



# *Swim to Survive*™

Important life skills children  
and teens need to know





### **Skill Development:**

- Core essential self-rescue skills are taught to everyone (roll entry, tread water and 50m swim)
- Everyone tries the Challenge Items in a way that suits their swimming skill and comfort levels (ie. With or without a lifejacket)
- Everyone attempts the Canadian Swim to Survive Standard with or without their lifejacket on (student decides)

### **Safety Awareness:**

- Having the experience that you'll know what to do if you fell into water unexpectedly is important
- Knowing why you need to wear your lifejacket is an important first step, knowing how to choose a properly fitting lifejacket is the next
- Get wet, hands on Water Smart activities are woven into class time. Important safety messages are learned

### **Fitness Opportunities:**

- Core skills are practiced often with the goal to develop fitness
- Kicking drills using interval training techniques (kick boards or lifejackets used to support students)
- Sculling (treading water) during cooperative games in deep water (less skilled students can opt to using a lifejacket)
- Challenge items can include: Aquacise or Obstacle courses/work stations



## Getting Results

*"I learned (how) to keep myself alive"*

*"I was challenged to do my best & even more"*

*"It was just what swimming should be"*

*"I am convinced this is the 'wave' of the future."*





## *Session Overview*

- The Drowning Picture
- Solutions from the Lifesaving Society
- Swim to Survive
- Success Stories
- In your community





**The Lifesaving Society saves lives, enhances quality of life and empowers communities.**

The Lifesaving Society is the **expert** in lifeguarding and water rescue. We share our expertise openly. With over 100 years of experience, the Lifesaving Society actively participates internationally, representing Canada in the International Life Saving Federation and the Royal Life Saving Society Commonwealth.

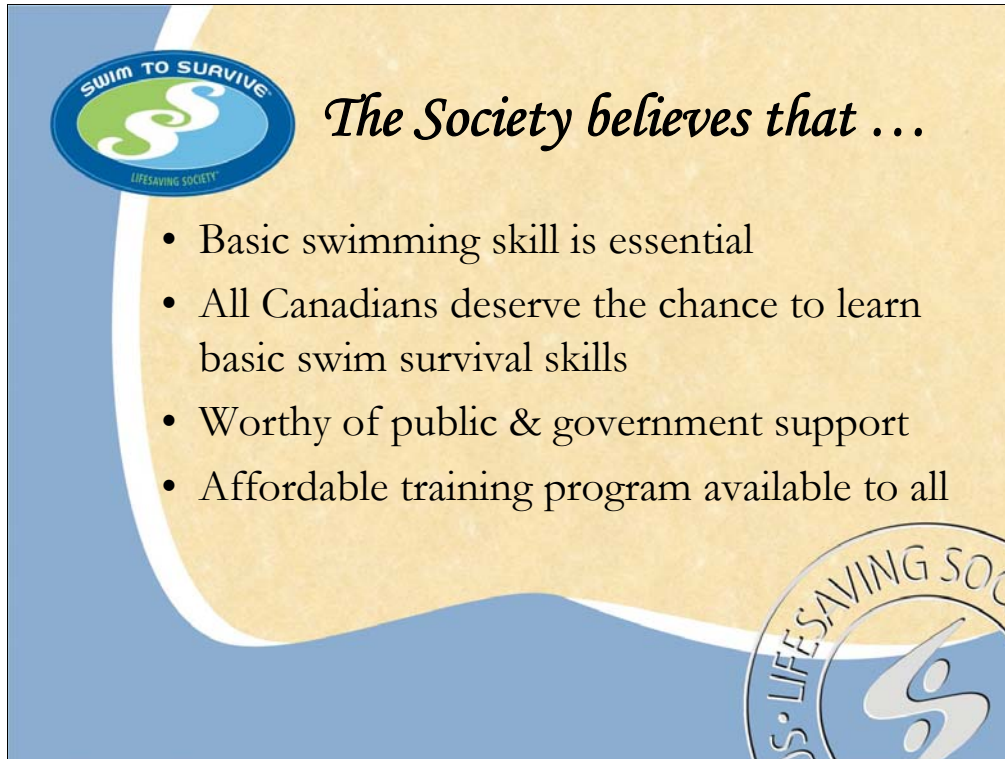
The Lifesaving Society is the **authority** in lifesaving standards, education, and rescue. Our safety standards influence government regulations to which the industries adhere. The Society's National Lifeguard (NLS) certification is the standard for lifeguarding in Canada and is a model for lifeguarding education internationally.

The Lifesaving Society is the **leader** in research and prevention of drowning and injury. Our comprehensive research enables us to provide timely response to the ever changing needs of the community.

The Lifesaving Society is an **advocate** for aquatic fitness and healthy living. Our programs encourage active living and leading a healthy lifestyle. Our newest program, Lifesaving Fitness, is in its piloting stages and it works in partnership with Alberta Community Development's Live Outside the Box campaign. The Society sees the long term benefits of an active, fit community and strives to support it through education and programming.

