Camp Swim Time Checklist

A one-page swim-time checklist for camp counselors: swim tests and areas, buddy checks at least every 15 minutes, scanning, and the lost swimmer plan.

Letter page · For camps, teens, adults

Scan for the web page, sources and downloads

NYC camp rules require buddy checks at least every 15 minutes, and say an incomplete buddy system has been a significant factor in every camper drowning since 1986 (NYC Health). Follow your camp's written plan.

Before swim

- [ ] I know our written swim plan, our lost swimmer plan and the buddy check signal.
- [ ] Every camper is swim-tested and grouped; non-swimmers stay in water less than chest deep.
- [ ] Buddies are paired by similar ability and checked in on the board.

During swim

- [ ] Phone away. Eyes on my zone the whole time, counting heads.
- [ ] Buddy check no later than 15 minutes after entry, then at least every 15 minutes.
- [ ] I watch for quiet trouble: upright and not moving forward, can't tread water, or face down.
- [ ] On a boat, every camper wears a Coast Guard-approved life jacket that fits (federal law under 13).

If a buddy is missing

- [ ] Get the name, call it out, and tell the nearest lifeguard: water search now.
- [ ] Clear the water, gather campers away from it, and start the lost swimmer plan.

What you can do today: ask your aquatics director for the written plan and practice one buddy check. Learn the signs in what drowning looks like.

Sources

1. Children's Camp Safety Plan: Swim Supervision & Safety Addendum, NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. https://www.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/camp/camp-safety-plan-addendum-swim-safety.pdf
2. Water Safety, American Red Cross. https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/water-safety.html
3. Life Jacket Wear / Wearing Your Life Jacket, U.S. Coast Guard Boating Safety. https://uscgboating.org/recreational-boaters/life-jacket-wear-wearing-your-life-jacket.php

Amin Foundation · aminfoundation.io · Free to print and share. Updated 2026-10-18.