

Be River Safe

River Crossing

Notes for Teachers & Leaders

Trampers, walkers and hunters cannot always use bridges to cross rivers and streams. They must cross rivers using techniques that increase their chances of crossing safely. On some occasions they must decide that it is just too dangerous to cross a river and wait for the river level to go down.

The **River Crossing** section of the **Be River Safe** DVD outlines current best practice for crossing rivers. Teachers and leaders will want to work through the DVD with their students or trainees before they go on a tramp or walk that involves a river crossing.

Relevant segments of the **Be River Safe** DVD **River Crossing** section are:

- Introduction and site selection
- Crossing preparation
- Using the Mutual Support Method to cross the river (with packs and using the clothing grasp)
- Turning back or retreating (including backing out of the river or completing a Caterpillar Turn)
- Day trip preparation
- Pack Float.

Crossing a river alone

The solo crossing section is a skill that experienced trampers and hunters use and may not be appropriate learning for beginning trampers or walkers.

When things go wrong – floating head first or feet first

The Pack Float section demonstrates what to do if things go wrong and you end up in the river current. The Pack Float section models someone coming down the river head first using their pack as buoyancy.

In some situations trampers wearing a full pack may choose to go down the river feet first. If a trumper is not wearing a full pack they should go down the river feet first.

The **Be River Safe** DVD section **Survival Swimming** models going down the river feet first. A brief description of Survival Swimming feet first is on the website: www.watersafety.org.nz

The Mountain Safety Council publications listed on the next page discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each method.



Be River Safe ... *learn to swim and survive*

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Understanding river features

Students and trainees need to understand river features before they can assess a safe place to cross the river. The **River Features** section of the **Be River Safe** DVD explains river features. Some features are explained with simple animation to show what is happening under the water. These features can also be viewed on the website: www.watersafety.org.nz

On this website there are a series of River Features factsheets and some River Features activities that extend learners' understanding of river features. You may want to work through these with your group.

Mountain Safety Council Publications

The Mountain Safety Council has two publications that can provide background information for teachers and leaders. These can be obtained from Mountain Safety Council: www.mountainsafety.org.nz

The New Zealand Mountain Safety Council's **Bushcraft Manual – Outdoor Skills for the NZ Bush**, Manual Number 40 (2011), is an essential resource for instructors, leaders and teachers involved with groups who cross take trips in the outdoors.

Be River Safe – River Crossings (2011). This A5 booklet is written for instructors and is designed to accompany the **Be River Safe** DVD.

Crossing a river - extending the learning beyond the classroom

The activities provided are classroom based. Students' or trainees' understanding of river crossings will be consolidated and extended if they can relate their learning to your local river(s).

You could:

- provide DVD footage or digital photographs of features in your local river(s), including safe and unsafe crossing sites
- organise a trip to the river and
 - analyse safe and unsafe crossing sites
 - prepare for and complete a river crossing.



Be River Safe ... *if in doubt STAY OUT*

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A river crossing presents an opportunity to engage students and trainees in planning an activity and assessing and managing the risks associated with the trip.

When planning and organising this trip you will want to follow the procedures established by your organisation but you may find the factsheet: PLANNING A TRIP useful. Schools will want to refer to EOTC Guidelines **Bringing the Curriculum Alive**.

Resources

- **Be River Safe** DVD sections **River Crossing** and **Survival Swimming**
- Factsheet: RIVER CROSSING – SELECTING A SAFE PLACE TO CROSS A RIVER
- Factsheet: RIVER CROSSING – THE MUTUAL SUPPORT METHOD
- Factsheet: RIVER CROSSING – TURNING BACK OR RETREATING OUT OF A RIVER
- Factsheet: RIVER CROSSING – PACK FLOAT
- Factsheet: PLANNING A TRIP
- Activities about river crossings.

Discussion

Discussion with students and learners about crossing rivers should focus on:

- the dangers of crossing rivers.
- identifying a safe place to cross.
- recognising that sometimes it is just too dangerous to cross the river and being prepared to wait until river conditions change.
- crossing in a group using the Mutual Support Method.
- advantages of the Mutual Support Method.
- how to get out of the river safely if the crossing becomes difficult or unsafe.
- what to do if you lose your footing and are swept into the river current.

