



**Department of
Education**

APPENDIX R: SURF RIDING

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SURF RIDING

This document contains specific requirements related to surf riding activities and must be read in conjunction with *Appendix A: General Requirements in the Recreation and Outdoor Education Activities for Public Schools Procedures*.

1. BACKGROUND

This document contains specific reference to surf riding (also referred to as surfing). Activities include riding waves on either a surf or body board.

Teachers who plan to conduct paddling activities in surf environments (for example, surf ski riding and stand-up paddle boarding) must refer to Appendix L: Paddling for activity-specific mandated requirements.

If a recreational or “free” swimming activity is included in a surf-riding program refer to Appendix S: Swimming and Water Based Activities for activity-specific mandated requirements.

DEFINITIONS

ASSISTANT SUPERVISOR

Assists the Qualified Supervisor and or Department Teacher-in-charge. Must have recent and relevant experience in the activity, at the level being offered to the students.

BODY BOARDING

The activity of riding waves towards the shore whilst lying prone on a body board.

CALM WATER

A still or slow-moving water environment with no to low swell, within **400 meters** of a safe landing point. These areas may include a sheltered/ protected coastal area or river, dam, waterhole or inland water body.

DEPARTMENT TEACHER-IN-CHARGE

A member of the teaching staff employed by the Department of Education (or an Approved Provider) and managing the school activity. For information relating to Approved Providers refer to Appendix A: General Requirements.

LOW SWELL

Shore breaking waves that are on average less than 0.5meters and have a times wave gap of greater than 8 seconds.

OPEN WATER

An unprotected water environment that may be fast flowing or turbulent, such as a surf beach, flowing river or waterway, tidal coastal water, or areas affected by swell and or/strong currents. This also applies to calm water areas greater than **400 meters** from a safe landing point.

SHORE

An area of land adjacent to the water. These areas may include low lying land, a beach, wharf, jetty or similar rigid structure attached to land.

QUALIFIED SUPERVISOR

Has the required qualifications, skill, experience and technical knowledge to instruct the activity.

SURF

The mass/or line of foam created by swell and the breaking of waves against the shore.

SURF RIDING (SURFING)

The activity of riding waves towards the shore whilst standing or lying on a surfboard.

2. ENVIRONMENT

Each aquatic environment is unique, and surf environments can be more hazardous. The effects of weather, currents, wind, waves, tide and land formations are less predictable and therefore must be continuously monitored.

The Qualified Supervisor must have first-hand knowledge about the venue, weather conditions, tides and currents at that venue (see Appendix A: General Requirements).

The Department Teacher-in-charge must ensure that research and/or a reconnaissance trip is conducted around the planned locations, well in advance to confirm sites are suitable.

The Department Teacher-in-charge confirms the suitability of the venue after considering the:

- location
- strength of tides, currents and presence of rips
- water depth and temperature
- presence, power and height of waves and swell
- students' capacity, skills and experience
- availability of shelter from the weather
- possibility of members of the public or other groups in the same area
- high tide changes that affect entry and exit
- supervision required.

When assessing the suitability of a location, access to resources, services and facilities need to be also considered (for example, toilets, water, external communication and assistance).

The Qualified Supervisor must clearly define the activity area to the supervisory team and students prior to entering the water.

An out of water waiting area must be clearly defined where students are supervised at all times.

Weather conditions can change rapidly and must be assessed and monitored in the days leading up to the activity, on the day of the activity and throughout the activity. In particular, any swells or rips should be noted, and students instructed on how to safely negotiate out of a rip if necessary. The supervisory team may need to modify, relocate or cancel the activity at any time. Check the Bureau of Meteorology for up-to-date conditions and weather warnings.

Supervisors must be aware that forecasted wave heights describe the average height of the highest third of the expected wave. It is estimated that one in every seven waves will be higher than forecast (rogue waves) and that there is potential to experience king waves of twice the forecasted height or greater.

Water depth must be appropriate for the activity.

Checks must be made directly prior to the activity regarding shark sightings or alerts in the location of use. In the event of a shark sighting the activity may need to be postponed or

modified. Prior to conducting the activity, the Department Teacher-in-charge must access information regarding coastal conditions and shark activity. Information is available from:

- SharkSmart website
- Surf Life Saving WA (SLSWA) website
- SLSWA X (Twitter feed)
- Beachsafe.

