

be water safe

national challenge 2026

scouts

guidelines



"Drowning is not always obvious. It can happen silently and quickly, often in the time it takes to check a text or apply sunscreen."
— National Sea Rescue Institute (NSRI) —





SCOUTS South Africa has adopted '**Be Water Safe**' as the **National Challenge for 2026!**

This year's **National Challenge 2026 – Be Water Safe** invites Scouts to explore, learn, and act safely around all types of water. From rivers and dams to pools and the sea, Scouts will develop the skills and confidence to respond responsibly in emergencies. Water-related disasters, including floods, are a major cause of drowning, and Scouts trained in water safety are better prepared to help protect themselves and others.

- 💧 **Awareness:** Scouts explore and learn about local water risks.
- 💧 **Preparedness:** Scouts gain practical safety skills around water.
- 💧 **Service & Responsibility:** Scouts take action to make a difference in their community.

The **Be Water Safe National Challenge** is supported by the **Jaryd Payne Foundation**. The water safety skills that Scouts gain through the Challenge are in memory of Jaryd and honour his love of the outdoors and playing football with friends.

SCOUTS South Africa also thanks the **NSRI** for their continued support in making this challenge possible.

The National Sea Rescue Institute (NSRI) reports that South Africa experiences approximately **1,484 drownings every year**. This makes water safety one of the most important life skills for all young people.

Every day Scouts around the world contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the 'Scouts for SDGs' initiative. The SDGs are a call to action to end inequality and poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that everyone has access to health, justice, and prosperity. This initiative is the world's largest coordinated youth programme that ensures and enables young people to take local actions that contribute to solving global challenges. (<https://sdgs.scout.org/>)

Embracing '**Be Water Safe**' drives the SDGs in several ways. The SDGs the programme addresses include:

- **SDG 3: Good Health and Well Being: *Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.*** Promoting safety, preventing injuries, and reducing drowning deaths.
- **SDG 4: Quality Education: *Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.*** Building lifelong skills and knowledge in water safety.
- **SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities. *Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.*** Preparing young people to respond to floods and water-related disasters safely.





notes & guidelines:

- The **Court of Honour** (COH) should meet to decide how the Troop will tackle the Challenge. Activities can be done as a full Patrol (preferred), in smaller groups, or individually.
- The **Patrol** is the primary unit for activities. Wherever possible, tasks – especially the Community Service Project – should be done in Patrols. This contributes to the **Star Patrol Award** - Remember to load your Community Service Project on the **Scouts4SDGs** portal, <https://sdgs.scout.org/>.
- For the Patrol to qualify, **at least 50% of Scouts in the Patrol** must complete all **Be Water Safe** tasks and activities.
- Once the COH has agreed on a plan, the **Patrol Leader** should hold a **Patrol-in-Council** (PIC) to decide on timing and execution.
- For individual tasks done outside Troop activities, Scouts must provide a **parent/guardian confirmation letter** to their Patrol Leader or Troop Scouter.

safe from harm



*Whilst completing the requirements for the National Challenge **Scouts must not be placed in hazardous or dangerous situations under any circumstances.** All activities must comply with SCOUTS South Africa Safe from Harm framework and be **supervised by responsible adults.** Participation should offer meaningful learning or service experiences while always ensuring the Scout's safety and well-being!*

the challenge:

To complete the **National Challenge 2026 – Be Water Safe**, Scouts must complete requirements from each of the following three sections:

- **Awareness,**
- **Preparedness,**
- **Service & Responsibility**

Scouts may complete a combination of both Patrol and individual activities.

- **Note to the TS:** – These **Be Water Safe** tasks and activities could be incorporated into exciting Patrol Activities and in Troop meeting Programmes!

The **Be Water Safe Troop Programme-On-A-Plate** equips Scouts with the knowledge, skills, and habits to enjoy water activities safely. Through **games, practical activities, discussions**, and a fun **quiz**, Scouts will:

- **Identify hazards**
- **Use safety equipment**
- **Practice the buddy system**
- **Respond confidently in emergencies**

All while having **FUN** and living the Scouting values of **Preparedness, Responsibility, and Care for Others.**



task one: awareness

Scouts must **first complete Requirement 1** (mandatory), then choose **TWO additional requirements** from the list.

Requirement One (Mandatory):

- Participate in the **Be Water Safe Programme-on-a-Plate** (PoP).
This interactive Troop meeting programme introduces Scouts to key water safety principles through games, practical activities, and discussions.

Note: If a new recruit joins the Troop after the Be Water Safe Programme-on-a-Plate has already been presented, the Scout will still qualify for the National Challenge, provided all other required tasks and activities are completed before the end of November 2026.

