

Site Identification and Audit Toolkit



Toolkit to assist practitioners to identify and audit suitable sites for basic swimming and water safety lessons in low resource settings

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Introduction

This toolkit has been developed to assist practitioners to identify safe and suitable sites for operating swimming and water safety lessons in low resource settings.

It includes tools to help initially select sites and check that sites remain suitable and safe while they are used.

Why is site selection and audit important?

Teaching basic swimming and water safety skills to school-age children aged 6 years and older reduces drowning risk. Implementing basic swimming and water safety skills lessons carries a risk of harm. Ensuring that a safe and suitable site is selected for the delivery of lessons is essential to reduce the risk of harm and help ensure that lessons are implemented in a safe and effective manner. It is also essential that the selected site remains safe to use for lessons while in operation.

The World Health Organization’s publication *Preventing Drowning: Practical guidance for the provision of day-care, basic swimming and water safety skills, and safe rescue a resuscitation training (2022)* recommends that organisations implementing basic swimming and water safety skills lessons perform site safety assessments. (*Practical Guidance 4: Perform a safety assessment using a checklist each time a swimming training site is used for a lesson*). This toolkit is designed to help practitioners implement this best practice recommendation.

How to use this toolkit

This toolkit has three key tools that can be used to assist you to manage swimming sites safely.

Tool	Use	Frequency
Site Identification Checklist	Used to help identify suitable sites for swimming lessons.	Initial site selection.
Daily Site Checklist	Used to check the site is safe to use before each lesson.	Daily, or before each lesson.
Supervisor Checklist	Used by supervisors to check that the site is operating safely.	Regularly – see details.

Each tool has its own supporting notes. These three tools are designed to be used together to help manage sites safely.

Site Identification & Selection

Choosing a suitable site to carry out swimming lessons is of the utmost importance. There are a lot of factors to consider when choosing a site – from accessibility for staff and students, to environmental hazards, water quality and water depth.

Who should use this tool?

It is important to engage key stakeholders in the site selection process. You should identify who the key stakeholders are for your programme and involve them in the process of site selection. Key stakeholders may include:

- Swimming teachers
- School staff
- Parents / parent groups
- Community groups
- Local authorities
- Implementing organisations

This is not an exhaustive list.

Each stakeholder may offer different perspectives and opinions, all of which are valuable and can assist not only with site selection, but with the success of the lessons overall.

Safety and Site Selection

Site identification and selection should be carried out safely. Those checking the site could be placed at risk if appropriate safety procedures are not in place.

To ensure safety, you should:

- 1) Have at least two staff present who have practical experience of the delivery of swimming lessons in open water environments.
- 2) Ensure staff have appropriate training – this could potentially include swimming teaching and lifeguard qualifications.
- 3) Ensure one member of staff who is trained in rescue stays on land and has appropriate rescue equipment, first aid kits and a means of communication to call for emergency assistance if required.
- 4) Ensure the staff member entering the water wears a lifejacket.

Site Selection Checklist

This checklist is designed to help you work through the key areas to consider when identifying a site that is potentially suitable for swimming lessons.

It is primarily for practitioners looking to assess lessons in open water sites. However, additional notes on swimming pools are provided below the checklist.

To use the checklist, you should work through all of the points and determine whether the site, at the time of assessment, meets the criteria required. You may place a tick in the **Pass** or **Requires Action** boxes for each point.

NOTE:

Every site is different and there may be hazards present that are not identified on this checklist. The checklist is a tool to help you to work through the key areas to consider.