The activity must be cancelled immediately, and students/staff removed from the water if a shark warning alert is sounded or becomes current.

In the north of WA these checks must also extend to Estuarine Crocodiles. Further information is available from The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions or Be Crocwise.

If the beach has been closed or if conditions are deemed to be unsuitable by the beach lifeguards, the activity must be cancelled.

Any beach selected must have emergency vehicle access.

The activity area **must not** exceed **100 metres** along the shore and must be clearly defined by markers on the beach, or identifiable natural features. These areas should be determined in consultation with beach control authorities.

Surf-riding activities **must not** operate in designated swimming areas (between the red and yellow flags).

The following types of surf are appropriate for students' various levels of skills:

- Beginner and Intermediate: spilling waves, broken waves, small unbroken, and beach breaks.
- Advanced: larger spilling and plunging waves, reef breaks. These carry additional risk.

Guidance

Potential dangers in aquatic environments may include hypoxic blackout (shallow water blackout), immersion in deep water, impact injuries from dumping waves, or from diving into shallow water, cuts and abrasions from rocks or snags, sunburn, hypothermia, marine stings, objects in water acting as strainers and the presence of marine craft.

For more information regarding weather and wave height:

- Bureau of Meteorology
- Weatherzone
- Seabreeze
- Swellnet.

3. CAPACITY OF STUDENTS

Prior to commencing any surfing activity, the Department Teacher-in-charge must confirm that each student has the capacity and required swimming and water safety skills to participate safely.

Specific strategies and support must be put in place for students who may have had limited exposure to water-based activities.

Primary-aged students may undertake surfing activities if the Department Teacher-in-charge deems that each student has the physical capacity, skills and/or support to enable them to capably control the board at the proposed location.

The Department Teacher-in-charge, in consultation with the Qualified Supervisor where applicable, determines whether the students will need to develop additional skills to safely participate in the proposed activity.

Students with a disability or impairment, or who have had limited exposure to water-based activities, may participate in surfing activities provided adequate safety, control and modification measures are implemented. Specific consideration is given to:

- the impact of the student's ability to safely participate in the activity
- location and access
- supervision levels
- suitable equipment (soft-top surfboards)
- providing curriculum adjustments so the student can access the activity on the same basis as their peers
- on-shore assistance and supervision.

Students who have a medically diagnosed condition that may impact on their safety, must be cleared by a medical practitioner before they can participate.

Students must demonstrate the following skills and understandings prior to, and whilst participating in surf activities or programs:

- recognition of rips and currents, wave types and breaks
- identification and treatment of marine stingers
- self-rescue in surf conditions
- familiarity with buddy practices
- surf etiquette and rules
- recognition of signals.

The Department Teacher-in-charge and relevant supervisors must be aware of health care maintenance and/or any intensive health care needs of students, particularly allergic reactions to stings or bites in a marine environment. Protective equipment such as gloves and appropriate exposure suits should be considered for students who are susceptible.

A re-assessment of students' capacity is undertaken if any circumstances surrounding the activity change. This includes any change in the condition of the aquatic environment, their medical fitness, or their capacity to undertake the activity.

Before moving beyond broken waves, students must demonstrate proficiency moving out in surf (beyond breaking waves) whilst maintaining possession and control of the board.

Guidance

The Department's Swimming and Water Safety Continuum and the Safety Survival Sequence (refer to Swimming and Water Safety Activities document) within the Swimming Instructors Handbook and Guidelines and Royal Life Saving Swim and Survive Instructor Assessment Guide are useful resources for gauging students' swimming and water safety skills. They are only indicative of student skills at the time of assessment and their use does not guarantee students' safety, nor reduce a teacher's duty of care responsibilities.

Prior to engaging in surf riding activities, students should be able to:

- swim 200 metres in less than seven (7) minutes and
- support themselves in water for a minimum of fifteen (15) minutes without the aid of a flotation device.

If a student's capacity has been compromised due to injury or illness, they may require re-assessment prior to re-engaging with surf riding.

