



**middle level
commissioners**

Proudly managing water levels in the Fens since 1862

Water Safety for Young People

Stay smart. Stay together. Stay safe.

As you become more independent, it's more important than ever to know how to stay safe near water — especially rivers, lakes, and reservoirs.

It's not just about swimming ability...

Even strong swimmers can get into trouble in cold or open water. Knowing how to behave can *save your life* — or someone else's.

- **Cold water shock** can make it hard to breathe or move — even if you're a strong swimmer.
 - **Hidden dangers** and currents can quickly pull you under.
 - You might not be able to get out due to **slippery, steep banks**.

Being able to swim is important, but knowing how to behave around water is what saves lives.

Learn the Water Safety Code

-  **Stop & Think** - Take time to assess hazards & the risks before going near water.
 -  **Stay Together** - Never swim or walk by water alone.
 -  **Call 999** - In an emergency, ask for the Fire & Rescue Service. Provide clear details about your location. (Use what 3 words app!)
 -  **Float** - If you fall into cold water, float on your back with your arms and legs spread out. This position helps you stay calm and breathe while awaiting rescue.
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Unseen Dangers of Open Water

Water may look calm and inviting — but it can hide deadly risks:

-  **Cold water shock** - Sudden immersion in cold water can cause your body to react uncontrollably, increasing the risk of drowning.
-  **Unknown depth** - Water may be deeper or shallower than it seems, posing risks when jumping or diving.

-  **Slippery Banks** - Steep, slimy banks can make it difficult to climb out.
 -  **Underwater hazards** - Objects like shopping trolleys, sharp metal, or broken bottles can cause injury.
 -  **Reeds and plants** - You could become entangled on waterborne vegetation.
 -  **Diseases** - Swimming in open water can expose you to serious diseases such as Leptospirosis (Weil's disease).
 -  **Hidden currents** - Flowing water, especially near locks or pumping stations can be deceptively fast and strong.
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If You Fall In: Cold Water Shock

When you fall into cold water:

- You'll **gasp uncontrollably** and start to panic.
- Your body will **lose energy fast** and muscles may freeze.
 - Fighting it will make things worse.

FLOAT TO LIVE – Be a Starfish

Lie on your back, spread your arms and legs like a starfish.
Focus on breathing slowly. Call for help when you're calm.

If Someone Else Is in Trouble

-  **Never jump in**, even if you can swim.
 -  **Stay calm** and think clearly.
 -  **Shout for help** and call **999 – ask for Fire & Rescue**.
 -  Use **What3Words** or local landmarks to explain your location.
 -  **Talk to the person** – encourage them to float.
 -  **Reach or Throw**: Use a stick, rope, or any long object to reach the person. If possible, throw them something that floats.
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What if your dog goes in?

- **Don't Jump In**: Entering the water can put you at risk.
 - **Call the Dog**: Encourage your dog to swim back to the edge.
 - **Seek Help**: If the dog is in distress, call for professional assistance.
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 **Stay smart around water. Your life depends on it.**