The Lifesaving Society is a **promoter** of lifesaving sport. We are unique in that our organization has a humanitarian focus and mission.





2000 – Lifesaving Society established the Canadian Swim to Survive Standard

Society experts meet to analyze drowning and water-related injury statistics. They conclude that a vast majority of the drowning could have been avoided if victims knew three essential self rescue skills: Roll into deep water, tread water (1 min.) and Swim 50m.

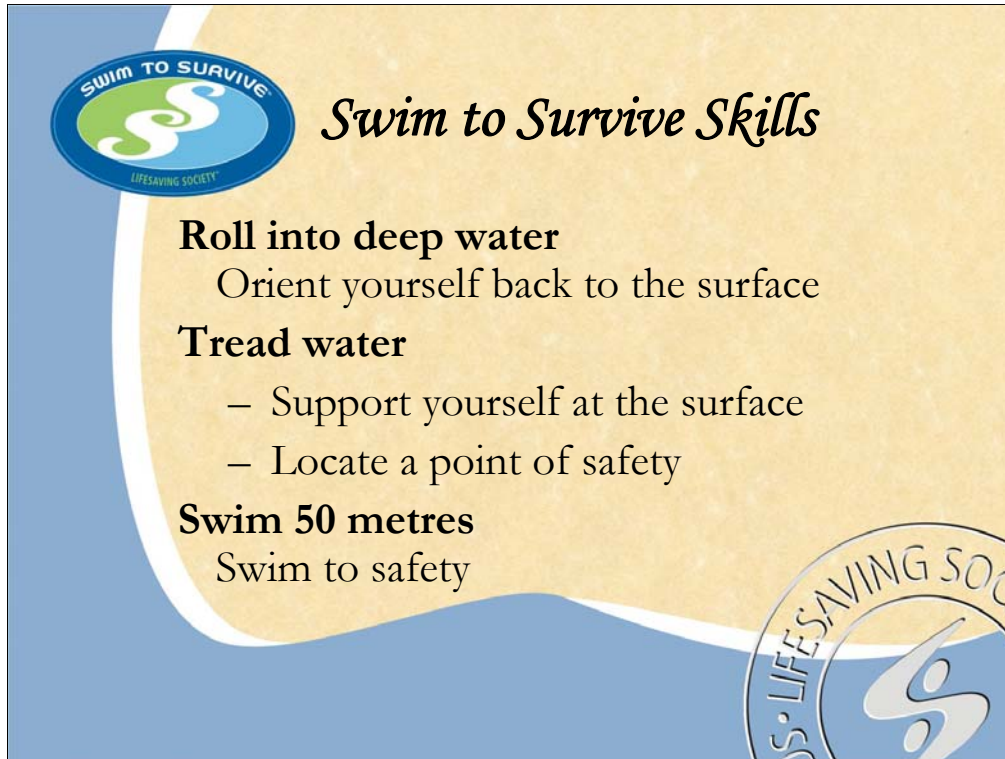
#### **Lifesaving Society Position Statement**

- Acquisition of basic swimming ability is a fundamental requirement in any meaningful attempt to eliminate drowning in Canada.
- All Canadian children deserve the chance to learn basic swim survival skills.
- The acquisition of basic swim survival skills by Canadian children is worthy of public and government support.
- Affordable training should be available for all children to the level of the *Canadian Swim to Survive Standard*.



*Let me show you what is taught*





When performed as a continuous sequence the swim to survive skills meet the Canadian Swim to Survive Standard

**Skill: Roll into deep water**

**Purpose:** Orient yourself at the surface after an unexpected entry

**Rationale:** During a fall into the water, the person is usually disoriented by the rolling or tumbling entry. He must be able to get his head above the surface and avoid breathing water.

**Skill: Tread Water**

**Purpose:** Support yourself at the surface

**Rationale:** Canadian waters are cold enough to trigger cold shock as a result of immersion in the water. The person's initial response to cold shock is uncontrolled gasping. If the person is underwater during the cold shock response, he will breathe water and probably drown. The ability to tread water allows the victim to protect his airway while waiting to regain conscious control of his breathing. Treading water also allows him to look around and decide how to get to a point of safety.

**Skill: Swim 50 metres**

**Purpose:** Swim to safety

**Rationale:** The Lifesaving Society's research shows that most drownings occur only 3 to 15 metres away from a point of safety such as a pool edge, dock or the shore. The person must be able to swim to safety while retaining the ability to control his breathing. Because the person's ability may be impaired by cold or clothing, the Society uses a 50 metre distance as a testing standard.