All participating students should be capable of remaining calm in deep water surf and/or surf that is some distance from the beach.

4. STUDENT HEALTH CARE

Refer to Appendix A: General Requirements for further requirements.

5. ACTIVITIES

Activities conducted in aquatic environments require a high degree of dynamic risk analysis and management. Surf environments can be more hazardous than calm and open water environments.

The full range of activities for the proposed surf riding program must be assessed to inform planning and selection of appropriate water-environments.

The duration of the surf activity is dependent on prevailing conditions (wind, swell and water temperature), the capacity of the students to participate and the quality/type of attire worn. Time limits for the activity must be planned prior to entering the water. The surfing activity area must be defined prior to entering the water to students and enforced.

Buddy practices and lost buddy procedures are used wherever practical.

Guidance

Surfboard riding and bodyboarding activities may be included as an advanced activity for primary students in Years 4-6 if the Department Teacher-in-charge determines that each student has the capacity and skills to participate safely in the activity.

6. EQUIPMENT

All equipment must be checked by the Qualified Supervisor and Department Teacher-in-charge, to confirm that it is appropriate to the activity, safe and well maintained.

Damaged equipment must be removed from use including surfboards that have sharp fibreglass splinters around contusions or damaged areas or “dings”.

Surf riders and body boarders must have a leg rope or leash securely fastened to the board at all times. It is recommended that body boarders wear fins that are correctly fitted and in good repair.

Leg and paddle ropes and body board leashes must be inspected for cuts, abrasions, and replaced when damaged.

Equipment required for the whole group includes:

- emergency rescue equipment (for example, surfboards, rescue tubes, wave skis, body boards or swim fins) must be in good working condition, in close proximity to participants and accessible by a Qualified Supervisor
- appropriate first aid equipment must be accessible and include items that are appropriate to the activity, environment, size and needs of the group and duration of the activity
- transport must be available in case of emergency.

Mobile phones must be available for use in an emergency situation (with allowance made for the fact that they do not operate in all localities). Where there is no mobile phone coverage, MHz, MF/HF, UHF or VHF radios should be used (27- MHz radios are being phased out and will no longer be compliant from 1 September 2028). A satellite phone is an alternative option. Knowledge of the location of a phone that has range should be known at all locations.

Where a safety or support craft is used, it must comply with Department of Transport Marine requirements.

Guidance

Boards constructed of soft materials are recommended for beginning surfers.

It is recommended if hard plastic or fibreglass boards are used or if surfing over reef, suitable helmets should be worn.

In cold weather, a wetsuit or thermal rash vest is recommended.

Nose cones should be used on boards.

Students should bring additional clothing to protect them from the sun/wind/cold before surfing, and as soon as they leave the water, as appropriate for the location and weather (for example, a towel, jumper, long trousers and hat). Students who own sunglasses should be encouraged to bring and wear them when required.

Drinking water should be available at all times.

A broad-based, water-resistant sunscreen should be applied as per manufacturer's instructions.

7. THE SUPERVISORY TEAM

Refer to [Appendix A: General Requirements](#) for further requirements.

8. EXTERNAL PROVIDERS

The Department Teacher-in-charge must ensure that when booking an external provider, they are made aware of the documentation that they need to provide, or that must be sighted.

External providers must follow all mandated requirements in the Recreation and Outdoor Education Activities for Public Schools Procedures will be asked to supply copies of certain documentation, and/or make them available for the Department Teacher-in-charge to sight. External providers should familiarise themselves with [Appendix A: General Requirements](#) and [Appendix D: External Provider Checklist](#).

9. MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS AND COMPETENCIES

The Department Teacher-in-charge must confirm that the supervisory team members possess skills in surf activities, and have the appropriate recent and relevant experience, to identify and manage potential risks at any stage during surf activities.

Refer to [Appendix A: General Requirements](#) for mandated:

- first aid qualifications and
- evidence requirements for all qualifications and competencies.

