Worksheet for preparation

Activities in the lake

Weather conditions

For safety reasons, all activities in a lake are only carried out in good weather. Before the start of the activity, the group leader must check what the weather will be like over the next few hours. If a bad weather front is expected, swimming in the lake should be avoided.

If the group is already in the water and a bad weather front is approaching, they should also leave the water as quickly as possible and seek shelter.

It should be noted that the weather has a significant influence on the lake. Strong winds lead to waves, currents and a rapid drop in water temperature. A lightning strike is also a deadly danger on land and in the water. In summer, the sun and heat also play a role (overheating can also occur in the water!). In sunny weather, it is therefore advisable for children to wear a hat to protect them from the sun's rays.

On most larger lakes, the storm warning service also issues warnings of impending storms. The warning is signaled with an orange flashing light.

- The caution message is an early indication of the probable occurrence of danger and is displayed by flashing 40 times a minute. Return to the shore immediately with the group.
- The storm warning announces an imminent danger and is displayed by flashing 90 times per minute. Leave the lake immediately with the group and seek shelter.

supervised sea bathing

It is necessary to do the following before visiting a seaside resort:

- Inform the lake resort of the group's visit (if possible, notify the number of children and leaders)
- Prior visit to the lake resort

It is essential to have visited the pool at least once with the group before the visit. Here too, the focus should be on the following things:

- Where are the danger spots?
- Where is an (emergency) telephone?
- Where is there a defibrillator (usually by the lifeguard)?

- Where is the access road for the ambulance?
- Where is the pharmacy in the lido (usually by the lifeguard)?
- Where are the SOS buttons?
- Where is the rescue equipment?
- Where is the bathing zone (marked with yellow buoys)?

The lifeguard will be happy to answer any questions you may have! The document below can help you record the above information.

The basic rule is: Nobody goes outside the bathing zone (marked with yellow buoys)!

Various things can be considered as danger spots. The following list should give you an idea of all the possible hazards:

- Is there an inflow/outflow to the lake in the bathing zone?
- Are there shallows?
- Are there boats in the bathing area?
- Is there a strong current in the lake?
- Are there any other dangers (e.g. diving platform)?

A lifeguard will also be happy to provide information here!

For a visit to the lake pool, it is advisable to have at least one leader with SLRG Brevet Plus Pool training and BLS/AED (CPR) for every 12 children.

Worksheet_Plus_Pool_e_02

Crossing the lake / swimming outside a bathing zone

You must be aware that if you cross the lake or swim outside the bathing zone, there is no lifeguard to assist you in an emergency. For this reason, such an activity should only be undertaken with good swimmers.

More preparation is required for this type of activity. The following things must be considered:

- Are there dangerous currents in the lake?
- Is there boat traffic in the lake?
- Are there other dangers (whirlpools, poisonous gases, ...)?
- Where are large shallows?
- Where are possible exit points?
- ...

In the case of shipping traffic in particular, it must be clarified whether the lake may be crossed at all. The lake police can provide information. For all other dangers, lifeguards from existing lakeside resorts or local swimming clubs can be consulted.

As a general rule, lake signals must be observed as they often warn of dangers!

Every lake crossing must be accompanied by at least one support boat to pick up any swimmers who are weak or injured.

The basic rule is: no lake crossing without an escort boat!

A lake crossing can only be carried out by swimming or with the aid of fins/canoes/etc. In all cases, participants and leaders must wear a life jacket. Furthermore, a pharmacy and at least one throw bag are available on the accompanying boat. If the crossing is only carried out by swimming, it is recommended that the participants wear a luminous swimming cap (e.g. yellow) to increase their visibility in the water.

For rafts with a side length of more than 2.5m, a permit must be obtained from the shipping authority for the journey on public waters if the shore zone (150m) is left.

The document below is intended to help you plan such an activity. The document is explained in more detail in the chapter "3x3 planning scheme".

For a lake crossing, at least one leader with SLRG Brevet Plus Pool training with the addition of BLS/AED (CPR) is required for every 10 children. In addition, at least one leader must have the Lake supplement.