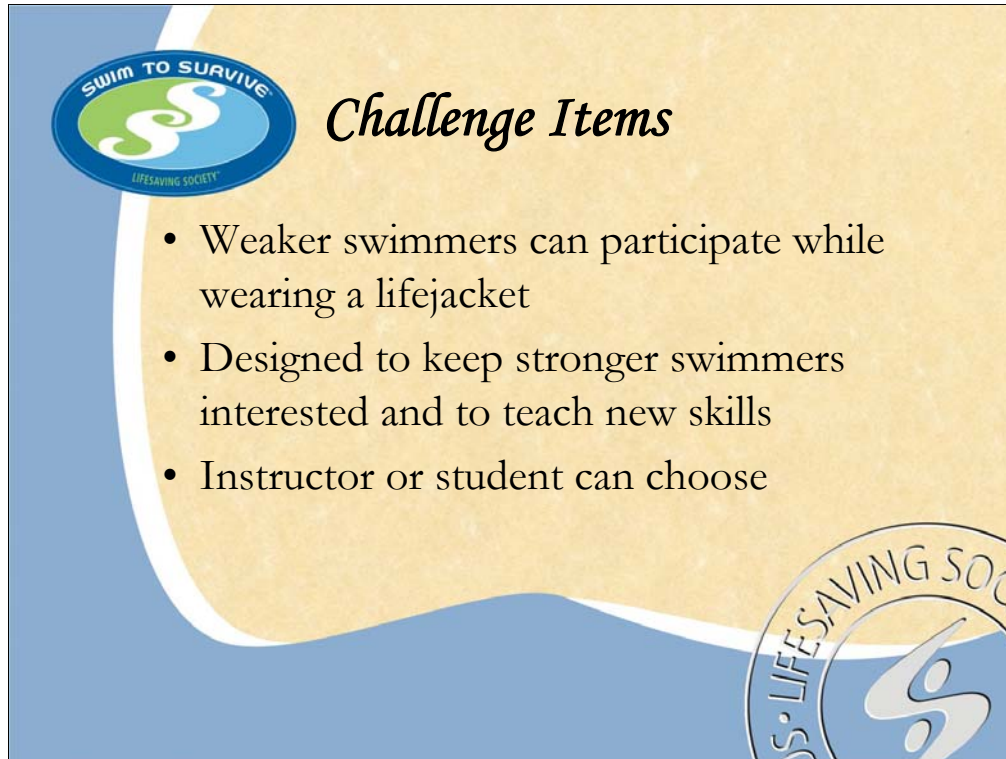


At the beginning all students focus on developing Swim to Survive skills and making the connection to the effects of cold water during an emergency.

Core survival skills are presented in a manner that interest most students (swimmers and non-swimmers alike). Students willingly working on basic skills (i.e. kicking, sculling) especially when presented in a style that promotes fun (friendly competition, cooperative games, fitness).

A key component of the teaching strategy is a problem solving approach to help the learner find an effective solution. Any movement that effectively moves the student towards a safe outcome achieves the standard. There is no single, “right” solution.

Weak or non-swimmers can meet the Canadian Swim to Survive Standard with “dog paddle” or just kicking on their back to safety.



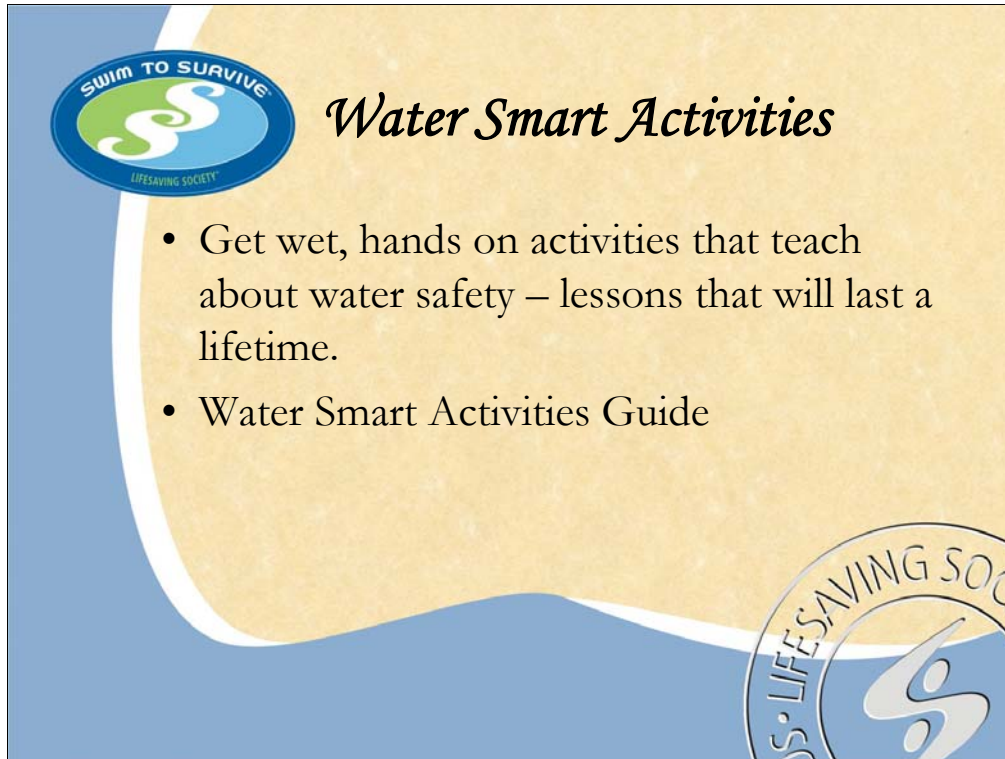
Once stronger swimmers demonstrate that they can do Swim to Survive skills, they then focus on Challenge Items that engage their interest and teach them new skills. Weaker students can participate while wearing a lifejacket.