Minimum qualifications and/or formal training requirements

The Department Teacher-in-charge must confirm that the supervisory team:

- has recent and logged experience in the activity at the level being offered to students
- has the relevant qualifications
- has experience and knowledge of local surf zones, rips and current, including surf types and patterns
- has current aquatic rescue qualifications, relevant to the activity and location and the physical attributes required be able to affect such a rescue
- understands the emergency responses and supervision responsibilities
- can perform first aid, including CPR (holds a current first aid qualification that is relevant to the activity and location).

The Qualified Supervisors must hold the following:

Qualified Supervisor requirements	<p>Must have recent and relevant logged experience and at least <u>ONE</u> of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Current Surf Board Riding</i> accreditation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Foundation Surf Coach Accreditation (Formerly Level 1)</i> ○ <i>Progression Surf Coach Accreditation (Formerly Level 2)</i> • RLSSA <i>School Teacher Aquatic Rescue Training (START)</i> certificate • SLSA <i>Bronze Medallion</i> • Surf Life Saving WA (SLSWA) <i>Community Surf Rescue certificate</i> • an equivalent qualification, as recognised by the Director General.
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Guidance

Rescue and resuscitation qualifications are current for twelve months.

It is recommended that supervisors maintain evidence of their currency and experience through the use of a logbook, or similar.

Safety or support craft

Where a safety or support craft is used, the Department Teacher-in-charge must ensure that the supervisor in control of the craft:

- is competent in the use of the craft and holds one of the following:
 - a Recreational Skippers Ticket (RST)
 - *Safety Boat Operator*
 - *Australian Sailing Power Boat Handling* certificate (PBH)
 - a relevant commercial ticket.
- wears a safety tether lanyard at all times
- has recent and logged experience in affecting relevant support and rescue.

Where a safety or support craft is required to accompany participants, the craft must comply with Department of Transport *Marine: Recreational Boating* or *Marine Safety (Domestic Commercial Vessel) National Law Act 2012* requirements.

10. MINIMUM LEVEL OF SUPERVISION

The Department Teacher-in-charge must confirm that the supervisory team members possess skills in the relevant surf activities and have the appropriate experience, knowledge and skills to identify and manage potential risks at any stage during surf activities.

The level of risk in aquatic activities is dynamic and must be constantly monitored and assessed.

Supervisory requirements must take into consideration the:

- age, experience and capacity of each student
- students' medical conditions, disability or impairment
- supervisors' competence and experience
- competence of supervisors at the venue
- type of activities to be undertaken
- nature of the environment
- location of the activity
- SLSWA or X (*formally Twitter*) feed of shark sightings
- weather conditions, which need to be assessed and monitored in the days leading up to the activity, on the day of the activity, and throughout the activity. The supervisory team may need to modify, relocate, or cancel the activity at any time.

Greater supervision must be provided for less able students.

For all surf activities regardless of participant age or group size, the minimum level of supervision is:

- at least two supervisors at all surf riding activities
- one of these supervisors must be a Qualified Supervisor.

The appropriate number of supervisors directly monitoring students in the water must be maintained at all times. The Department Teacher-in-charge must assess student capacity and mitigate risk by increasing ratios where required.

Students must be briefed to maintain a rigorous lookout role for a designated buddy in the water.

Students not participating in the water activity must be supervised by an additional member of the supervisory team. This cannot be the second supervisor who is designated to keep watch of the participants in the water.

Lifesavers and/or lifeguards on duty at a beach can only be considered as a supervisor for the proposed activity, if their sole responsibility at that time is to supervise the students participating in the activity.

Kindergarten - Year 3

This activity is not recommended for students in Kindergarten - Year 3.

Year 4 - 6

There must be two supervisors at all times:

- One Qualified Supervisor for every 16 students or part thereof and
- One supervisor for every 8 students or part thereof (including the Qualified Supervisor).
- A maximum of 8 boards per supervisor.

Year 7 - 12

There must be two supervisors at all times:

- One Qualified Supervisor for every 24 students or part thereof and
- One supervisor for every 12 students or part thereof (including the Qualified Supervisor).
- A maximum of 12 boards per supervisor.

The table below illustrates the supervision requirements for common group sizes. Groups may be larger than those indicated here but must remain within the prescribed supervision ratios and any limits set out earlier in this document.