Additional Requirements (choose at least **TWO**):

- Explain and demonstrate the **Reach, Throw, Row, Go** method of assisting a swimmer in difficulty, including how to correctly throw a **heaving line** to someone in the water while maintaining your own safety.
- Explain the **safety rules** for swimming in the sea, lakes, dams, and rivers.
- Demonstrate how to correctly **wear, adjust, and care for a personal flotation device** (PFD).
- As a Patrol, (buddy system, safe swimming places, diving rules). Then design a **safety signage checklist** for use at Scout activities.
- Conduct a **water hazard survey** of a local dam, river, or swimming area. Identify and map possible risks (currents, unsafe entry points, obstacles, slippery banks, etc.). Present the findings to your Patrol.
- As a Patrol, create a short **skit, song, or poster** about safe and unsafe behaviour around water, and present it at a Troop meeting or campfire.



task two: preparedness

- Scouts must complete **ONE preferred water safety training** (if internet access is available) AND at least **TWO additional requirements** from the list below, including the ***Swimming Scoutcraft Badge** or ***Swimmer Scout Interest Badge** or the ***Lifesaver Scout Interest Badge** *(Ctrl + Click' to follow the link to the badge requirements.)

*If online training is NOT accessible, and/or if completion the Swimming Scoutcraft or Swimmer Scout Interest Badge is NOT possible, Scouts must complete at least **THREE other requirements** from the list instead.*

A total of **THREE** tasks are required for Task Two: Preparedness.

*Note: Completing the Swimming Scoutcraft and/or Swimmer Scout Interest Badge is not mandatory for the **Be Water Safe Challenge** but is *strongly encouraged* to ensure that Scouts are water-safe and confident swimmers. The Swimming Scoutcraft Badge is an advancement requirement for*

- Water Safety Training** (if accessible):

- Complete the Watersmart Water Safety Modules 1–3**, an online water safety learning platform offered by Lifesaving South Africa.

These modules are **FREE** and developed in partnership with DHL.

The training link can be accessed here: <https://watersmart.dhllifesaving.com/library/home>

- Complete the SCOUTS South Africa Water Awareness Course.**

Access to this training is available either as an in-person training course or an online training course via **Scouts.Digital**, depending on the availability in your Region.

Note: Any costs for this training will be at your own cost.

On successful completion, Scouts aged 14½ years or older will receive a Water Awareness Certificate, which authorises them to lead basic water activities (primarily swimming in a pool) in accordance with SCOUTS South Africa's Safe Scouting Policy.

- Additional Requirements:**

- Complete** (or have already completed) **an age-appropriate swimming badge:**
Younger Scouts (under 14 years): ***Swimming Scoutcraft Badge.**
Older Scouts (14 years+): ***Swimmer Scout Interest Badge.**
*(Ctrl+Click to follow the link to the badge requirements)
- Complete** (or have already completed) **the *Lifesaver Scout Interest Badge**
Older Scouts who have already completed the Swimmer Scout Interest Badge are encouraged to challenge themselves further with the completion of the Lifesaver Scout Interest badge.
- Identify and demonstrate the correct use of common water safety equipment** (throw bag, rescue tube, lifebuoy, rope) and **demonstrate how to perform safe land-based rescues** (using aids such as a stick, a rope, or an item of clothing) without entering the water.
- Create and present a Patrol emergency plan** for a possible drowning situation at a local water site. Your plan must explain how to recognise the signs of someone in trouble in the water, how to communicate with your Patrol, when and how to call for help, and what safe actions you can take without putting yourself at risk.



- As a Patrol or individually, **design and build a flotation device using simple materials** (e.g. rope, plastic bottles, wood, cloth).
Test the model in a swimming pool only (with a competent adult present) by checking that it can keep a small weight afloat. Use a 500 ml plastic bottle filled with water as the standard 'weight'.
Explain how such a device could be used safely in a real emergency, without entering the water.

task three: service and responsibility

Scouts must complete **at least ONE requirement**.

Patrol-based projects are encouraged, but individual contributions are also valid.

Note: All tasks that are completed in or near water must be supervised by a competent Adult Leader.

- Teach Meerkats, Cubs, or other young children about water safety.**
- Assist** at a Meerkat Den, Cub Pack, local school, swimming club, or community initiative by helping **someone to learn basic swimming skills**.
- Organise a Troop or Patrol visit to the NSRI or a local lifesaving club**, then share what you learned about their work with your Troop.
- Organise a public awareness activity**, preferably as a Patrol activity, or individually, e.g. posters, talks, or a community safety drive highlighting drowning prevention, the buddy system, and safe swimming practices.
- Create a short awareness video or podcast about water safety**, aimed at young people, and share it within your Troop, community or school. The video or podcast must be checked by the Troop Scouter before being shared.
Please also share this with pr@scouts.org.za, so we can share some of them on our SCOUTS SA social media channels!
- Complete a community service project by raising awareness** of or fundraising in support of the NSRI or another local water safety organisation.
- Complete an environmental service project** that helps keep a local river, dam, stream, or swimming area safe and clean. This could include a waterway clean-up, or maintaining safe access points. Work individually or with your Patrol and spend at least six hours on the project.



link to advancement

The **Be Water Safe National Challenge** has been designed to align with the learning outcomes of the SCOUTS South Africa advancement programme.

