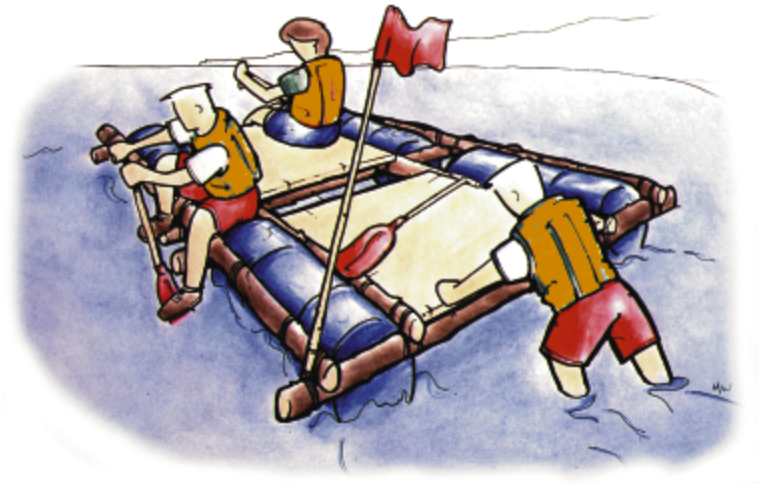
On the Water



Water safety

Activity on water is always great fun, however care needs to be taken at all times to prevent injury. Open water, such as lakes, rivers and sea can be dangerous.
First and foremost you need to be able to swim. If you don't know how to swim then join a swimming class and learn.

For most boating activities, it is advisable that you can swim a distance of at least 50 metres, and stay afloat for 2 minutes without the aid of a lifejacket.
Always make sure you wear a lifejacket or buoyancy aid as appropriate on all water based activities, even if the water is shallow. Water activities require a level of skill. The pages of this chapter are only an introduction to the many possibilities. In all cases special training will be required.

Buddy system

In all Scouting water activities we use the Buddy systemfor safety. Each Scout is asked to team up with another Scout while taking part. Your job as a Buddy is to look out for your partner and he/she has to look out for you. If you are a Patrol Leader you will have the additional responsibility of looking out for all the members of your Patrol.

From time to time the activity leader will call for 'Buddies'. At the signal you should find your Buddy - who should be close by, and hold his/her hand out of the water so that you can be clearly seen. Once everyone is checked you can resume your enjoyment.

Its a simple idea that everyone can understand, a simple idea that can save a life.

Open water is always cold. Water is a heat conductor and will draw heat away from your body very quickly. Wind chill also plays a big part in the cooling down process. For this reason it is advisable to wear the right clothing when taking part in water activities. Along with your life jacket you will need to wear a wind proof jacket, a tee shirt or light fleece and old training shoes with warm dry clothes available to change into after the activity.

Keep warm

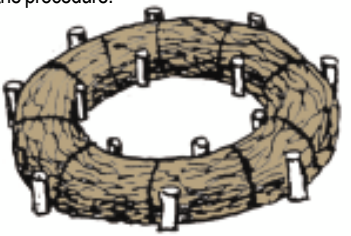
If you are visiting an outdoor pursuit centre, they will probabaly provide you with specialist equipment such as wet suits, bootees and helmets if white water canoeing.

You will get wet, but be careful not to get cold. If you feel you are getting too cold or are shivering, tell a Leader. Work the Buddy system and keep an eye on each other.

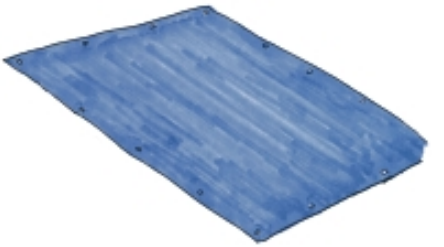
Rafts

Bush raft.

This raft is easy to make once you know the procedure.



First place a number of stakes in the ground and then pile light twigs and branches between the stakes, to make a doughnut shape. When the shape is complete weave sisal or rope around the pile to keep it together.

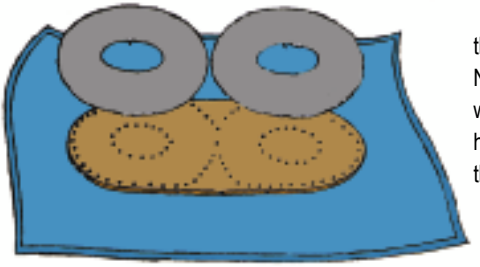


Lift the 'doughnut' pile from its frame and place in the middle of a plastic sheet or tarp. Fold over and tie the sheeting to the pile core. Your raft is now ready for use.