Site Selection Checklist			
Date		Time	
Location		Lead Assessor Name	
Weather Conditions		Other Support Staff	
Tidal Conditions		Other Notes	
Point	Verification	Pass	Requires action
Water Quality			
Sufficiently clean water Water is clean enough to swim in without additional health risks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Check visually for signs of pollutants - Ask locals whether the site is commonly used for bathing - Check site is not used for aquaculture or farming - Check for sewerage inlets or agriculture run-off - Check for pollutant sources upstream / in the vicinity of the site - Check whether plant/fish life is present that should be – e.g. coral - If in doubt, where feasible conduct water quality testing - If using a swimming pool, check chlorine and PH levels - Check if water quality is adversely affected by rain 		
Water clarity Water is sufficiently clear that a child wearing prescribed swimwear could be seen by teacher if submerged	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Submerge prescribed swimwear under water and conduct visual test 		
Site Conditions			
Existing site use Site should not conflict dangerously with any existing use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Check that site is away from areas that could be crowded with other swimmers / bathers. - Consult with other water users to ensure no conflict of space. - Ensure appropriate barriers are in place (or can be put in place) to segregate the teaching area from other users. 		
Emergency Accessibility Site should be accessible for emergency access/evacuation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Should be able to get to medical professional within 30-minutes - Should be convenient and safe for staff and students to access. 		
Currents and Wind Students should be stable when standing in the water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use a bottle / buoyant object to assess current flow – the bottle should move slower than the teacher walking in the water. - Ask locals about current strength - Check for RIPS - Visually check for calm water surface / no waves - Ask locals about weather patterns, including wind speed, rain patterns, and any other weather hazards 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understand impact of events upstream, if applicable (such as rapid rise in water level following rain) 		
Tides Need to be aware of when the site is suitable for teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Check the tide times - Check the site conditions at both high and low tide 		
Water Depth Should be no deeper than chest height of the smallest child to be taught	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teacher to check depth by entering the water, considering the height of the students. 		
Safe Entry and Exit The water should be able to be entered and exited safely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local knowledge - The teacher walks safely and exits the water 		
Community Accessibility Should be easily accessible for children (within the community it is serving)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local knowledge – asking parents / teachers if acceptable - Field visits - Check that journey to the site is safe (e.g. safe roads) 		
Safe Surface Solid surface without any hazards underfoot (e.g. sharp objects, rocks, mud)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teachers to use a stick / pole and check the surface across the whole swimming area. 		
Dangerous plants & animals Free from hazardous plants and animals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local knowledge - Visually check 		
Resources			
Shelter Should be an area available to protect from elements (sun/wind/rain/lightning)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visually check - Check any usage restrictions with local people 		
Community permission / attitudes Community should be happy with swimming lessons taking place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ask community leaders, teachers, parents about community attitudes - Permission from landowner / local authority - There should be sufficient privacy in the cultural context 		
Changing and toilet facilities Ideally toilet / changing facilities should be present.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Check availability of toilet and changing facilities - Ensure changing facilities conform to cultural sensitivities 		
Seasonal Changes Is the site suitable at all times?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are there any seasonal changes that can affect any of the above? 		

Notes:

Is this site suitable?

If a site does not initially pass all of the criteria on the checklist, it may be possible to modify the site and then reassess.

For example, there may not be any suitable area to shelter from the sun at a site when it is initially assessed, but it may be possible to construct a simple sunshade which would rectify this point. If a site is modified, the checklist should be completed again once modifications have been made.

Not every site can be made suitable for swimming lessons. There are some hazards which may be impossible or impractical to resolve. For example, if poor water quality or a source of pollution is identified at the site, it may not be possible to remove this hazard and make the site safe for swimming lessons.

NOTE:

If you are unsure about the suitability and safety of a site to conduct swimming lessons then the site should not be used. The safety of the participants and teachers should always be the first priority.

Considerations for swimming pools

If you are considering using a swimming pool to operate lessons, it is still essential to conduct a site assessment. Not all swimming pools are safe or suitable for teaching swimming, and failure to properly assess the suitability of a swimming pool for lessons is dangerous.

In addition to the points noted on the Site Selection Checklist, the following points should be considered for swimming pools:

- **Water Quality** – The pool water should be tested regularly throughout each day. This should include PH and Chlorine level tests by suitably trained personnel.
- **Maintenance** – The pool should be regularly maintained and all equipment should be maintained in line with the manufactures guidelines.
- **Fire and Evacuation** – there should be a sufficient fire and evacuation plan in place and equipment should be regularly tested.
- **Legal compliance** – The pool should be operating legally and in line with local regulation.
- **Depth** – The pool depth should be marked. A clearly defined teaching area with a depth not exceeding chest height of the smallest child being taught should be available.

