

Roundtable Hot Topic

Making a Splash with Aquatics in Scouting

Explore, Learn, and Lead on the Water

Why Aquatics?

Water-based activities teach Scouts confidence, safety, and responsibility – all while having a blast! Whether it's swimming, boating, or high-adventure sailing, aquatics help Scouts build skills that last a lifetime. But aquatics activities just don't happen without lots of preparation.

One of the most important pieces of an aquatic program is planning. Scouting America has some great resources to help your council with their aquatic program. The Aquatics Supervision Guide was updated in 2025 and the link is in the resource section below.



Safety First!

Before launching any aquatic adventure, it's critical that all adult leaders understand and follow Scouting America's safety protocols. These training programs are not just recommendations—they are mandatory requirements for any water-based Scouting activity. Completing them ensures you're providing a safe, structured, and fun environment for all participants.

These essential safety courses are available online through the BSA's training platform:

- [Safe Swim Defense](#) - Learn how to plan and supervise swimming activities following the eight points of Safe Swim Defense.
- [Safety Afloat](#) - Covers proper planning, equipment, and supervision for all boating activities, including canoes, kayaks, and rafts.
- [Aquatics Supervision Training](#) - For leaders overseeing swimming or paddle craft activities at the unit level, this advanced training is strongly encouraged.

Aquatics & Advancement

Aquatic activities are not just fun - they're integral to advancement and skill development in the Scouting program. From Cub Scouts learning the basics of water safety to Scouts BSA earning badges that can lead to lifeguard or emergency responder careers, aquatics are woven into the advancement journey.

- Cub Scouts have water-based adventures in every rank. They start small and work to improve their skills every year to get them ready for Scouts BSA.
 - o Lions earn the elective adventure Time to Swim

- o Tigers earn the elective adventure Tigers in the Water
- o Wolf earn the elective Paws for Water
- o Bears earn the elective adventures Bear afloat and Salmon Run
- o Webelos earn the elective adventures Aquanaut and Paddle Forward
- o AOL earn the electives Paddlecraft and Swimming
- For Scouts BSA there are a number of merit badges that a scout can earn: Canoeing, Motorboating, Multisport, Rowing, Small Boat Sailing, Swimming, Water Sports, and Whitewater, some of which are Eagle required.
- Older Youth Programs have many ways to earn ranks and advancements. Venture Crews can earn Scouting for Clean Waterways, Explorers can have posts that focus on water rescues, scuba and so much more. Sea Scouts has a primary focus on boating at all levels, from paddleboards to sailboats.
- So, as you can see, aquatics plays an important role in Scouting. It provides safety lessons, leadership opportunities, and most importantly fun. But to ensure that everyone stays safe while having fun scout leaders must create a plan based on the level of the scouts and the activity planned. Scouting America's goal is to provide a S.A.F.E. program while promoting outdoor activities and FUN.

Planning Resources for Leaders

- [Troop Leader Swimming Resources](#)



- [Scouting.org Aquatics Program Hub](#)



- [Scouting America Aquatics Resources](#)



- [Aquatics Supervision Guide updated 2025](#)



- [Aquatics Awards](#)