Students respond well to “swimming is not just about learning strokes”. The emphasis is on participation and having a positive experience.

#### **After the students can perform the standard, what can you do to add more challenge?**

Some students will complete the standard before the end of the lesson set (e.g. lesson 3 of an 5 lesson set). Instructors should be prepared to keep challenging these students to become more efficient, by increasing the level of difficulty or by working on skills in preparation for entry into other swimming lessons. Examples include:

- Water Smart activities
- Different kinds of entries: shallow or deep dives, stride, enter from a height (eg. 1 m diving board)
- Swim to Survive skills with clothes on (t-shirt and shorts)
- Treading water: for a longer time, arms only, legs only, carry a weight; play a cooperative game
- Longer swim: 75 m, 100 m
- Underwater swims, retrieve an object off the bottom of the deep end
- Fitness workouts with basic skill drills
- Basic synchronized swimming skills
- Aquacise activities
- Front or Back Crawl progressions (if requested by students)
- Breaststroke or Elementary Backstroke progressions (if requested by students)



Pair the Swim to Survive lessons with a Water Smart education component. Any component that includes Water Safety must be interactive in nature to get the message across properly. With this in mind Swim to Survive becomes highly effective in teaching about risk assessment and making safe choices that prevent life threatening injury.

The *Water Smart Activities Guide* is full of various hands on activities aimed at teaching people to make better, safer choices when in, on and around water and ice.

All 47 activities in the Guide are interactive - wet fun for every family member. These activities are presented in five themes: General Safe Behaviour; Swimming in Open Water; Safe Fishing and Boating; Ice Safety and Cold Weather; and Water Rescue.

These activities follow an experiential model of learning (Demonstrate, Discuss, Do), giving people clear experiences that reinforce "why" they should make safe choices in the future.

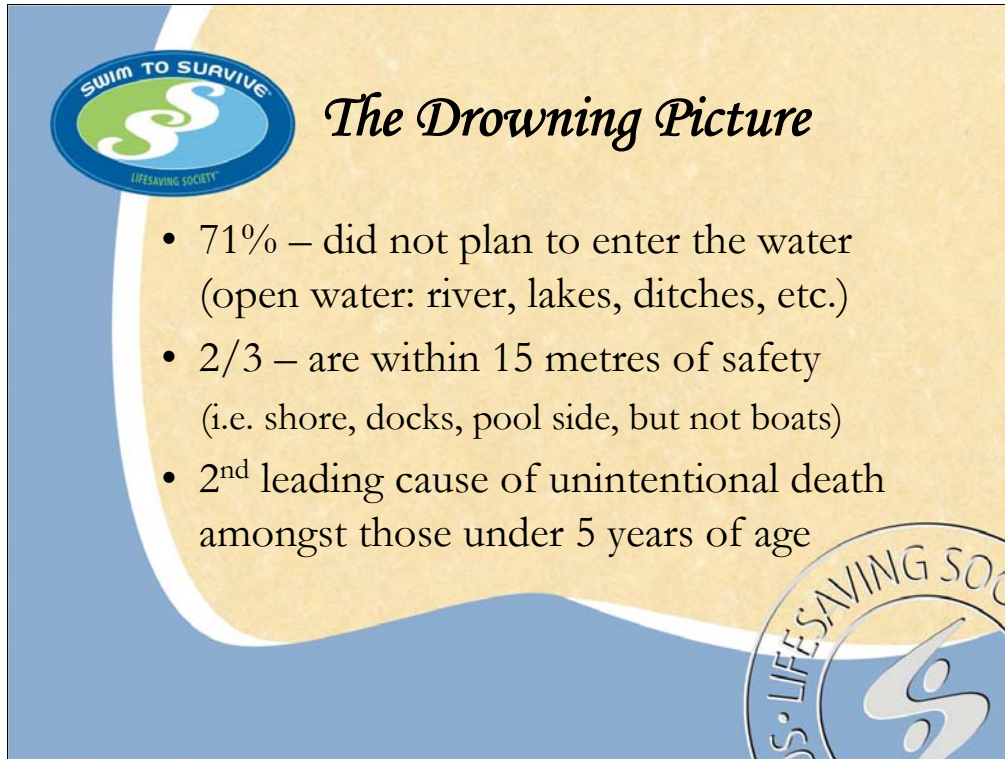
The *Water Smart Activities Guide* provides clear, concise Water Smart messages, derived from the Lifesaving Society's drowning research. These Water Smart messages have been developed specifically to change behaviour, written in a way that people will remember. These messages focus on the need to change behaviour, which is different than just creating awareness or providing information.

The *Water Smart Activities Guide* provides planning guidelines to help you reach out to your school community and make a Water Smart statement by hosting a Water Smart event. Most activities can be modified and used as part of a physical education class session.



