

Life Jackets Float - You Don't!

Grade: 1st & 2nd grade
Subject: Life Jackets or Personal Flotation Devices (PFD) (same thing)
Theme: Life jackets that are worn properly can save lives.
Goal: For students to have the opportunity to learn about lifejackets/ PFDs and how to use and wear them properly.

Objectives: Students will understand that there are various types of PFDs.
Students will properly wear a life jacket.
Students will understand the importance of wearing a life jacket.

Background: Drowning can occur within 20-60 seconds.
Drowning is the second leading cause of accidental deaths for children 14 years old and younger.
A drowning person cannot yell or wave for help. They will look like they are splashing and playing in the water.
Two out of three drowning victims had no intention of going into the water at all.
Most drowning victims had a life jacket available, but did not wear it.
Most boating fatalities are not the result of a collision, but victims unexpectedly entering the water as a result of a fall or capsized.
Most fatalities involve boats that are less than 16 feet in length.
Lifejackets are required in Arizona and Nevada for children 12 years old and younger.

Activities: PFD Relay (see summary for description)
PFD Fashion Show (see summary for description)

Key Points: Life jackets need to fit properly and be in good condition.
Life jackets can only save a life if they are worn.
It takes valuable time to put on a life jacket, especially when seconds count.
Lifejackets are required in Arizona and Nevada for children 12 years old and younger.

Each set of duffel bags contain the following items to be used in conjunction with the Water Safety Education programs:

- 4 life jackets (one adult size/three child size)
- 1 PFD Type IV throwable (cushion)
- 1 PFD TYPE IV throwable (ring)
- 1 rescue throw rope
- 1 cooler
- 1 towel
- 1 inflatable toy ring
- 1 stopwatch

Please be sure to keep the items together with the correct duffel.

Other things to take with you to the programs:

Copy of your requested schedule
Water Safety Education teacher evaluations
Water Safety Education booklets (one for each student)
Pencils or rulers (one for each student)

Summary of one way to do **Lifejackets Float, You Don't**

Water Safety Education program
submitted by Ellen Anderson
4-5-06

When I arrive to the classroom, I let the teacher know that I need to make a big open space for the students to sit on the floor. It usually means that desks and chairs need to be moved out of the way. After getting permission from the teacher, I instruct the students on where they need to move their desks.

Once everyone is sitting on the floor, I introduce myself, NPS mission, etc. and ask them what are their favorite summer activities at Lake Mead? They will most likely mention water related activities. I tell them that I'm in their classroom today, because I'm concerned about their safety while they're enjoying all the great water activities available at the lake. A few years ago at Boulder Beach swim area a 14-year-old boy drowned because he was not wearing a life jacket. He jumped off a raft to try to get a paddle that had dropped into the water. Most drownings at Lake Mead are due to people not wearing a life jacket.

These are the background facts that I use in this program:

1. Drowning can occur within 20-60 seconds.
2. Most drownings occur within 10-15 feet from safety.
3. Two out of three drowning victims had no intention of going into the water.
4. Most drowning victims had a PFD (life jacket) available, but did not wear it.

The proper use of life jackets is really the central idea behind this program. I mention that there are several different types of life jackets that people use depending on the type of activity. Most of the students are familiar with the types of lifejackets that have cartoon characters on them. That type of life jacket is usually a Type III. I don't think it's important to go through every type, but I've included a handout for your own reference that illustrates the different types approved by the United States Coast Guard. The ones the students are most likely to be familiar with are the Type II and Type III.

I ask if they have heard the other name for life jacket which is a PFD or Personal Flotation Device. I write the letters P, F, D on the board, and then fill in what each letter stands for:

Personal (it belongs to me)
Flotation (it helps to float in the water)
Device (it is an item)

I sometimes bring in my own life jacket to show them how it fits me perfectly. For those of you who do not have your own, then see if the adult life jacket in the duffel bag fits you before you demonstrate this or ask for a student to come in front and have them choose a life jacket that fits them. Demonstrate how to properly tie and/or zip the life jacket.

Now that the students have learned that there are various types of life jackets and how to properly wear one, get them ready for a fun relay race.

PFD RELAY

I usually divide the class into two teams, unless I have a class of 30 students, then I will divide them into four teams. The students sit down behind each other in a line in their individual teams. I tell them I'm going to time them to see which team can get finished first. Each student must put on the life jacket, tie it properly, then untie it, take it off, and give it to the person next in the line. I keep all the students sitting down, except for the one putting on the life jacket. I try to rush the students. Put a lot of pressure on them!

Before the relay begins make sure you've asked the teacher for help. I will usually help some of the students that are having difficulty with tying. These are only first graders and some don't have that skill yet! The teacher can assist one team, while I assist the other. Before the relay begins I write the teams on the board, so I can record the time for all the teams. This is fun and the class will probably get excited. That's o.k. You definitely want teammates cheering for each other. You want them to feel rushed! Use the stopwatch to record the time for each team.

Once you've finished the relay, discuss with them briefly just how quickly someone can drown in the water. It only takes 20-60 seconds. I ask the students the question, what do we all need to breathe in order to live? *Air*. What happens when we breathe water instead? PFDs or life jackets are designed to keep us breathing air. That is the purpose of life jackets.

If time permits, you can have them do the relay race again, but this time instead of trying to rush all the students, have the students sit quietly and do not pressure anyone. Have the students take their time getting on the life jackets. Everyone needs to be very calm and quiet. The time it takes for the teams should be shorter, because when people are frantic they aren't as able to do something as well. But when they're calm and focused it's easier. (If I use four teams, then I change which teams have the adult lifejacket for the second time since that one does not take as long to put on.) I only do the second relay if time permits. The best way to keep safe in the water is to put on your life jacket before you get onto a boat or before you go swimming from shore.

PFD FASHION SHOW

I choose a few students to come into the hall with me, while the teacher stays with the class. I tell the class before we go out that we're going to have a fashion show with the PFDs. I only take a few minutes outside the classroom door and have the students put on the PFDs incorrectly. I really make them look wacky! I even use the throwable!

When they come back into the classroom I introduce them as *the name of school Fashion Club* that will be modeling this year's water safety styles. I really talk up the wackiness of each student's PFD. Then I ask the class just what they think is wrong with each of these models. I take one example at a time and set it right, so they'll know what is the correct thing to do! This is fun, but the lesson is that life jackets must be worn correctly, so that they can keep you safe in the water.

I always end the program by reminding students that "Life Jackets Float, You Don't". I always encourage those students who don't have their own life jackets to speak with their parents about getting them one.

When I give the water safety education programs it never fails that I meet students who have had near drowning experiences. A few times I've even met students who've had family members drown. A few years ago I spoke with a student who was at Boulder Beach swim beach when there was a drowning there. It definitely opened my eyes to the importance of what we do. Any of these students could be the next drowning victim at Lake Mead National Recreation Area. Our safety education programs can save lives. Please give the students your very best effort.