

Lifeguard skills and response techniques

Skills and knowledge required to respond in rescues



Board skills

It is important to know how to paddle a board effectively through the surf. Paddling requires balance, strength and skill.

Paddling the board

Two paddling techniques can be used to paddle a rescue board, lying stomach down paddling with alternate arms, or kneeling on the board using both arms simultaneously.

46 Paddling lying down

- Arms should dive well into the water, not slap down.
- Arms should dive as deep as possible into the water.
- Hands and arms should pull straight down the side of the board.
- Elbow should be high during recovery, with arms along the side of the board.

47 Paddling on knees

- Knees and feet should be placed as wide as possible, to form a stable base of support on the four points.
- Position yourself on the middle of the board to create a plane. The nose of the board should not be too high or low.
- Minimal bouncing of the board when taking the stroke will reduce speed loss.
- Reach as far forward as possible without losing balance to take the stroke.
- Drive arms into the water as deep as possible.
- Fully extend trunk and spine.
- Pull and accelerate hands along the side of the board.

Positioning on the board

The position you take on the board depends on what you are doing. When attempting to catch a wave, your weight may need to be near the front or middle of the board to help you go down its face. Once the wave is caught, having your weight at the back prevents the nose of the board diving under the water. When paddling in still water, having your weight near the middle allows the board to glide through the water more efficiently and effectively.

48 Bunny-hopping

Bunny-hopping is used to travel through shallow water quickly.

- Put your hands on either side of the board.
- Jump with both feet pushing the board forward and putting weight on your arms.
- Land with your inside foot fractionally before the outside foot, pushing off one and then the other.
- Lift legs as high as possible out of the water to prevent drag putting weight on arms, to maximise glide.

49 Eskimo roll

The Eskimo roll is used to avoid large broken waves.

- Approach the wave with speed.
- Before the whitewash hits, grab both straps and roll upside down.
- Keep body vertical under the water because it acts as an anchor.
- Drive the nose of the board into the wave and down, as it hits the white water.
- Roll back onto the board once the wave has passed.



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50 Catching waves

- Paddle and get some speed up.
- Catch the wave while it is still green.
- Keep your weight forward on the board to make the tail lift.
- Once the wave is caught, move to the back of the board by putting your hands on the rails and sliding back.

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51 Board rescue of conscious patient

To successfully complete a board rescue of a conscious patient, the following steps are recommended:

- Stop close to the patient on the shore side.
- Straddle the board towards the stern and tell the patient to take hold of the hand grips.
- Grab the patient's nearest leg, and pull him or her onto the board.
- Help the patient get onto the board in a balanced position.
- Lie on top of the patient's legs and paddle.

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52 Board rescue of unconscious patient

Rescuing an unconscious patient using a board can be quite demanding for a lifeguard. This skill should be practiced regularly in various conditions.

- Locate patient and approach carefully on the shore side.
- Flip the board upside down and grasp the patient's hand, pulling the wrist onto the far side of the board.
- While holding the patient's wrist, reach over to the far side of the board with your free hand.
- Roll the board by pulling the far side over. The patient will end up lying face down across the board.
- Remount the board and straddle the stern.
- Align the patient on the board in a balanced position.
- Lie on top of the patient's legs and paddle.