*Let me show you why  
this is important*





Lifesaving Society research shows that most drownings occur close to safety. Year after year, the majority of people who drown have no intention of going into the water. Immersion is sudden, unexpected and often silent. They did not have the necessary self rescue skills to survive the incident.

### The drowning picture:

After 14 years of comprehensive drowning research in Alberta and across Canada, the Lifesaving Society has concluded the following:


- 71 % of drowning victims did not plan to enter the water. (open water: river, lakes, ditches, etc.)
- 2/3 of drowning victims are within 15 metres of safety. (i.e. shore, docks, pool side, but not boats)
- Drowning is the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of unintentional death amongst those under 5 years of age.

### Looking at the Alberta picture:

Over a ten year period (1994-2003) 354 people drowned in Alberta.


- 251 drowning victims within Alberta did not plan to enter the water.
- 269 drowning victims within Alberta are within 15 metres of safety.
- Drowning within child age groups: 28 children aged 0-4 years and 54 children aged 5-17 years





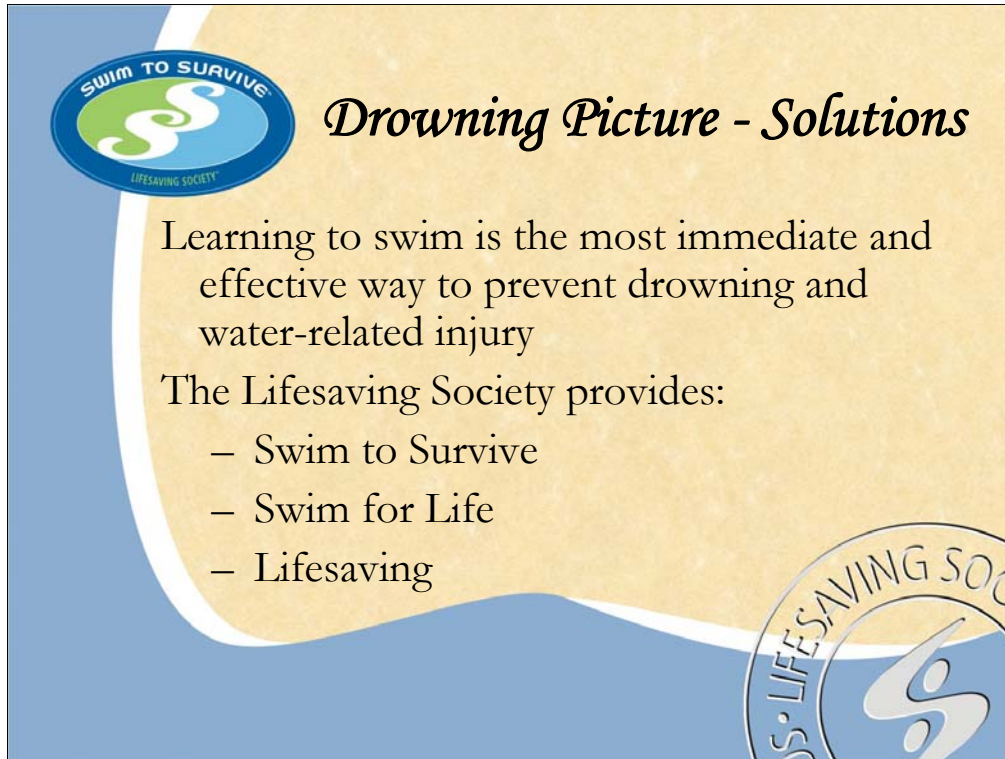
## *Drowning Problem Contributing Factors*

- Lack the simple skills needed to survive
- Disorientation – creates panic / confusion
- Cold Shock – an involuntary gasping for breath reflex
- Swimming failure – a gradual reduction of skill
- Conditions = greater challenges



### Contributing factors to the drowning problem

- Most drowning victims did not have the simple skills necessary to survive a fall into deep water.
- Falls into the water will disorientate the victims and threatens normal breathing.
- Sudden entry into Canadian waters causes Cold Shock, an involuntary gasping reflex caused by skin contact with cold water (response peaks at 10-15°C temperatures).
- Cold water causes 'swimming failure' a gradual reduction of skill due the affects on neuromuscular control in limbs.
- Weather/water conditions and wearing clothing creates greater challenges that the victim must overcome.



The Society is committed to providing Canadians with the opportunity to achieve a minimum swimming ability as a life skill for survival. The Society defines this minimum in its Canadian Swim to Survive Standard, promotes it with the Swim to Survive Challenge and teaches those minimum swimming skills in the Swim to Survive Program. The Society has embedded this standard into the Society's swim program, Swim for Life.

### **Swim to Survive Program**

The Swim to Survive Program teaches the essential self-rescue skills contained within the Canadian Swim to Survive Standard. The program was designed to teach non-swimmers and weak swimmers to achieve these critical self-rescue skills within the shortest time possible. Swim to Survive is ideal for groups that need a simple program option, have limited time or budget or contains diverse skill levels within their group. Making the program very accessible and affordable for all Canadians.