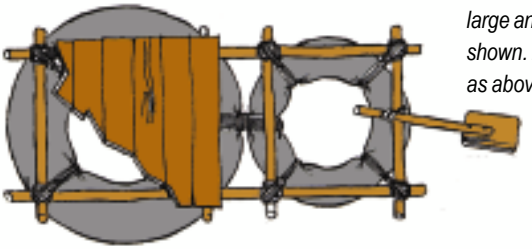
Be aware that the base of the raft is only a layer of plastic and will puncture easily. Use only on calm water such as lakes, slow moving rivers and canals.

Inner tube raft

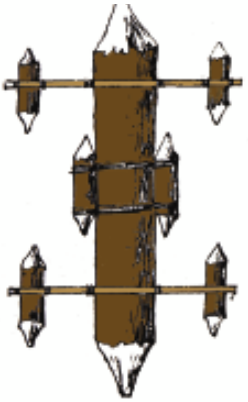
The inner tube raft is an ideal one person raft. You will need two large inner tubes, a plastic sheet or tarpaulin and a base board made of construction grade plywood. Cut out the base board as shown, and drill a number of threading holes in the base so that



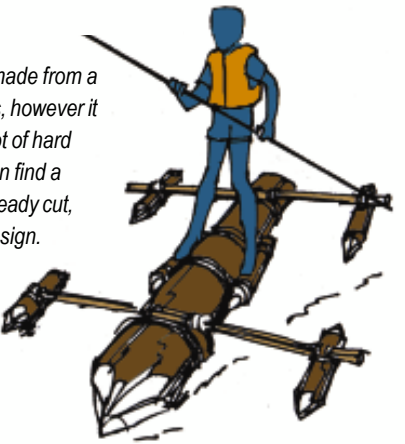
the tubes can be firmly attached to it. Now cover the base and the tubes with the sheeting and tie it off. If you have a plastic sheet with eyelets then this can be done easily.



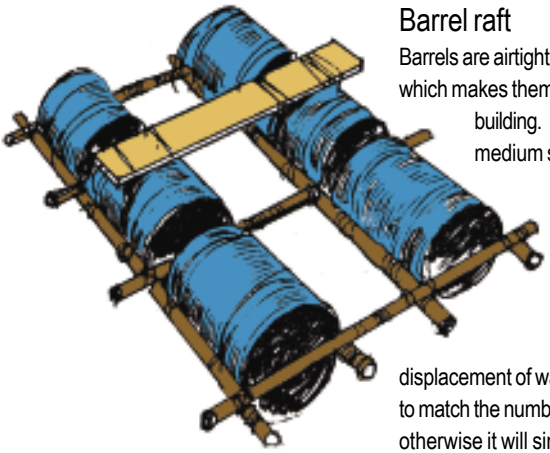
A similar raft can be made with a large and a small inner tube as shown. Either make a baseboard as above or construct a frame to hold the inner tubes together.



A raft can be made from a number of logs, however it will involve a lot of hard work. If you can find a suitable log already cut, then try this design.



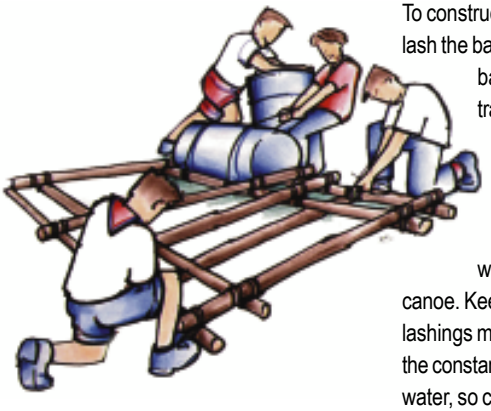
Rafts cont.

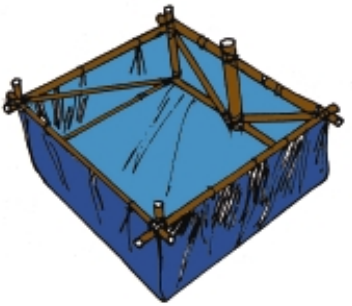


Barrel raft

Barrels are airtight and almost unsinkable which makes them ideal material for raft building. You will need a number of medium sized barrels to make a decent raft hat will hold a number of people. Look at the barrels you have, and think of them as a body of space that will displace a body of water. The total displacement of water by the barrels needs to match the number of people on the raft, otherwise it will sink below the water. In simple language you need a lot of barrels to hold a Patrol on a raft.