Activities in the river

Activities in the river are by far the most dangerous and therefore require very good preparation. Such an activity should also only be planned and carried out by experienced and trained guides.

Difficulty levels of white water

Rivers are divided into six different levels of difficulty. The characteristics of these levels are listed below:

Level I (not difficult):

- regular flow
- regular waves
- no surge
- simple obstacles

Example: Reuss (Melingen-Windisch), Thur (Frauenfeld-Andelfingen), Ticino (Biasca-Bellinzona)

Level II (moderately difficult):

- free passages
- irregular current
- irregular waves
- medium surge
- weak rollers, eddies and press water
- simple obstacles in the current
- smaller stages

Example: Engelbergeraa (Grafenort-Stans), Hinterrhein (Thusis-Reichenau), Simme (Garstatt-Heidenweidli)

Level III (difficult):

- Clear passages
- irregular waves
- large surges, rollers, eddies and press water
- individual blocks
- Steps
- multiple obstacles in the current

Example: Moessa (Cama-Roveredo), Muota (Muotathal reservoir), Simme (Heidenweidli-Weissenburg)

Level IV (very difficult):

- Passages not readily recognizable
- Exploration usually necessary
- high and persistent surge
- powerful rollers, eddies and press water
- Blocks offset in current train
- higher stages with backwash

Example: Engstligen (Achseten-Frutigen), Inn (Giarsun-Ardez), Landquart (Küblis-Fideris)

Level V (extremely difficult):

- Exploration essential
- extreme surge, rollers and press water
- narrow blockages
- higher gradients with difficult entrances and exits

Example: Inn (Brailschlucht), Lonza (Riederschellen), Lütschine (Bicok section above Wilderswil)

Level VI (limit of navigability):

- generally impossible
- possibly navigable at certain water levels
- high risk

Activities on rivers up to and including white water level II are permitted under Youth and Sport.

Dangers in the river

The following dangers can occur in a river:

- River bends (baffle slope, eddy, ...)
- Eddies
- Mushrooms and intersections
- Rollers
- Natural obstacles
- Artificial obstacles
- Backwaters
- Underwashings
- High water
- Cold water (hypothermia, shock)

As a general rule, river signals must be observed as they often warn of danger!

Weather conditions

For safety reasons, all river activities are only carried out when the weather is fine and the water level is normal. Before the start of the activity, the group leader must check what the weather will be like over the next few hours. If a bad weather front is expected, the water activity must be abandoned.

If the group is already in the water and a bad weather front is approaching, they should also leave the water as quickly as possible and seek shelter.

It should be noted that the weather has a significant influence on the river. Sudden heavy rainfall can result in a rapid rise in the water level. the catchment area of the river must be taken into account. A sign of heavy rain upstream can be when the water turns an earthy brown color. A lightning strike is also a deadly danger on land and in the water. In summer, the sun and heat also play a role (overheating can also occur in the water!). In sunny weather, it is therefore advisable for children to wear a hat to protect them from the sun's rays.

Movement in the river

The following types of movement are permitted under Youth and Sport:

- Swimming
- Raft
- Inflatable dinghy
- Rubber canoe
- Open canoe
- Tubing (truck tubes)

River rafting and hydrospeed are not permitted!

For rafts with a side length of more than 2.5 m, a permit must be obtained from the Navigation Office for navigation on public waters

Equipment

During a river activity, it is important to have and use the correct equipment.

Personal equipment:

- Life jacket with collar (protection in case of unconsciousness) or rib or plate vest (no protection in case of unconsciousness)
- Swimming trunks/dress
- Rain jacket (wind protection against cooling down)
- Spare waterproof underwear (if transported on the boat)
- Old sneakers (protects against injuries to the feet)
- Sun protection
- possibly a wetsuit
- possibly a helmet (depending on the route)
- Emergency sheet
- Drinks and food

The spare clothes can also be transported on land in a car to prevent them from getting wet.