### **Swim to Survive Challenge**

The Lifesaving Society's Swim to Survive Challenge asks, "Can you pass the Lifesaving Society's Swim to Survive Standard?" Youth and school groups, service organizations and swimming pools can host the challenge to encourage their community members to learn these valuable self-rescue skills.

### **Lifesaving Society Swim Program – Swim for Life**

It is recognized that there is a wide range of aquatic training well beyond Swim to Survive. The Canadian Swim to Survive Standard forms the basis of the Society's preschool program – L'il Tots and L'il Swimmers. The standard is integral part of the Swimmer program for school aged children and adults alike. To learn more about this program go to: [www.lifesaving.org/swimforlife](http://www.lifesaving.org/swimforlife).



*The story behind the success*





## *Swim to Survive Standard*

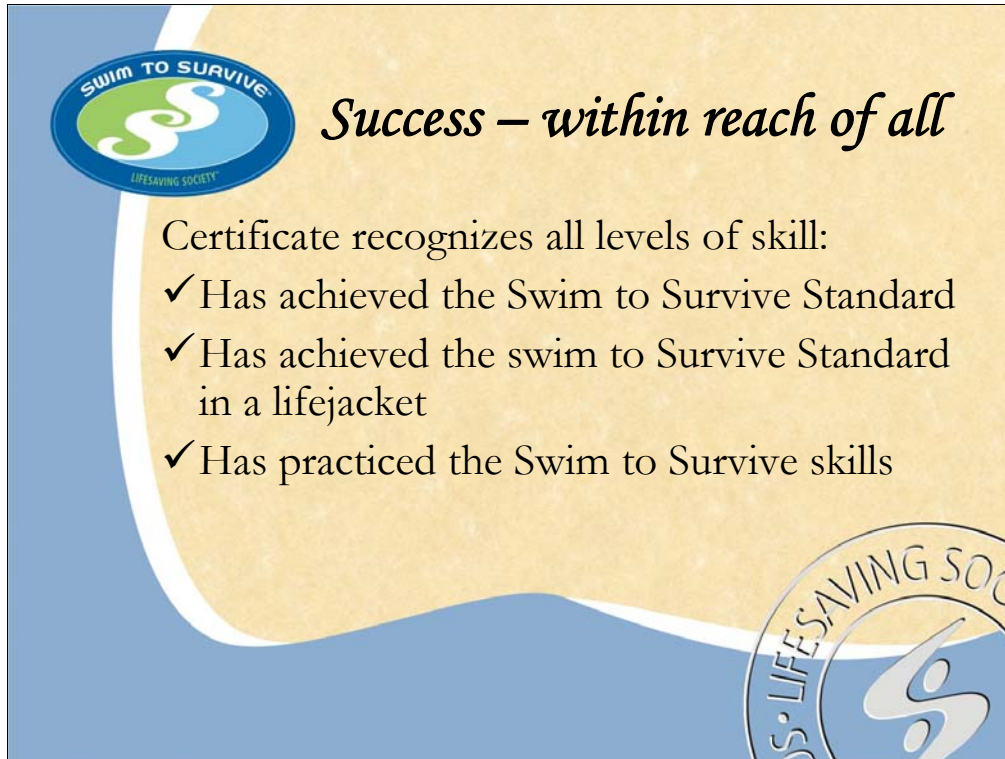
Any method that allows the learner to achieve the standard is acceptable – there is no “right” solution.

**ROLL** into deep water  
+ **TREAD** water (1 min.)  
+ **SWIM** 50m



Canadian Swim to Survive Standard = **ROLL** into deep water + **TREAD** water (1 min.) + **SWIM** 50m

*Any method that allows the learner to achieve the standard is acceptable – there is no “right” solution*



The standard for successful performance is within reach of all students.

**Canadian Swim to Survive Standard = ROLL into deep water + TREAD water (1 min.) + SWIM 50m**

*Any method that allows the learner to achieve the standard is acceptable – there is no “right” way to meet the standard, just as long as it gets them to safety.*

It is realistic that the majority of participants will achieve the identified basic swim skills within 3-5 classes. Success is not just measured by pass rates. Even those children, who do not meet the Canadian Swim to Survive Standard, will finish the program with increased swimming skills and will have learned a very valuable lesson around the importance in using a PFD when playing in, on or around water and ice.

