

# Water Safety Education: Early Level

## Introduction

The aspects detailed below (interactions, spaces and experiences) should not be seen as stand-alone areas for consideration. Instead, they should be considered together to create an effective learning environment for children.

Practitioners should be alert to meaningful and relevant opportunities to support children's understanding of water safety as they arise in their play or real-life experiences.

The suggestions below, in terms of interactions, spaces and experiences, could be used or adapted when the opportunities arise, and are not exhaustive. They could also support children's understanding and use of risk-benefit approaches more generally.

Where opportunities don't arise naturally, practitioners should intentionally plan to support awareness and understanding of the aspects suggested below, or by using resources developed by other practitioners, taking account of the key messages and children's specific needs and interests.

Given the wide range of developmental stages in children across the early level, practitioners should use their professional judgement as to how experiences and support should be presented – see [Realising the ambition](#).

## Interactions

### Key messages



**Stop and Think,  
Spot the Dangers**



**Stay Together,  
Stay Close**



**In an Emergency,  
Call 999**

- Water can be very cold, which is dangerous for people
- It's difficult to know how deep the water is
- Sometimes there are signs next to water that tell us about dangers – they are there to keep us safe
- Some beaches have flags to tell us how to stay safe in the water
- Never go close to the water without an adult to help you
- If you see someone in trouble in the water, you or an adult need to call 999

### Vocab bank

Water  
Play  
Fun  
Beach  
River  
Loch  
Pond  
Canal  
Beach bag  
Stop  
Help  
999  
Safe  
Deep  
Danger  
Trouble

(in relation to water:  
danger/hazards)

### Setting

Indoor or outdoor learning experiences that encourage learning and thought around the topic of water safety.



Suggested experience to observe/lead concerning water/water safety:

Discuss the nature of water, i.e. how things float and sink, and relate to the safety of oneself and others

## Suggested resources and links

### Books

Bookbug: [www.scottishbooktrust.com/bookbug](http://www.scottishbooktrust.com/bookbug)

Suggested books on the Scottish Book Trust website:  
[www.scottishbooktrust.com/book-lists/bookbugs-big-splash](http://www.scottishbooktrust.com/book-lists/bookbugs-big-splash)

Speak with your local Bookbug coordinator to promote water safety within your ELC setting.

### Songs

Suggested Bookbug songs and rhymes:

- [www.scottishbooktrust.com/songs-and-rhymes/swing-me-over-the-water-audio](http://www.scottishbooktrust.com/songs-and-rhymes/swing-me-over-the-water-audio)
- [www.scottishbooktrust.com/songs-and-rhymes/seashell](http://www.scottishbooktrust.com/songs-and-rhymes/seashell)

Alternative activity: use instruments to make the sounds of the sea and water.

### Mind mapping

What do the children already know about the topic of water safety and what do they want to learn?

Prompts: What activities do you like doing in the water? Where can you find water?  
What animals live in the water? What might you find under the water?

Link to 'Stop and Think, Spot the Dangers'. For example: Who goes into the water?  
Which animals go into the water? What are the dangers? What might you find under the water?

### Outdoor experiences

Take the children for a walk to your local park/beach/garden/swimming pool. Use this as an opportunity to engage with the environment and discuss why it's important to stay together and stay close when out and about, particularly when near water. This can be compared to the importance of staying together and holding hands when near the road, or in a busy car park, for example.

### Talking tubs

A talking tub is a **box filled with a variety of objects about a specific subject**. Children take each item out one at a time and fully examine them, and are given time to investigate and discuss each one.

Suggested objects: shells, water bottle, wellies, jar of sand, beach ball, hat, sun cream, bucket and spade.

### Interactive workshops from Water Safety Scotland members


- Contact Police Scotland or Scottish Fire and Rescue Service for a visit to your ELC setting.
- Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park [education visit](#).
- Free [workshops](#) offered by organisations such as the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI).
- STA School Swimming Academy which is aimed at primary school [www.sta.co.uk/school-swimming-academy](http://www.sta.co.uk/school-swimming-academy).
- Kangaroo beach which is aimed at pre-schoolers [www.sta.co.uk/news/2022/05/13/jumpin-joeys-sta-has-launched-a-new-water-safety-programme-for-pre-schoolers](http://www.sta.co.uk/news/2022/05/13/jumpin-joeys-sta-has-launched-a-new-water-safety-programme-for-pre-schoolers).

### Resources from Water Safety Scotland members

Resources:

 [rnli.org/youth-education/education-resources/lower-primary](http://rnli.org/youth-education/education-resources/lower-primary)

 [www.rlss.org.uk/primary-school-lesson](http://www.rlss.org.uk/primary-school-lesson)

 [Swimming Games – Scottish Swimming Learn to Swim](#)

Colouring-in sheet download available alongside this document.

[Stay Safe Near Water with Rosie, Jim & Duck - Neil Brewer \(1999\) - YouTube](#)

# Spaces

## What you potentially set up

Space (adapting the learning environment to create experiences that connect to water safety and related topics)

### Suggested resources

<b>Dress-up area</b>	Items related to: Police Officers, Fire Officers, Coastguards, Lifeguards and other items related to 'people who help us'.
<b>Arts and crafts corner</b>	Pictures of people who help us. Posters/photographs of landscapes with water to inspire children's artwork. Access to paints and other media in a range of shades of appropriate colours.
<b>Displays</b>	<p>Display boards featuring key words and the Water Safety Scotland <a href="#">Water Safety Code</a>.</p> <p>A display with the following: Water Safety Code or the 'Stop and Think, Spot The Dangers' section, photos of water safety equipment, e.g. life jackets, buoys, shells, beach flags, sun cream, wellies.</p> <p>Break down language of the Water Safety Code – use pictorial code.</p>
<b>Books/Library area</b>	<p>Book Trust/Bookbug: reach out to your local Bookbug organiser. Have link to Bookbug coordinator.</p> <p>Stories about visits to people who help us, specifically around water.</p> <p>Non-fiction books about water and water safety.</p>
<b>Beach bag: resource and water-related activity corner</b>	<p>A beach bag can be used to encourage conversations about water safety and the environments in which you could come across water. You can use the objects, one by one, to focus on what the object is, what it does, and how it could be used. Discussion may prompt children to ask additional questions which can be researched together. Encourage the children to identify and share what they have learned.</p> <p>Suggested items include those often found on a beach, and objects you would bring to the beach: a hat, water bottle, sun cream, wellies, jumper, bucket and spade.</p>
<b>Water station or table</b>	Add water play materials that support understanding of floating and sinking. Use dolls to show safe bathing in the bath.