Beach Safety Checklist for Families

A one-page beach checklist: swim near a lifeguard, read the flags, spot rip currents, stay away from piers and jetties, and know how to escape and help.

Letter page · For parents, caregivers, teens

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Swim near a lifeguard: the chance of drowning at a beach with lifeguards is 1 in 18 million, says the U.S. Lifesaving Association, as quoted by the National Weather Service. Tick these off at every beach.

When you arrive

- [ ] Swim only in a lifeguarded area. Ask the lifeguard about today's conditions.
- [ ] Read the flag sign at the entrance. No flag does not mean the water is safe.
- [ ] Look for rip currents: darker water, a gap where waves aren't breaking, foam moving out.
- [ ] Stay at least 100 feet from piers and jetties. Enter feet first; never dive into surf.
- [ ] Name a Water Watcher for the kids. Phones away while you watch.

If a rip current pulls you

- [ ] Relax and float. Don't swim against it. Swim along the shore, then back in.
- [ ] Can't get out? Keep floating or treading water, and yell and wave for help.

If someone else is in trouble

- [ ] Get a lifeguard or call 911. Throw something that floats. Don't go in.

What you can do today: learn the flags with what each beach flag color means and practice with Rip current trainer.

Sources

1. How to Avoid Getting Caught in a Rip Current, National Weather Service. https://www.weather.gov/safety/ripcurrent
2. Swimming Safely at the Beach, American Red Cross. https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/water-safety/beach-safety.html
3. Gulf Coast Rip Current Awareness, National Weather Service Tallahassee. https://www.weather.gov/tae/ripcurrentawareness
4. Social Media: Rip Currents & Beach Hazards, National Weather Service. https://www.weather.gov/wrn/rip-currents-sm

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