

2.1 Safety Aids

These could save a life – learn how to use them

Responsibilities

Personal

- Know how to use the club's safety aids and follow the club's rules on their use
- Wear a personal flotation device (PFD) when required by your club or coach or when you consider it to be necessary

What safety aids are available? Where are they?

Club

- Provide and adequately maintain sufficient lifejackets, buoyancy aids, throw lines and space blankets to cover the size and needs of the club as detailed by the club's risk assessments and Safety Plan
- Provide training to all members in the location and effective use of safety aids
- Have procedures in place for the purchase, maintenance and use of safety aids
- Ensure that all safety aids comply with specified standards, see Further Information

Coach

- Include the use of safety aids as part of the training and risk management strategies, and follow the club's procedures on their use, maintenance and storage
- Report any safety equipment that is damaged or missing
- Lead by example in the use of safety aids

Check and store them correctly

Club Water Safety Adviser

- Advise on the club procedure on the use of safety aids
- Monitor the procedure in operation and advise on any necessary changes to improve their use

Competition Organisers

- Ensure that all people involved in running the competition have an appropriate PFD and/or throw line (if identified in the Competition Safety Plan) and are aware of how to wear and use them correctly

Minimum standards to be adopted

- All lifejackets and buoyancy aids (PFDs) must conform to the relevant national EN standards and carry the CE mark of approval
- All clubs must have written procedures in place for the use of safety aids and ensure that all members understand and follow them
- All coxswains must wear an approved lifejacket or buoyancy aid on top of all other garments when in a boat. In 'front-loader' boats, only a manually operated lifejacket can be worn to allow easy and unrestricted escape from the boat
- All launch drivers and passengers must wear an approved lifejacket or buoyancy aid on top of all other garments when in a launch
- Where a participant cannot meet the swimming competency standard set by the ARA or the club, a lifejacket or buoyancy aid must be worn when in a boat
- Where, because of a medical problem, there is a risk to a participant of becoming unconscious or immobile, an automatic lifejacket must be worn
- All lifejackets and buoyancy aids should be checked for wear and tear before each use
- Lifejackets and buoyancy aids should be stored properly in a designated place where they can dry out naturally away from a heat source
- All safety aids should be made readily accessible, particularly throw lines, and stored ready for use where they may be needed in an emergency
- All those involved in rowing should be trained and have had practice in the use of a throw line
- Throw lines and space blankets must be carried by coaches and those monitoring activities
- Lifejackets must be checked for damage, leaks and gas cylinder integrity frequently and the check recorded in a maintenance log in accordance with the Section on Using and Looking After PFDs. See additional information on PFDs
- Junior beginners must wear a PFD until they have completed a swim test, received training in capsizing procedure and reached a satisfactory level of competence in, for example, a single sculling boat

Are throw lines accessible and usable?

Further good practice

(In addition to minimum standards to be adopted)

- Adult beginners should be offered the use of a PFD
- Those training on their own away from immediate help should wear a PFD, especially in cold conditions

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Additional information on PFDs

Selecting a Personal Flotation Device (PFD) or lifejacket for Sculling or Rowing

All lifejackets and buoyancy aids sold must have an 'EN' (European Standard) number. This standard, which has replaced British Standard, ensures that all lifejackets and buoyancy aids sold in this country meet very stringent requirements regarding the design, performance, materials and components used. It is important therefore to purchase from a recognised and reputable manufacturer.

Lifejackets

Lifejackets rely on inflation to provide buoyancy. They have no permanent inbuilt buoyancy making them generally compact and easy to wear. There are three methods of inflation:

The automatic gas inflation lifejacket

Inflation is automatically triggered via a CO² gas cylinder on entering the water without the wearer having to take any action. This is recommended for those with disabilities and those with a medical condition that may render them unconscious before entering the water.

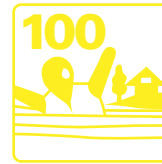
The manual gas inflation lifejacket

Inflation occurs when the user pulls a short cord which fires CO² gas from a cylinder in the personal flotation device. This is recommended for normal use and particularly coxswains. It is the only type that should be used in front-loaders and, indeed, the only type allowed in these boats in competition.

The oral inflation lifejacket

The wearer has to inflate the jacket by blowing into a tube. This may prove difficult, particularly if the wearer is unfit or unable to breathe correctly in cold or rough water. These are not recommended for rowing.

The buoyancy rating of PFDs is in Newtons. 10 Newtons are approximately equivalent to 1kg of buoyancy.



- **Lifejacket 100** Standard Application Sheltered Waters, children under 40kg, Relevant European Standard EN395:1993



- **Lifejacket 150** Suitable for swimmers and non-swimmers
- Will give reasonable assurance of safety from drowning to a person not fully capable of helping themselves
- Although intended to self-right, an unconscious user may not immediately do so
- Suitable for anyone wearing heavy, waterproof clothing



- **Lifejacket 275** Standard Application Offshore, extreme conditions Heavy protective clothing Relevant European Standard EN399:1993

ARA Lifejacket

The ARA, in conjunction with GeTeK Ltd., have produced a 150 Newton lifejacket manufactured to EN396, suitable for rowers 32kg and over and designed specifically to minimise interference with the normal rowing action and overheating during strenuous activity. It is available as a manual gas or automatic gas inflation.

Buoyancy aids

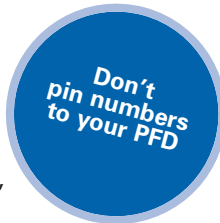


- **Buoyancy aid 50** Relevant European Standard EN393:1993
- Air-foam filled buoyancy aids have inherent buoyancy and thus do not require inflation. They are particularly suitable for younger juniors or those that prefer this type in preference to a lifejacket
- Only suitable for competent swimmers
- For use in sheltered water where help is close at hand
- For providing support to a conscious person who can help themselves
- **Warning: This is not a lifejacket**

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Using and looking after PFDs

- It is essential that a lifejacket or buoyancy aid be worn correctly if it is to be effective in the event of an emergency. When fastened, it should be a tight but comfortable fit. If straps are slack there is the risk of it slipping over the head
- Pinning race numbers or other items through the inflation bladder is dangerous
- After use, PFDs should be stored so that they can dry out naturally, never on a radiator or dried with a hairdryer or similar, as this will have an adverse effect on the buoyancy material
- Never put a PFD away for someone else to use if it is defective or has been activated – it must be quarantined until it has been serviced
- Remember that before using your lifejacket it only takes a minute to make a visual check to ensure that the CO² cylinder is satisfactory and tight, the automatic inflation cartridge has not been fired or the manual firing mechanism used. Always check the manual activation cord is visible and can be easily used in an emergency
- PFDs must be checked **every three months** and a record kept of the following:
 - all webbing, stitching, buckles and zips are in good order
 - the CO² cylinder has not been fired, is free from corrosion and is screwed up tightly
 - where there is an automatic inflation cartridge this should be checked to confirm it has not fired
 - the inflation bladder should be checked for leaks by inflating orally, or by hand pump to avoid moisture build-up inside, and left inflated for 24 hours to ensure there are no leaks and pressure is maintained
- Over time the foam material in buoyancy aids can degenerate
- With all PFDs there should be maintenance instructions. These can also be accessed on the various manufacturers' websites



Further information

Row Safe – related sections

- 3.1 Beginners
- 3.2 Juniors

ARA website

- Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs)

Other

- Royal National Lifeboat Institution – www.rnli.org.uk
- GeTek Ltd – www.getek.co.uk

