

The SEA and SAFETY:

The UK is surrounded by water. The sea can be great fun, but it also holds many dangers. So you need to treat it with respect. There are a few basic safety rules to remember.

Contact the RNLI (Royal National Lifeboat Institution) for more information about water safety. Their website is at www.rnli.org.uk

If you see someone in difficulty in the water, shout for a lifeguard or phone either 999 or 112. Ask for the coastguard or lifeboat.

The general rules for swimming from a beach are as follows:

- Don't go into water any deeper than chest height unless you can swim well.
- Remember that beaches can have uneven bottoms.
- Realise that a single wave can lift you off your feet and then take you away.
- Any beach near a river will have a strong underwater current.
- No child should be in the water without supervision by an adult who can swim well.
- Children's inflatable arm-bands and rings and air mattresses are not really suitable for use in the sea because they can give a child the confidence to go out of their depth and be swept away.
- Look at the safety signs.
- Ask a lifeguard for advice.
- Get a friend to swim with you.
- Don't swim if you're too tired, too hot, if you've been drinking or your stomach is full.
- Never leap into water unless you are totally sure that it is safe to do so.
- Wear some footwear on very hot days, as some fish which can cause injury lie in the sand.
- The other main danger in UK waters is from jelly-fish. They are best avoided!
- There is only one recorded shark attack in UK waters, at Poole Harbour in the 1930s. It bit off a swimmer's leg.
- Put your hand in the air and shout for help if in difficulty (if you still have a hand!)

What the flag systems mean:

- Red and yellow flags show areas patrolled by lifeguards. Swim or use a body board only between the flags.
- Black and white flags show areas for the use of water craft, including surfers. Do not swim between these flags.
- Red flags mean danger. Do not go in the water.
- Orange windsocks mean the winds are dangerous. Do not take an inflatable toy or mattress into the water.

Make sure you are aware of what the tide is doing if you are on the beach. On some beaches the tide can come in very quickly (faster than a racehorse can run). Usually there are 2 high-tides and 2 low-tides every 25 or 26 hours. You can buy a book of tide times for the whole year in bookshops for about £1.