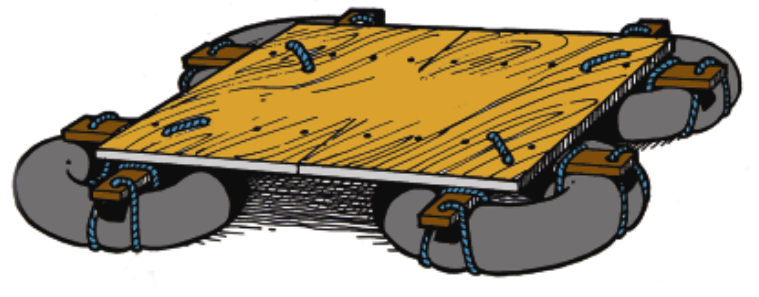
To construct a workable raft, you will need to lash the barrels to a frame. This will keep the barrels stable and allow you to travel through the water under paddle or sail power. The frame also needs to be balanced so that it does not topple over. Design the raft to be wide rather than streamlined like a canoe. Keep an eye on the lashings. The lashings may loosen due to being wet and the constant twisting of the frame in the water, so check them regularly.



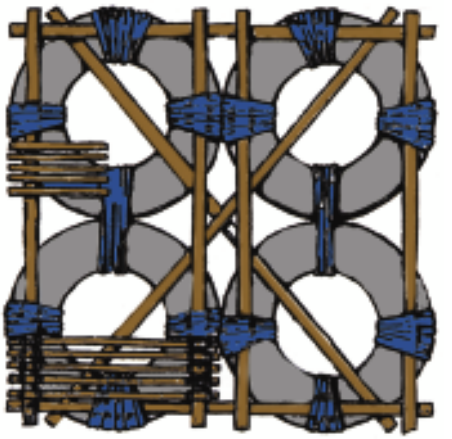


Plastic sheet raft

A plastic sheet is ideal for raft making. We have already shown designs using inner tubes and branch 'doughnuts' which use a plastic sheet or tarpaulin. This design is a simple box created with light poles and covered with plastic sheeting.

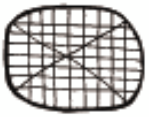


Inner tubes - truck wheel size are great for making rafts. This raft will support up to three or four young people. The tubes provide the buoyancy for the raft but they are unstable without a frame. A simple frame can be constructed as shown with standard 4X2 timber and plywood sheeting held together with rope. Alternatively you can use the more traditional method of construction using light pioneering poles. The top frame is only shown in part so that the frame design can be clearly seen. When constructing a raft it is most important to have a stable and secure frame that will not loosen and fall apart with use.

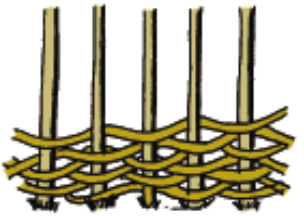


The Coracle

The coracle is a traditional water craft used for centuries by rivermen fishing salmon. It was particularly popular on the Boyne. It is an excellent and fun filled activity for Scouts and its backwood element certainly makes it a scouting skill worth possessing. They can be simply built in one day or a more permanent craft in two.



Start by collecting 32 hazel or ash rods from croppings approx. 25 mm thick across their length. The rods need to be about 2.5 metres long. Place rods evenly in the ground in a rough oval shape 2 metres long by 1.5 metres wide (traditional size 6' X 4').

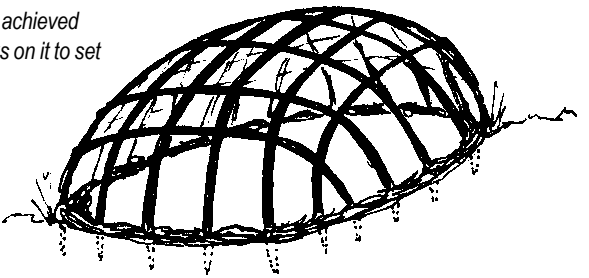


The idea is to create a basket shape approx. 50 cms high. Bend the rods over from the long side first and tie together as shown

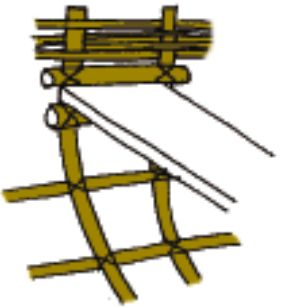
Do not trim the rods until the basket is created as minor adjustments may be necessary to get the correct shape. Work slowly and with care to avoid rods cracking.