NOTE:

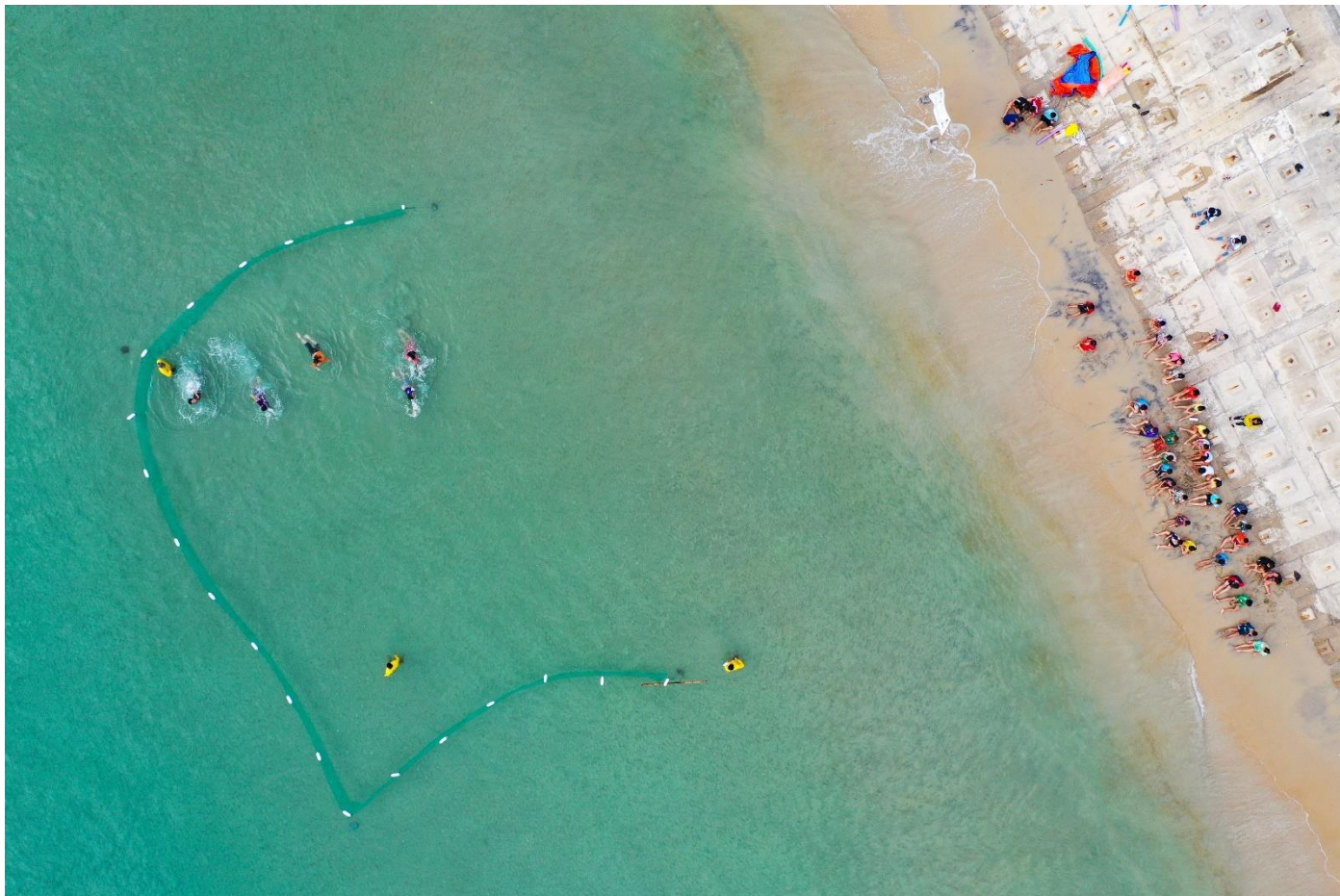
It is important not to assume that swimming pools are an inherently safe option for swimming lessons. Pools must be assessed to ensure that they are safe.

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Marking a safe area

If a site is identified as suitable for swimming lessons, an area at the site to conduct the lessons should be clearly defined with clear boundaries. Participants should be informed that they must remain within the swimming teaching area at all times, and this should be enforced by the teachers.

At some sites, the area may be marked out temporarily before the start of each lesson and removed at the end of the lesson. A simple system using rope with buoyant objects and sticks may suffice:



Above: Rope and floating objects used to mark out safe swimming teaching area (Vietnam)

At other areas, permanent or semi-permanent structures may be put in place to mark out the swimming area. Care should be taken to ensure that any structures put in place are safe and fit for purpose.