<i>Environment</i>	<i>Year Level</i>	<i>Number of Students</i>	<i>Qualified Supervisor</i>	<i>Assistant Supervisor</i>	<i>Total Supervisory team</i>
<i>Open Water</i>	<i>K-3</i>	<i>Not recommended</i>			
	<i>4 - 6</i>	1 - 16	1	1	2
		17 - 24	2	1	3
		25 - 32	2	2	4
	<i>7 - 12</i>	1 - 24	1	1	2
		25 - 36	2	1	3
		37 - 48	2	2	4

Guidance

Members of the supervisory team should consult the relevant lifeguard or patrol captain in charge of a location, on arrival.

The supervisory team will undertake a rescue and perform any CPR until the lifeguard or the SLSWA lifeguard or a member of the emergency services takes over responsibility for the rescue.

11. SUPERVISION STRATEGIES

The Department Teacher-in-charge, in consultation with the Qualified Supervision, must ensure that supervision strategies:

- maintain the safety and well-being of students at all times
- reflect risks associated with the activity
- address circumstances when students are not in clear view of the supervisors
- include students who are not actively participating in the activity.

An emergency response plan must be prepared for the proposed activity site.

At a patrolled beach, the lifeguard or mobile patrol should be notified on arrival.

The appropriate number of supervisors directly monitoring the students in the water must be maintained at all times.

Regular checks are made on surf conditions to confirm suitability for the entire group.

A head count or roll check should take place before, during and after students enter and leave the water.

Rules are established to confirm that all students remain in close proximity to the supervisor while participating in surf activities.

If other schools or groups are using the same venue, potential risks must be identified, and supervisory strategies put in place to deal with the nature and number of those groups.

Guidance

Consideration is given to positioning, scanning and safety check systems (as outlined in Swimming and Water Based Activities).

One member of the supervisory team should be placed on lookout from the beach or an elevated feature such as a vessel, groyne or jetty.

12. IDENTIFICATION OF PARTICIPANTS

A suitable system of identifying participating students is determined after assessing the environment, the capacity of the student cohort, the type of activities that will be undertaken, and the number of participating students.

Students should wear a highly visible rash vest or identifiable item.

Supervisors should make themselves clearly identifiable by wearing an alternative colour rash vest in the water.

Guidance

Systems may include:

- confining students to designated areas not being utilised by other schools or the public
- the wearing of rash vests, standardised high-visibility lycra vests or shirts, 'life saver' or swimming caps, neoprene armbands or school uniform.

Bodyboards, and surfboards should be clearly marked and easily identifiable.

13. COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Refer to Appendix A: General Requirements for further requirements.

14. RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN

Refer to Appendix A: General Requirements for further requirements.

15. EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN

Refer to Appendix A: General Requirements for further requirements.

16. BRIEFING STUDENTS AND SUPERVISORS

The Department Teacher-in-charge must confirm that all participants are briefed about:

- the educational purpose (learning intentions) and the cooperative nature of the activity
- components of the activity
- standards of behaviour, including roles and responsibilities
- hazard identification and safety requirements
- buddy practices and procedures that will be followed if members of the party become lost or separated from the group
- boundaries marked for the activity
- communication signals to gain attention and request assistance
- emergency and evacuation procedures, signals and location of emergency equipment
- how to identify currents, tides, reefs and other potential hazards of the venue, including safe entry and exit points
- minimal impact principles for that location (see Leave No Trace principles).

In addition to the above, the Department Teacher-in-charge must confirm that the supervisory team have been briefed about the following:

- the role and location of supervisors
- maintaining supervision ratios (including of those students not involved in the activity)
- modified/adjusted activity requirements for students with a disability or impairment
- the system for identifying students and supervisors
- student-specific medical requirements
- conditions associated with hypothermia, sunburn and dehydration
- communication strategies that will be used throughout the activity, including designated signals to gain the attention of the whole group, and to identify when emergency assistance is required
- location of first aid kit and emergency/rescue equipment
- appropriate clothing for the activity and weather conditions, including thermal and sun protection
- aspects of the environment and expected weather conditions.

Special information sessions must be arranged for students or staff who were absent from preparatory briefings.

17. INFORMED CONSENT

Refer to Appendix A: General Requirements for further requirements.