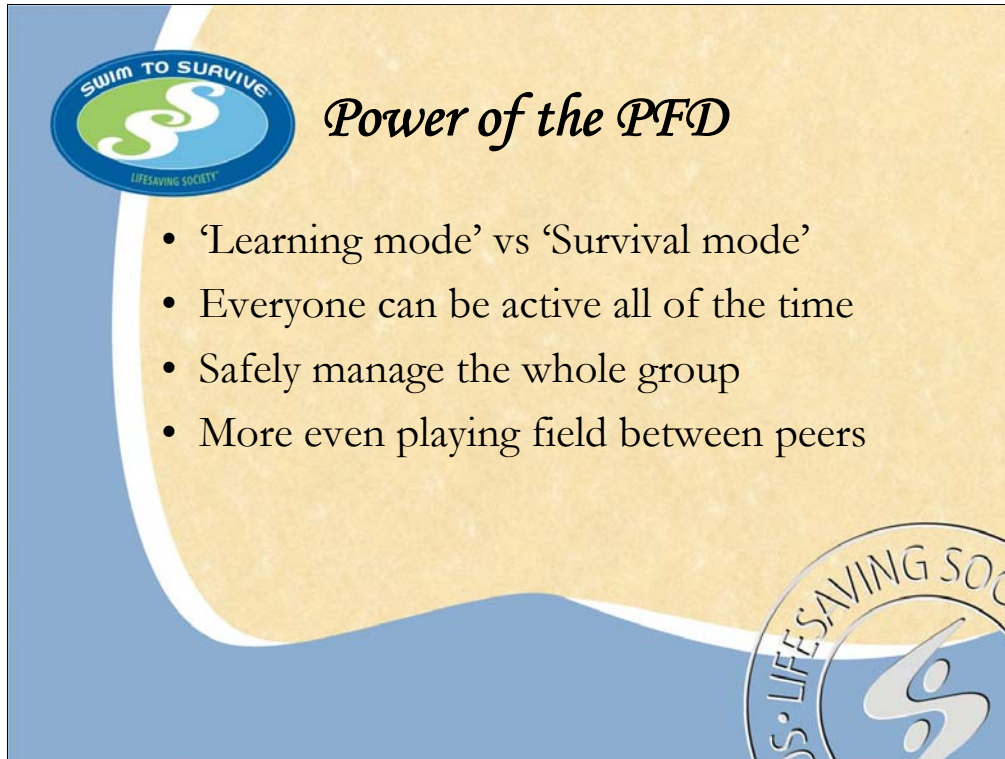
**The certificate that they receive recognizes the three possible outcomes of Swim to Survive:**

- ✓ Has achieved the Swim to Survive Standard
- ✓ Has achieved the swim to Survive Standard in a lifejacket
- ✓ Has practiced the Swim to Survive skills

**Other reward items can include:**

- ✓ Glow in the dark wristbands
- ✓ Sticker – using the full logo
- ✓ Awareness ribbons





### **Lifejackets or PFDs make for powerful teaching aids**

Provide support with floatation devices. lifejackets supports the student while they are learning something new, this puts them into a 'learning mode', rather than 'survival mode' where they are more focused on trying to breath than to learn.

- Weak or non-swimmers build confidence and swimming skills to the point where they are ready to swim with out the extra support
- Swimmers will find learning and practicing more complicated skills such as whip kick easier. The PFD supports the learner and allows him to keep his hands and feet free to experiment with methods for propulsion and support

**Floatation devices also keeps the whole group safe, when participants have a wide variety of skill level**

- easier to keep all students moving and learning, quickly developing endurance
- When every one wears one, it puts every student on a more even playing field. Having the additional floatation support allow weaker swimmers to participate equally with their peers. No one misses out on group activities based on their limited skill levels.

**A variety of floatation devices can be used:**

- PFD or lifejacket
- Floatation belts, such as AquaJoggers
- Flutterboards
- Pool noodles



1. Students respond well to “swimming is not just about learning strokes”.
2. They respond well to the Swim to Survive core survival skill message, willingly working on basic skills (i.e. kicking, sculling) especially when presented in a style that promotes fun (friendly competition, cooperative games, fitness).
3. The stronger their skill level, the more interested they are in challenge items such as entries, synchro, water polo, underwater swims, fitness workouts.
4. The use of buoyant supports such as lifejackets and AquaJoggers succeed in putting students on an even playing field. Having the additional floatation support allow weaker swimmers to participate equally with their peers. No one misses out on group activities based on their limited skill levels.



## *Student Feedback Weak or Non-Swimmer*

- *"I feel more comfortable in water and (am) able to move in the water"*
- *"Now I know what to do when I am in trouble in (the) water"*
- *"I'm a better swimmer, and (I) know what to do in a scary situation"*



- *"I now know how to be calm if I fell off a boat."*
- *"I learned how to handle a situation when I am in water and I need help"*
- *"... realizing that I must get better (at swimming)."*
- *"I can swim a lot better without asking for help."*
- *"A very fun time for me."*
- *"I learned (how) to keep myself alive"*




## Student Feedback 'Swimmer'

- *"I am a more confident swimmer"*
- *"This is the first time in years (that) I have gone swimming. If something happened I would be all right"*
- *"Boy, I'm going to be more careful next time I'm at the lake, I didn't realize the danger"*




- *"Getting back into the swimming groove!"*
- *"I was challenged to do my best and even more"*
- *"It was just what swimming should be"*
- *"I learned new ways to swim"*
- *"I am a better swimmer"*
- *"Excellent – important stuff was learned"*



**Bonus:**  
*Meets Parent Expectations*

- Critical self rescue skills they need to be safe in, on and around water.
- Swimming skills and strokes so they can become better swimmers.
- Knowing how to make safe choices when in, on or near water.



