THE PULL OF A RIP

LEARNING OUTCOME: 1 If I’m in trouble in a rip current I know never to swim against it but instead I should hold onto something which floats / to float myself and raise my arm and shout for help. I know to swim parallel until free from it.
RESOURCES REQUIRED

- The pull of a rip personal story sheet
- The pull of a rip support slides
- rnli.org/safety/know-the-risks/rip-currents
- magazine.rnli.org/Article/Its-all-right-buddy-Ive-got-you-15

LOW TECH OPTION

- No tech required for main activity
- Print outs of The pull of a rip personal story sheet
- Print outs of The pull of a rip slides

INTRODUCTION

Understanding the force of a rip current is a difficult concept to comprehend unless you have experienced one. Through a personal account and a physical demonstration, this activity aims to enlighten students to the power of a rip while imparting important life-saving information regarding how to respond if caught in one.

The physical demonstration of this activity requires space, so a clear classroom or sports hall offers the best environment in which to deliver this.

DELIVERY

- Ask students if any of them have experienced a rip current or heard the term before.
- Allow any personal stories or explanations to be shared before showing slides 2–4 which explain what a rip is. The explanation featured on the slides is as follows:
  - Rips are strong currents running out to sea, which can quickly drag people and debris away from the shallows of the shoreline and out to deeper water.
  - They tend to flow at 1–2mph but can reach 4–5mph (up to 8kph), which is faster than an Olympic swimmer.
  - Rips are especially powerful in larger surf. They are also found around river mouths, estuaries and man-made structures like piers and groynes.
  - Rip currents can be identified by a smoother channel of water between sets of waves. They can be very difficult to spot and move around as the tide goes in and out.
  - Even the most experienced beachgoers can be caught out by rips, so don’t be afraid to ask lifeguards for advice. They will show you how you can identify and avoid rips.
  - The best way to avoid rips is to choose a lifeguarded beach and always swim between the red and yellow flags, which have been marked based on where is safer to swim in the current conditions.
ADVICE IF YOU FIND YOURSELF CAUGHT IN A RIP

- Don’t try to swim against it or you’ll get exhausted.
- If you can stand, wade don’t swim.
- If you can, swim parallel to the shore until free of the rip and then head for shore.
- Always raise your hand and shout for help.
- If you are surfing or boarding do not let go of your board.
- If you see anyone else in trouble, alert the lifeguards or call 999 or 112 and ask for the coastguard.

- You may find the following time-lapsed video [rnli.org/safety/know-the-risks/rip-currents](http://rnli.org/safety/know-the-risks/rip-currents) useful to demonstrate how a rip works.
- To further explore the power of a rip, ask students to read through The pull of a rip personal story which is taken from a real RNLI rescue story (see below). The following video also tells of the rescue of a young bodyboarder caught in a rip and rescued by a lifeguard and includes footage of the rescue. [magazine.rnli.org/Article/Its-all-right-buddy-Ive-got-you-15](http://magazine.rnli.org/Article/Its-all-right-buddy-Ive-got-you-15)
- Of those students who may be familiar with a rip, ask whether they know how to react if caught in one before running through the advice on slide 5 which explains what to do.
- Once the slides have been delivered, move to a clear classroom or sports hall to run through the physical demonstration.
- Select one student volunteer to be the swimmer in your demonstration.
• Now arrange the rest of the group into a cluster and instruct them to prevent the swimmer from moving past them using their hands and bodies as a barrier, pushing him/her away. The aim is not to shove, but to gently push the volunteer back in the direction they are moving from.

• Task the swimmer with trying to move through the wall of people to get to the other side.

• Once this has been attempted a few times (and by varying students), explain how this demonstration is designed to show the force of a rip.

• Now explain how wading parallel to a rip is the best way to escape the current. This could be demonstrated by instructing the group previously told to prevent the swimmer from moving against them to stand still when the swimmer moves sideways through them. Ensure all students are clear on the message being explained in this activity before concluding the demonstration.

**THE PULL OF A RIP – PERSONAL STORY**

Sally Cole and her sons Jack (15) and Toby (12) will never forget their holiday in August ...

‘We were enjoying a family holiday with friends at Mawgan Porth. The beach was busy and the water was heaving. We were swimming and bodyboarding between the flags when we were suddenly caught in a rip current.

‘One minute the water was at waist level, the next my feet couldn’t find the bottom. My son Jack just shot straight out to sea, along with our friend Colin, his son and some others. Colin and I are both strong swimmers and I used to be a pool lifeguard so it was such a shock that I was out of my depth so quickly.

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I was being pulled under and out, and was really fighting large waves every time I came up. 'We were really glad to see the lifeguards who brought Jack in, along with our other friends, and checked I was okay on the way through. Luckily, my other son Toby had paddled out to me and two other ladies so we could grab onto his bodyboard until the lifeguards could come back for us. He was remarkably calm considering! All in all I reckon the lifeguards must have picked up 11 people during that rescue. We were all incredibly grateful.

'If I could give a piece of advice to others it would be that you absolutely need to be swimming on a lifeguarded beach, especially if there is a large group of you with teenagers. Most importantly – don’t panic!'