ADVENTURE ACTIVITY GUIDELINES

# WATER SKIING

Schools must follow the Department’s Excursion Policy and Guidelines and the requirements outlined in this document when planning, conducting and approving adventure activities.

These guidelines are for developing risk management plans specific to the location, activity and group participating. They are not intended to be used as a training manual. Staff instructing the activity must have sufficient knowledge/expertise in the activity.

These guidelines apply to water skiing and any activities where students are in a craft designed to be towed by a power boat (e.g. knee boarding and wakeboarding), except in rescue situations.

Jet skis must not be used to tow students – unless they have been specifically designed for this purpose. Water skiing is an activity with a high rate of injury in comparison to other water-based recreational activities and should only be offered by staff experienced in its instruction.

If an overnight camping component is planned, please also refer to Camping guidelines.

## VENUE Definitions

[Transport Safety Victoria – Maritime Safety](https://transportsafety.vic.gov.au/maritime-safety) provides the following definitions of waterways in Victoria to provide guidance for minimum safety equipment and preparation:

**Inland waters** – rivers (inside the seaward entrance), creeks, canals, lakes, reservoirs and any similar waters either naturally formed or man-made and which are either publicly or privately owned but does not include any navigable rivers, creeks or streams within declared port waters.

**Enclosed waters** – any declared port waters inside the seaward entrance. See [Victorian Recreational Boating Safety Handbook](http://transportsafety.vic.gov.au/maritime-safety/recreational-vessel-operators/powerboat/victorian-recreational-boating-safety-handbook) for all listed port waters.

**Coastal inshore waters** – include all beaches with direct access to ocean waters, any beach exposed to ocean swell, and any beach that is exposed to currents, rips, strong winds or surf. This may include enclosed waterways at times with these features.

**Coastal offshore** – all waters greater than two nautical miles from the coast.

Where possible, programs taking place at coastal waterways should be conducted at patrolled beaches. Staff may find [Beachsafe.org.au](https://beachsafe.org.au/) a useful reference when planning activities in coastal waterways.

## Staffing definitions

**Staff** – any adult approved by the principal who provides supervisory, instructional or educational elements of the activity or excursion. See Excursions Guidelines: Staffing for further details.

**Teacher** – a staff member registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching who provides a supervisory role on a program.

The following roles can be filled by school staff, a teacher or an external provider, or a volunteer (See [Volunteers in Schools](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/volunteers/policy) policy).

**Designated Instructor** – the appointed staff member on a program who provides the lead technical expertise and supervision for the activity.

**Instructor** – a staff member who provides professional, technical expertise and supervision for the activity.

**Assistant Instructor** – a staff member who provides assistance to the instructor(s) in the provision of technical expertise and supervision for the activity. An assistant instructor role may be filled by a volunteer (See: Volunteers in Schools Policy).

## Student preparAtion and skills

Planning for activities should begin with an assessment of each student’s current knowledge, skills and experience in sailing and in water environments (including their swimming abilities).

Students can be classified as either:

* **Beginner swimmers**

Students with little or no experience including in shallow water.

* **Intermediate swimmers**

Students with basic skills, able to swim 25 metres with a recognisable stroke.

* **Advanced swimmers**

Students able to swim 50 to 100 metres using two recognisable strokes and to demonstrate one survival stroke in deep water.

Schools must consider the swimming competency of students in particular water environments when deciding on the venue, staff-student ratio, risk management plan and emergency response plan.

The assessment of students’ current knowledge, skills and experience in the activity should be documented using [Documentation of Participant Preparation, Prerequisite Skills/Knowledge​ ​ (doc - 139kb)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/principals/safety/participrep.doc).

The instructor should ascertain the previous experience of each student.

Instructional staff must brief students on:

* equipment, clothing and footwear that is suitable for the activity and location
* safety measures appropriate identify and control any reasonably foreseeable risks associated with water skiing and with the water environment
* minimal environmental impact techniques relevant to the activity location
* historical and cultural considerations relevant to the activity and location
* activity scope and boundaries
* communication and communication signals
* float and swimming methods
* relevant water skiing terminology.

## Equipment

All equipment used must be in sound condition, suitable for the activity and must meet applicable industry safety standards.

##### Boats

Boats must conform to the standards required by [Transport Safety Victoria](http://www.marinesafety.vic.gov.au/) as described in the current [Recreational Boating Safety Handbook](https://transportsafety.vic.gov.au/maritime-safety/recreational-vessel-operators/powerboat/victorian-recreational-boating-safety-handbook). Where a training bar is used for beginners it should be attached to the operator’s side of the boat.