NOTE:

The area for teaching swimming at a site should be clearly defined and there should be no other activity in the teaching area while lessons are taking place.

Daily Checks

After a site has been assessed as suitable for swimming lessons, daily checks should be carried out.

Conditions may change frequently, so it is essential to ensure that the site is checked carefully before use to make sure it is safe. If conditions change throughout the day – for example, in a tidal area - the checks should be carried out before each lesson.

Daily Site Safety Checklist Notes

The checklist below has been designed for teachers / instructors to use prior to running lessons at a site.

For each point, there are three options:

Checked and no action required (note if needed)	Checked and action required to make safe	Checked and not possible to make safe (cancel, move or change session)
Tick this if no action is required and the lesson can operate normally.	Tick this if it is not currently safe but can be made safe by taking action. You can write the action taken in the Notes at the bottom of the form.	If it is not possible to make it safe, this box should be ticked. The lesson should be cancelled / moved to an alternative time. It may also be possible to conduct another activity that does not involve entering the water (for example, water safety skills on land).

This checklist is intended as a tool to help you develop your own checklist. You may use this as a template and modify it to make it suitable for your site.

NOTE:

If there are changes at the site throughout the day (e.g. tides, weather), a checklist should be conducted before each lesson. Teachers should also be aware of conditions changing while a lesson is taking place.

Daily Site Safety Checklist

Session Details				
Date				
Venue/Location		Lead Instructor Name		
Group Name/Reference number		Other Instructors or lifeguards or support staff		
Tide Time & Height (Low)		Tide Time & Height (High)		
Weather	Checked and no action required (note if needed)	Checked and action required to make safe	Checked and not possible to make safe (cancel, move or change session)	Guidance
Wind speed				Light/Medium/Strong may cause waves, currents or cool participants.
Wind direction				Onshore may cause waves. Offshore may drive groups away from shore. Cross shore may drive groups along the shore.
Rain				Heavy rain may cause pollution run off, if upstream heavy rain is forecast then risk of flooding.
Lightning				Seek shelter as soon as lightning is seen, or thunder is heard. Wait 30 minutes from last sight/sound before recommencing.
Air temperature				Cooling or heating of participants should be considered.
Water				
Water Cleanliness and Clarity				Visually check for signs of pollutants and ensure that the water is clear enough to identify participants.
Water Temperature				Suitable for length of lesson and condition of participants (I.e. are participants too cold)
Water Depth				No deeper than chest height of smallest child – must be checked
Water State (waves)				Wave height and type should be considered
Current				Use a bottle / buoyant object to assess current flow – the bottle should move slower than the teacher walking in the water.
Other water users				Boat use, fishing, water sports
Plants and animals				Free from dangerous plants and animals e.g. Snakes, Crocodiles, Mammals, Urchins, Leeches, Sharks
Submerged objects				Free from submerged sharp or blunt objects that could cause injury
Floor level				No sudden drops, soft mud, dense weed
Teaching Area				
Bathroom and changing areas				Should be clean and safe. Consider if toilet facilities are a hazard to water quality. Changing facilities should be free from other users (safeguarding).
Surrounding (land) area				Should be safe and free from hazards while participants not in water
Entry and exit				Safe and free from debris/hazards (litter, broken glass, shells)

Platforms/ropes/structures				Where using temporary structures, or ropes to mark teaching areas ensure they are structurally sound, free of sharp edges and opportunities for entanglement. They should be highly visible.
Equipment				
Teaching Aids				In safe condition and able to be used as expected
Rescue Equipment				In safe condition and able to be used as expected
First Aid Equipment				Available and sufficient
Other				
Emergency Communications				(please circle) – Radio/Mobile Phone/Telephone
Instructors briefed				All instructors informed of reporting from the daily checks
Participants				Number of participants is as expected, and the teacher/lifeguard supervision ration is in line with standard procedure. All participants have appropriate swimwear
Notes (complete for any actions taken)				

Retaining Records

It is recommended that Daily Checklists are retained at least one month after the lessons have been completed. If an incident has occurred, it is recommended that a copy of the relevant Daily Checklist is kept with the Incident Report Form for as long as the Incident Report Form is retained.

Supervisor Audits

Regular site audits help ensure that lessons are operating safely and effectively.