As a general rule, personal equipment must be checked before every water activity!

Group material:

- Map, river guide, compass
- First-aid kit, rescue blanket
- Signal whistle
- Throwing bag
- Dagger, folding knife (in case a rope has to be cut!)
- Cell phone (packed waterproof)
- Water activities information sheet (see below)

Leaflet_Water activities

Planning

The following points are intended to provide a brief overview of what should be considered when planning such a water activity in the river.

Requirements:

- What type of boat/raft will be used for the water activity?
- Who and how many participants are coming along?
- Which route/river will be chosen?
- What skills do the participants need to have?
- Are there any cantonal regulations?
- What equipment is available?
- What is the personal equipment like?
- How long does the activity last?
- What previous knowledge do the participants have?
- What specialist knowledge do the leaders have?
- Is an additional specialist required?

Preparation:

- Set date/excursion date
- Select river route (clarification with water maps, river guide, ...)
- Reconnoitre 1:1 (go down the river by boat, assess danger spots, determine possible places for entering and leaving the water, assess optimum water level)
- Choose an interesting route/stops
- If necessary: Register with the cantonal navigation authority
- Discuss safety concept with the leader team
- Work out an alternative program
- Obtain water level/weather report
- Make the decision to carry out/cancel the event

Instructions from Youth and Sport:

For every 12 children (Y+S) / 8 children (SLRG), at least one leader with the SLRG Brevet Plus Pool qualification with the BLS/AED (CPR) supplement is required for a water activity in the river. Furthermore, at least one leader must have the River supplement. For youth and sport, a leader with J+S 1 training with the additional water activity safety module is also required.

All boats/rafts used must be unsinkable! Furthermore, the wearing of life jackets is mandatory.

Safety concept:

- Determine exit points (mark on the map and agree meeting point)
- Obtain information shortly before the start (dangers, water conditions, ...)
- Alternatives (if the current situation is unfavorable, cancel the activity)
- Define rules of conduct (discuss before setting off)
- Connections (visual connections to the boats, contact point for uncertainties, where is the expert, where is an emergency telephone)
- Equipment (check all participants, take spare equipment with you, pack all equipment watertight)
- Emergency sheet (fill out, have ready, explain handling)
- Emergency material (take a pharmacy with you, keep a litter bag to hand)

The document below is intended to help you plan such an activity. The document is explained in more detail in the chapter "3x3 planning scheme".

Planning_a_free_water_activity_01

3x3 planning scheme

This list is intended to help you fill in the 3x3 planning scheme for planning an open water activity.

at home

Conditions:

- Current weather forecast
- Time of year
- Person of trust on site
- Temperature (water/air)
- Regulations, laws (permits)

Terrain:

- Lake/river map, terrain map, aerial photographs
- Own knowledge (reconnaissance / photos)

Group:

- How many participants are coming?
- Equipment, experience, competence, etc.
- How much experience do I have as a leader?

In the region

Conditions:

- Weather (precipitation, temperature, wind)
- Weather forecasts

Terrain:

- Is my idea correct (entry/exit points, undercutting, etc.)?
- Are the existing currents acceptable?
- Water level (open weirs)

Group:

- Who is really there (equipment, condition)?
- Motivation, group dynamics
- Personal fitness as a leader (possible illness)
- Personal responsibility

during the activity

Conditions:

- Water temperatures
- Water color
- Weather behavior
- Abort criteria

Terrain:

- What lies ahead?
- Communicate and secure exit points

Group:

- Continuously check the condition of the participants (hypothermia, malaise, tiredness, etc.)
- Motivation, condition, discipline, group dynamics

Note

This article is not a substitute for a trained leader and should not be considered complete under any circumstances. If you are unsure, consult a competent leader or do not carry out the activity.

File reference

- All worksheets are from the SLRG. With the kind permission of the SLRG (Swiss Life Saving Association)
- The latest version of these worksheets can be downloaded here.
- The leaflet on water activities comes from Jugend und Sport.

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No data available.

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