If more than one boat is to be used, each boat must be allocated a specific area in which to operate and boats must maintain suitable communication at all times.

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##### Life Jackets

In all waters, skiers must wear a securely fitted Australian Standard Type 2.

Occupants in the tow boat or other craft must wear an Australian Standard Type 1 or Type 2. For more information, see [Life jacket laws](http://www.wearalifejacket.vic.gov.au/lifejacket-laws).

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##### Skis

Skis must be well maintained and suited to the individual students.

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##### Tow ropes and handles

Tow ropes and handles should be brightly coloured for visibility and should be checked before each use. Ropes and handles must float.

## Clothing

Before and after the activity, students need to protect themselves from the sun with sunscreen, a shirt and hat, and cold and wet weather with a towel and change of clothing, including a jumper, long pants and jacket. Sun protection clothing should be handy to students when they leave the water.

## Experience and qualifications

Staff instructing the activity should have sufficient knowledge and experience of the activity and the activity environment to operate in all reasonably foreseeable conditions.

The designated instructor/s must have one of the following:

* Level 1 [Australian Water ski and Wakeboard Federation](http://www.awwf.com.au/) Water Skiing coaching qualification
* equivalent documented training and experience from another training provider or education institution
* equivalent documented experience in lieu of certification/accreditation.

In addition, at least one staff member must hold a current version of one of the following:

* AUSTSWIM Teacher of Swimming and Water Safety Certificate
* Inland waterway Life Saving Certificate
* Royal Life Saving Society Bronze Medallion
* Royal Life Saving Society Pool Lifeguard Certificate
* Surf Life Saving Australia Surf Bronze Medallion
* Surf Life Saving Australia Surf Rescue Certificate
* Life Saving Victoria Community Surf Life Saving Certificate
* Recognised Australian White Water Rescue Training.

The driver of the boat must be an adult experienced in towing skiers and have as a minimum a Marine licence. For more information see: [Transport Safety Victoria – Marine Licence](http://www.transportsafety.vic.gov.au/maritime-safety/recreational-maritime/marine-licence).

The designated observer must:

* have experience in the activity at the level being offered to students
* be able to assume a supervisory role during the activity
* have the ability to participate competently in emergency response procedures
* have conferred with the instructor on the safety requirements of this role and all applicable signals for communicating with the student whilst water-skiing.

 [Documentation of staff qualifications and experience (doc - 151kb)](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/principals/safety/staffqual.doc) must be used to document staff experience and training in lieu of the listed qualifications.

Where an external contractor is chosen to run all or part of this activity, see: Roles and responsibilities, External Providers.

## Supervision

Supervision is a critical factor in managing risk in the outdoors.

A minimum of two staff members must be present for each activity, one with main responsibility for activity instruction and the other to assist the instructor.

It may be necessary to increase the staff allocation based on ability to observe or monitor students on activity with consideration to:

* students (medical conditions, age, physical, mental and emotional maturity, ability and experience)
* group (dynamics and size)
* staff (medical conditions, age, ability and experience, qualifications and skills)
* location (remoteness, communications and environmental conditions).

Reasons for increasing staff allocations must be documented.

The following table shows the minimum student-to-staff allocation that must be used for Water skiing activities.

|  |
| --- |
| **\*\*Water skiing beginner** |
| Staff numbers | Student numbers |
| 2 | 1 |

\*\* Staff required must include an observer and driver. The boat driver and observer cannot be the same person.

The teacher in charge is responsible for the supervision strategy, which must be endorsed by the school principal as part of the excursion approval process. Staff members must supervise students according to that strategy, and in accordance with their duty of care. It is the role of the teacher in charge to clearly and adequately explain the supervision strategy to all participating staff members.

Students not directly participating in the activity must be separately supervised in line with Excursions Guidelines – Supervision.

## Peak bodies and expert advice

Australian Waterski and Wakeboard Federation <http://www.awwf.com.au/>

AUSTSWIM <http://www.austswim.com.au/>

Maritime Safety Victoria <https://transportsafety.vic.gov.au/maritime-safety>

Outdoors Victoria <https://outdoorsvictoria.org.au/>

Surf Live Saving Australia <https://sls.com.au/>

Surf Life Saving Australia – BeachSafe <https://beachsafe.org.au/>

Victorian Rainfall and River Height Data <http://www.bom.gov.au/vic/flood/index.shtml?ref=hdr>

For further enquiries, please contact community.stakeholders@edumail.vic.gov.au

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