Each site may have a supervisor, or there may be a supervisor that covers a number of sites. For the purposes of supervisor audits, the supervisor should be someone who is not directly involved with the delivery of swimming lessons at the site or completing the daily checks. The supervisor should be trained to conduct site audits.

Checks should be carried out on the first lesson when the site is used, as well as at least two other times in the programme. More checks may be necessary if any issues are identified or the teachers need more support.

The Supervisor Audit Checklist form is intended to be a tool to assist with supervisor visits. You may use this as a template and modify it to make it specific for your site.

Supervisor Audit Checklist			
Site:		Date:	
Start Time of Audit:		Supervisor Name:	
Instructor Names:			
Criteria		Pass / Fail	Notes
General Check			
1. Class operating as per schedule?			
2. Number of instructors present during visit			
3. Are student/instructor ratios correct?			
4. Is teaching equipment present and in safe condition for use, and able to be used as expected? (list of equipment included)			
5. Teaching site set up safely as per normal operating procedure?			
6. Site free from powered water craft / other hazardous water users?			
7. All emergency equipment present? (first aid kit, rescue equipment)			
Facility / Site			
8. Water quality normal? (pool – check water quality testing results)			
9. Free from hazards – litter, rocks?			
10. Physical site structure in good condition?			
11. Wash room / changing area clean and safe?			
12. Children out of the water supervised and in safe location?			
Documentation			
13. Daily site safety checklist completed?			
14. Class register completed?			

15. Incident report forms completed (if incidents have occurred)?		
16. Enrolment forms present?		
17. Emergency Action Plan available?		
18. Documents kept in a secure and private location to ensure data protection?		
Instructors and Students		
19. Instructors following manual and lessons plans?		
20. Instructors in correct uniform?		
21. Instructors behaving professionally?		
22. Students in correct uniform?		
Environment		
23. Weather conditions suitable for lesson?		
24. Students have area of shade / shelter available?		
25. Tidal/Current conditions appropriate?		
Safeguarding		
26. Instructors / staff behaving appropriately / child safe manner?		
Previous Audits		
27. Previous audit reviewed and actions from previous audits have been completed?		
Instructor Feedback?		
1) Any concerns about the lessons, site or operations? 2) Any safeguarding concerns? 3) Teacher and staff wellbeing?		
Student feedback?		
Without teacher present but conducted in view. Are the students enjoying the lessons? Do they feel they are progressing? Anything they don't like? What do they like?		

Parent / caregiver / guardian feedback?

Are they happy with the lessons? Happy with progress? What is going well / not well?

Other stakeholder / community feedback?

(Are they happy with the lessons? Happy with progress? What is going well / not well?)

Actions

Action required:	By who:	By when:

Signature of Instructors:

Date:

Signature of Supervisor:

Date:

Finish Time of Audit: _____

Retaining Records

It is recommended that Supervisor Audit Checklists are retained at least one month after the lessons have been completed. If an incident has occurred, it is recommended that a copy of the Supervisor Audit Checklist is kept with the Incident Report Form for as long as the Incident Report Form is retained.

Glossary

Aquaculture	Aquaculture, also known as aquafarming, is the controlled cultivation of aquatic organisms such as fish, crustaceans, mollusks, algae and other organisms of value such as aquatic plants
Audit	A formal inspection or examination.
Current	A body of water moving in a definite direction.
Emergency Accessibility	The ability of Emergency Assets to reach the location.
Incident Report	A written report that should be completed after an emergency situation occurs to record what happened and how it was responded to.
Pollutant	A pollutant or novel entity is a substance or energy introduced into the environment that has undesired effects, or adversely affects the usefulness of a resource. For example – sewerage.
Seasonal Changes	Changes to the likely weather conditions that are affected by different seasons.
Sewerage	Consists of wastewater discharged from residences and from commercial, institutional and public facilities that exist in the locality.
Site	A specific location that has been selected to operate basic swimming and water safety lessons – such as a swimming pool, beach, or pond.
Submerged objects	An object that is below the surface of the water.
Tide	The rise and fall of sea levels in response to the forces exerted by the moon and sun.
Water clarity	The level of visibility in the water. Good water clarity indicates that it is easier to see into the water.
Water testing	A process of analysing water to determine water quality, usually conducted in a laboratory.