Time and again parents have stated that their reasons for putting their children into swimming lessons are:

- To learn safety skills
- To learn safety awareness

Swim to Survive delivers on these expectations


- Critical self rescue skills they need to be safe in, on and around water.
- Swimming skills and strokes so they can become better swimmers.
- Knowing how to make safe choices when in, on or near water.





*"I get it – What do I need to do next?"*






*Swim to Survive for your school*

**Give each student a swimming experience that will last a lifetime!**

- 3 x thirty minute classes
- Meets tightest timelines and budgets
- Teacher led or swim instructor led
- Ask for it at your local pool



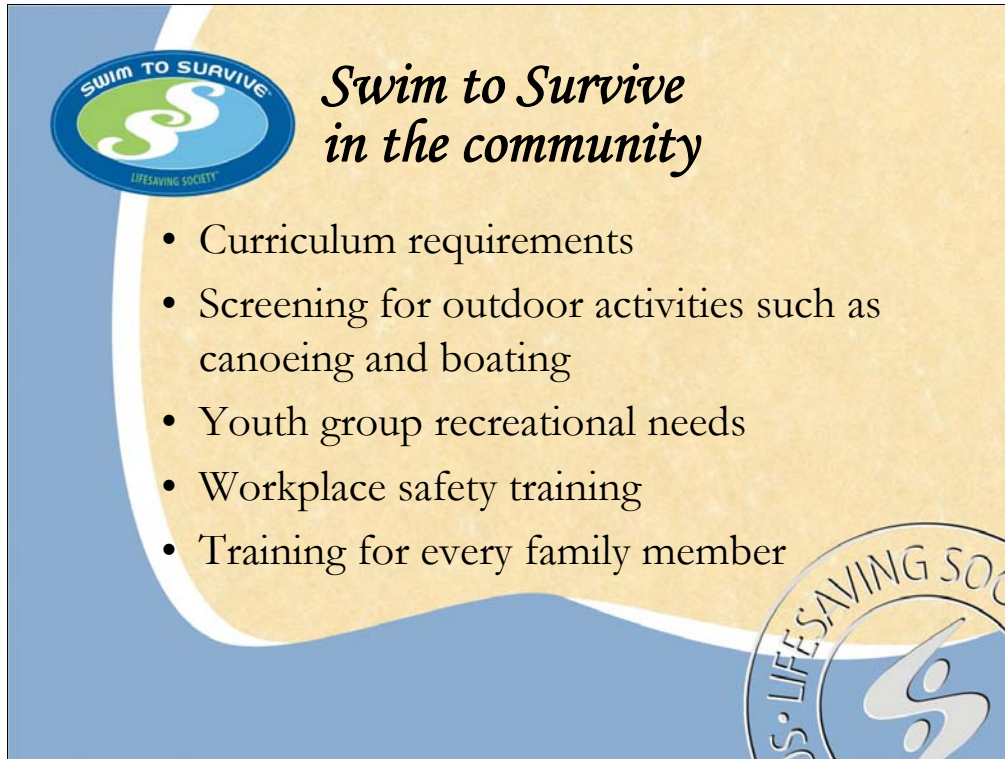
Most people can learn the Swim to Survive skills in just 3 thirty minutes classes Swim to Survive is ideal for groups that need a simple program option, have limited time or budget or contains diverse skill levels within their group.

### **Designed to meet the tightest timelines and budgets**

The Swim to Survive Program is designed to teach three critical self-rescue swimming skills within the shortest time possible. This makes this program both viable and cost-effective with groups and individuals with limited budgets and time. A perfect fit for school boards and organizations servicing marginalized groups such as new immigrants, aboriginal peoples and low income families, all of which may not be able to afford or have access to traditional learn to swim programs.

### **Teacher led or Swim Instructor led**

The Society has taken the unprecedented position that any teacher, swimming instructor or recreation leader can teach this program. We can do this because Swim to Survive only teaches basic skill movements with the extensive use of lifejackets as teaching tools. Leaders do not need extensive training or specialized certification to be successful in teaching the program. This action will greatly increase access by Albertan's and Northerners' to learning the skills taught in Swim to Survive.



Besides school programming you can use Swim to Survive with:

- Safety preparation for groups intending to take part in water based outdoor activities, i.e. canoe trip or rafting. (i.e. Scouts/Guides, High School students, rowing club)
- Youth Groups, i.e. Church, Cadet, Boys and Girls Clubs and other leadership groups
- Summer Day Camps organized by Parks and Recreation
- The Swim to Survive Standard can be used as your "test" to get access to the deep end
- Employers as a workplace safety training
- Piggy backed on a special event, i.e. National Drowning Prevention Week or pool party

Groups wanting to use Swim to Survive have two options:

1. Become an Affiliate of the Society and run the program themselves (NB: Need to ensure that you have safety systems in place)
2. Contact your local swimming pools and have their staff run Swim to Survive for your group.



*All Canadians deserve the chance  
to learn basic swim survival skills.*