An interlacing binding is woven around the base of the frame approx. 100mm deep using light rods or willow withies.

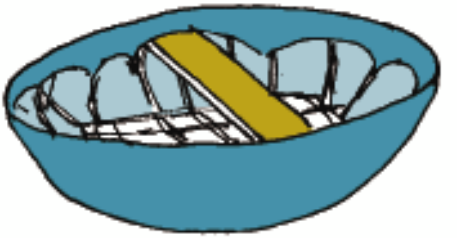
When basket shape is achieved place planks and rocks on it to set the frame in shape overnight.



When the rods have been cut, trim and smooth the edges to prevent them puncturing your covering.



The seat is fixed in the middle of the coracle. Bind the edge of the seat to the frame.



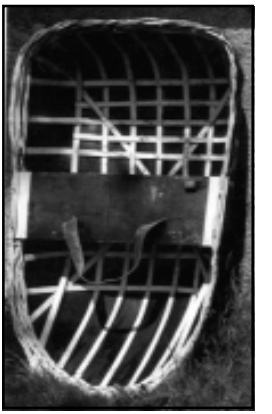
Remove the coracle frame from the ground and trim the edges. Cover the frame with plastic sheeting and you're ready to go.

Photograph from the 1890's showing traditional Welsh coracle, built using ash lathes to form the basket, and covered in cowhide.

Paddling a coracle

The coracle is paddled by leaning over the front end of the boat and moving the paddle in an 'S' movement.

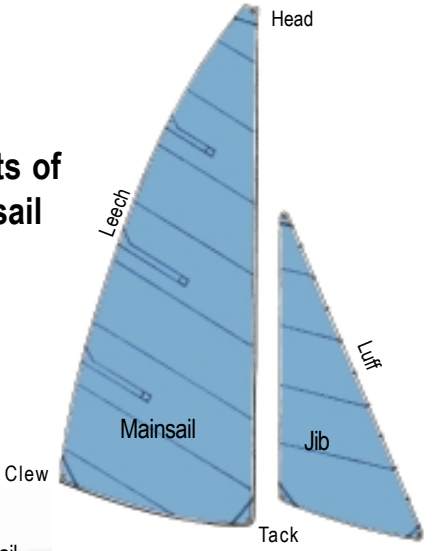
This may seem odd at first but it is the traditional method of paddling the craft.

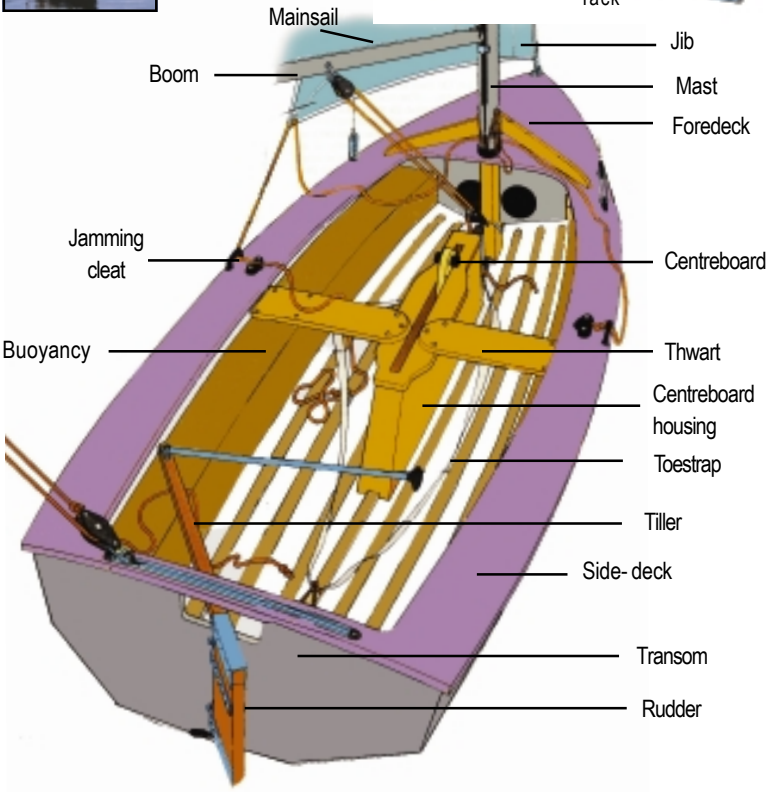


A single handled paddle is used. It can be a modern type, or constructed as shown. It is 2 metres in length.

