Guidelines for Swim Checks
Old North State Council, BSA

These are guidelines that we have worked out over the years to make the swim checks safe, reliable and as painless as possible for the boys. It is important to keep in mind that for some boys, this may be one of the most frightening things they have experienced. Worse yet, their friends are watching them! Experienced swimmers should have no trouble with the requirements if they are in good physical condition. Others will be surprised to realize that they cannot complete the swimmer or even beginner swim test. Adults are especially in danger of being out of shape and we should not assume that they are good swimmers just because they are adults. Please stick to these guidelines as much as possible**.
SAFETY IS OUR NUMBER ONE CONCERN AT CAMP AND AT THE PRE-CAMP SWIM CHECKS!**

WHO CAN ADMINISTER PRE-CAMP SWIM CHECKS FOR ONSC

We have recently changed our requirements for who can administer the pre-camp swim checks. The swim classification test may be **administered** by one of the following council-approved resource people.

- BSA Swimming & Water Rescue certified leader
- Certified Red Cross Lifeguard or equivalent
- BSA Lifeguard
- Aquatics Instructor, BSA

Please note that the certified swim check administrator MUST be at least 18 years old, and must agree in writing to follow our ONSC Swim Check Guidelines. The event must also include a supervisor who is 21 years or older who has taken the Safe Swim Defense course and understands his or her responsibilities.

BSA Swimmer Classifications (as described in the Aquatics Supervision Manual, pages 37 – 42)

Swimmer
"Jump feet first into water over the head in depth. Level off and swim 75 YARDS in a strong manner using one or more of the following strokes: sidestroke, breaststroke, trudgen, or crawl; then swim 25 yards using an easy, resting backstroke. The 100 yards must be completed in one swim without stops and must include at least one sharp turn. After completing the swim, rest by floating."

Beginner
"Jump feet first into water over the head in depth, level off, and swim 25 FEET on the surface. Stop, turn sharply, resume swimming and return to the starting place." (for a total of 50 feet)

Non-Swimmer – This is anyone who has not or cannot complete either the beginner or the swimmer test. Neither Scouts nor leaders are required to take a swim test, but they will be labeled as Non-Swimmers.

ADMINISTERING SWIM TESTS

The major point we ask you to always keep in mind is **SAFETY.** Remember that you are NOT doing the boy (or adult) any favors by calling him a "swimmer" or "beginner" if he really is not able to complete those tests. You are actually setting him up for failure or for a potential accident. If you are in doubt, err on the side of safety. He can always take the test again later to prove you wrong.

1 -Stand between the Scout and the water. (Don't let them in the water until you have a pretty good idea of what their skill level may be. (They may be reluctant to tell you the truth if they are afraid.)

2 –Say, "Hi, what's your name? My name is _____. (Make them feel comfortable. Try to avoid the word "test."

3 –Say something like, "Are you a pretty good swimmer?" (We are really just looking to see how confident or nervous they are. If they seem like they may be a weak swimmer, place them in the first lane where you can reach them quickly if they get in trouble.)

4 – Say, "Have you jumped in water over your head before?" (This is the scary part for some of them.)

5 - Describe the entire test to them before they start, but understand that they will probably not remember all of it. I often say, "Don't worry. I'll count the laps and tell you what to do."

6 - You are now their buddy, best friend and personal lifeguard. Walk along the side of the pool right beside them, and understand that there is a very good chance that a weak swimmer will get in trouble. **TEST ONLY ONE PERSON AT A TIME.**

7 - Encourage them and even give suggestions, but this is not the time to teach them how to swim.

8 - Tell them when to do the backstroke. (Try to get them to do the elementary backstroke as much as possible, but alterations in this are ok if they are relaxed while doing it. A racing backstroke is not the best choice, but is acceptable if slow and relaxed.)

9 – Ask them to float (for at least several seconds or long enough to be sure they can do it without moving their hands or feet.) This often requires a little coaching. Many children and adults have trouble floating. If so, have them stretch their arms in the water above their head and take in a big breath to become more buoyant. We don't care if their feet tend to sink. They just need to keep their head and upper torso floating.

10 – After completion, remind them to check in with whoever is keeping records. Walk the beginners and non-swimmers over to the person recording the swim classifications.

11 - Talk to a parent or a unit leader if they are labeled either beginner or non-swimmer. Explain why and tell them what they need to work on.

12 – Keep in mind that the Camp Aquatics Director has the right to retest anyone at any time, but you should also know that boys can ask to retake the swim test if the staff has time to do it for them.

Additional Information:

Note that some pools are 25 meters long, rather than 25 yards. This means that they will actually be swimming about 9 extra yards total. This should not be a problem, but someone may ask.

If they are not sure whether they can complete the swimmer test, encourage them to try. If they can do one full lap, they have already completed the Beginner test if you can get them to make a turn

If they definitely want to just take the Beginner test, you can also measure off the distance (about 1/3 of the length of the pool). Have them swim to that spot and turn around and swim back.

You may ask assistants to help. They are not required to have the training, but it is definitely preferable. YOU are responsible to spend enough time with assistants to be sure that they understand the guidelines.

Swimmers may not touch the bottom or the side of the pool while swimming, but in some pools this may be virtually impossible when the Scout is making his turn. Be reasonable if the boy is struggling, of course. A weak or struggling swimmer can become panicked very quickly, and his safety is much more important than the swim classification.

Swim goggles are allowed.

They may NOT swim underwater for more than one or two strokes for any part of the swim test.

Flip turns are allowed, but certainly not required.

No diving! (Feet first only)

If jumping in water over their heads seems really frightening to them, you may want to let him swim first and then return and show you that he can jump in water over his head. This seems to be a common fear that may go away after swimming, but it is still a requirement for the swimmer and beginner.

Let us know if you have other questions or concerns.

Jason Powers
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Council Program Director
Old North State Council

SWIM CHECK GUIDELINE AGREEMENT FORM

Name (Please print) – _____

Type of Certification – _____

Expiration Date of Certification -_____

> The swim classification test may be **administered** by one of the following council-approved resource people.
>
> - BSA Swimming & Water Rescue trained leader
> - Certified Red Cross Lifeguard
> - BSA Lifeguard
> - Aquatics Instructor, BSA

I have read, understood, and agree to follow the Swim Check Guidelines of the Old North State Council.

Signature _____

After swim check completion, please send:
1 - a copy of proof of the supervisor's training
2 - Pre-Camp Swim Check Agreement form
3 - Two copies of "Unit Swim Test Classification Record" (or a similar document if out of council)

PLEASE BE SURE TO COMPLETE ALL THE INFORMATION ON THE UNIT SWIM TEST CLASSIFICATION RECORD. Please specify Troop, Pack or Crew. We need to have contact information for one unit leader. Also, please be sure to specify which camp the boy or adult will be attending.

Attn: Colin Lemon
Old North State Council
1405 Westover Terrace
Greensboro, NC 27408