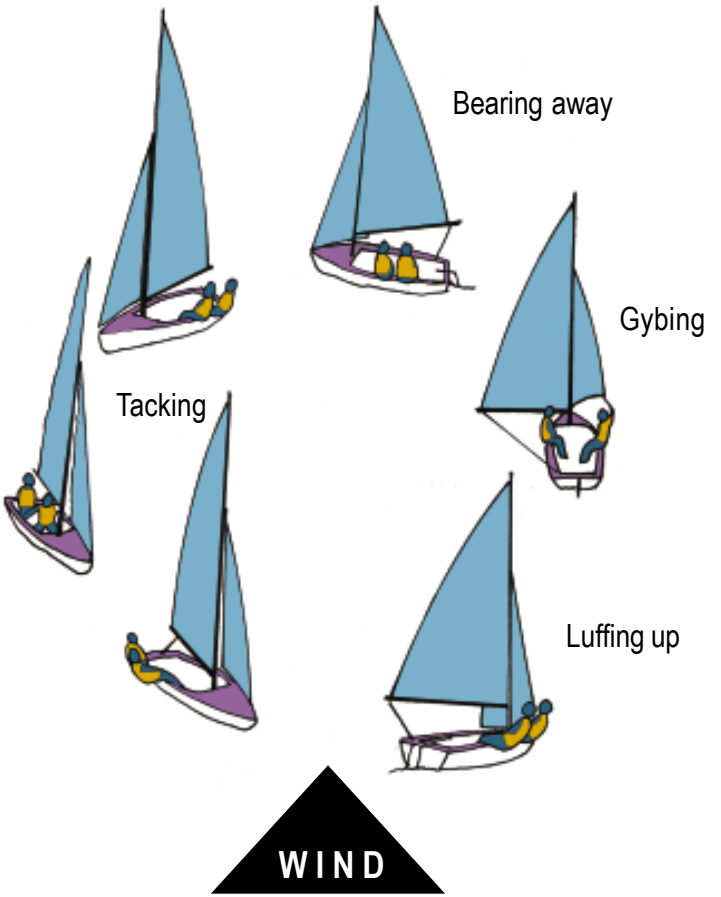
Sailing

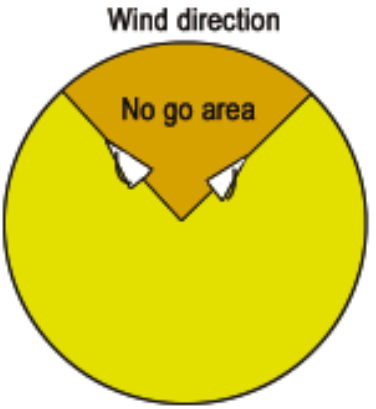
Parts of a sail





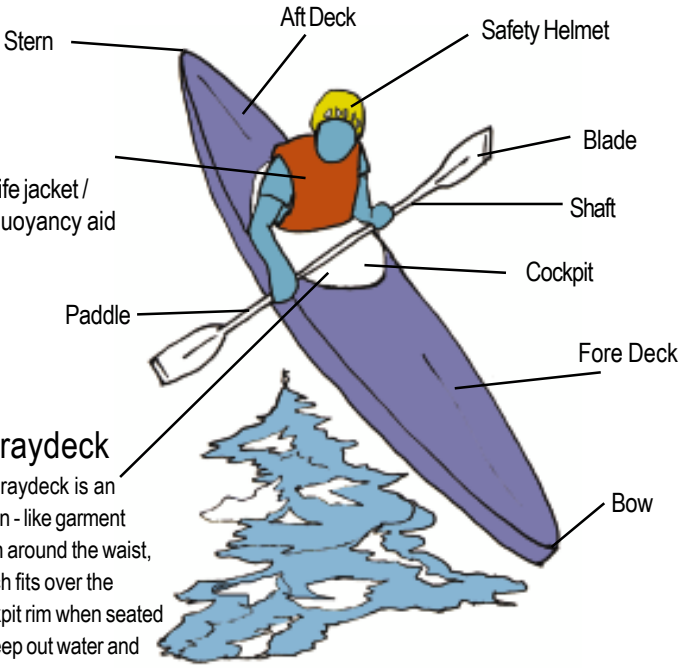
Parts of a sailing dingy





Learning to 'read the wind', and adjust the sails accordingly, so that you can travel to a desired destination, requires practice. A sailboat can use wind from any direction to take the sailor where he/she wants to go, but there is an area directly into the wind that sailors call the 'no go zone'. In order to travel into this zone it is necessary to travel at 45 degrees to the direction of the wind. This is known as ' tacking'. Progress is made by a zigzag route.

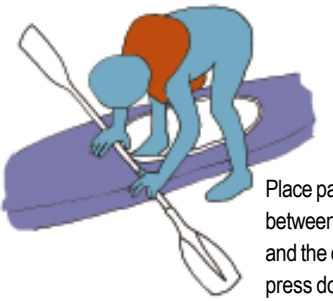
Canoeing



Spraydeck

A spraydeck is an apron - like garment worn around the waist, which fits over the cockpit rim when seated to keep out water and keep heat in.

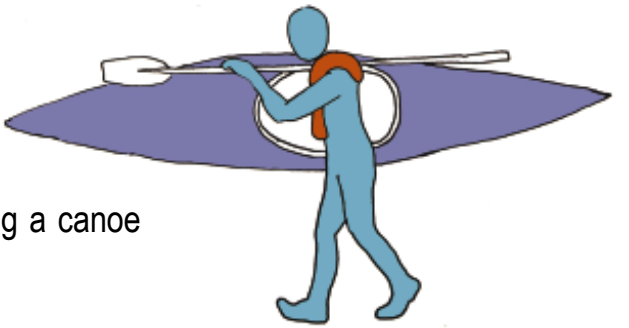
Getting in and out of a canoe



Place paddle between the bank and the canoe, and press down for support.

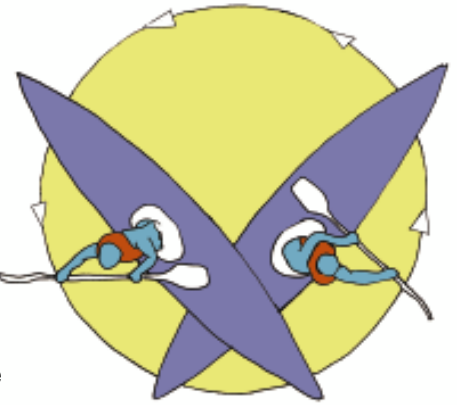
Ease yourself slowly into the canoe

Carrying a canoe



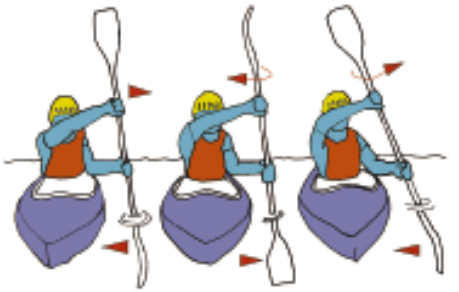
Moving forward

To paddle, lean forward, place the paddle into the water and pull on the paddle. The blades of the paddle are offset to each other so the paddle needs to be twisted slightly for each stroke. Try to maintain an even balanced movement to travel in a straight line.



Sweep stroke

The sweep stroke is a technique which allows you to move your canoe about a set point. It is completed by using a wide drawing stroke with the paddle.



Sideways pull

The sideways pull stroke can be used to move the canoe towards the bank or around an obstacle. The paddle is kept in the water throughout the stroke.

Swimming

Every Scout should know how to swim. Most Scouts will probably learn to swim through a school programme in the local swimming pool.

Being able to swim open up the possibility to take part in numerous activities which are water related such as sailing, canoeing, and rafting.

As Scouts you will be presented with many challenges which can be water related. In most cases, these challenges will take place on rivers or lakes. These locations are different to swimming pools. The water will be cooler, and there can be currents and obstacles hidden under the water.

Be careful at all times. Always wear a buoyancy aid or lifejacket while taking part in water based activities. Only swim in an area that your Leader has checked out and has declared safe to swim in. Never swim alone. Always operate the buddy system.

It is a good idea for every Scout to learn how to life-save. This can be done in your local swimming pool. Ask your swimming instructor for details of classes in your area.