Each task builds progressively on the knowledge, skills, and values found in the **Trail to Traveller**, **Track to Discoverer**, and **Road to First Class** advancement levels — reinforcing safety, preparedness, responsibility, and leadership through practical Scouting experiences.

This alignment ensures that participation in the **National Challenge** supports Scouts in their advancement journey while promoting real-life application of water safety awareness and service.

💧 **Trail to Traveller:**

Focus: Understanding and practising safe behaviour near water.

Linked to **National Challenge Be Water Safe** Tasks:

- Task One – **Awareness**
- Task Two – **Preparedness**

💧 **Safety Awareness**

💧 **General Safety:**

1. Discuss in your Patrol or stage a role-play that emphasises the importance and principle of the buddy system.

💧 **Emergency Situation:**

1. At a simulation staged by your PL or Scouter, know how to approach an emergency scene safely, including the 4 H's (Hazards, Hello, Help, History) and the importance of your own safety over the safety of the patient.

Memorise the main contact numbers for the various emergency services in your area and know how to report an emergency to these services correctly.

💧 **In Water:**

1. Earn the Swimming Scoutcraft Badge OR swim at least 50m and keep afloat for 5 minutes OR create a poster explaining water safety.
2. Explain and demonstrate the components of the Reach, Throw, Row, Go concept of assisting a swimmer in difficulty.

💧 **Service**

💧 **Environment:**

- ii. e. Clean part of a waterway, as agreed upon by your Court of Honour or Scouter

💧 **Personal Development**

💧 **Leadership:**

- iii. Demonstrate leadership by planning a Patrol day activity, including the permit, programme, catering, etc.

Scouts gain confidence in recognising and responding to water-related hazards, understand how to prevent accidents through safe planning and teamwork, and develop responsibility for themselves and others around water.



💧 Track to Discoverer:

Focus: Developing readiness, leadership, and practical skills to act safely and responsibly near water.

Linked to **National Challenge Be Water Safe** Tasks:

- Task Two – **Preparedness**
- Task Three – **Service & Responsibility**

💧 Safety Awareness

💧 At Home:

- i. Devise a safety checklist for your house or other building.
- ii. Use that checklist to inspect the building.
- iii. Explain the hazards found, why they are hazardous and how they can be corrected.

💧 Outdoors:

- i. While on a camp, assess the potential hazards in and around your campsite. Compile a list and discuss these hazards with your PL or Scouter. Assist in rectifying these hazards.
- ii. Give an accurate account to your PL or Scouter or designated person, of an incident, either natural or staged, lasting at least one minute and involving at least three persons.

💧 Accident Scene:

- i. At an accident scene staged by your PL or Scouter, demonstrate an ability to take charge of the scene of an accident.

Completing water safety online modules and practical rescue drills develops the skills to assess hazards at home (e.g. swimming pools) and at campsites (e.g. rivers or dams). Staged accident scenarios can include water rescues or situations where swimmers get into difficulty. Demonstrating safe rescue methods, using flotation devices, and recognising environmental risks reinforces the ability to identify hazards, explain associated dangers, and take appropriate corrective action in any setting.

💧 Service

💧 Environment:

- i. Identify an outdoor environmental service project to improve the quality of the environment in your community.

💧 Personal Development

💧 Leadership:

- iii. Demonstrate leadership by planning a Patrol day activity, including the permit, programme, catering, etc.

Scouts learn to recognise and respond to water hazards, prevent accidents through planning and teamwork, and take responsibility for themselves and others. They practise environmental stewardship, develop leadership skills, and make a positive impact in their community.



💧 Road to First Class:

Focus: Developing leadership, planning, and practical skills to act safely and responsibly near water while mentoring younger Scouts.

Linked to **National Challenge Be Water Safe** Tasks:

- Task Two – **Preparedness**
- Task Three – **Service & Responsibility**

💧 Safety Awareness

💧 In the Community:

i. Research one of the following scenarios (Choose the task - *"any other topic approved by your Scouter"*) and, after discussion with your Scouter, prepare an imaginative training exercise designed to provide your Patrol members with practical advice on how to survive a scenario with the least risk of harm from the list. Run the exercise and discuss the results with your Scouter.

The Scouter can set a scenario that ties in with the Be Water Safe theme
e.g. *"A Patrol is hiking near a river after heavy rain, and one member slips into fast-moving water. The group must respond quickly to ensure everyone's safety without putting themselves at risk."*

Practising safety exercises, staged incidents, and self-preservation techniques develops decision-making and hazard recognition skills. Scenario planning can include water hazards, promoting safe behaviour and emergency preparedness near water.

💧 Service

Community Service:

i. Plan and run a community project. Spend at least 10 hours over at least one month by yourself or with your Patrol in meeting this need. These may include one of the following or another project approved by your Scouter.

Choose the task - *"Helping younger children who are disadvantaged or who have disabilities with reading or homework (or other ongoing activities)"*

The Scouter can approve a project where the Scout teaches Meerkats, Cubs, or other young children about water safety, assists at supervised learn-to-swim sessions, or leads an environmental service project to keep a local river, dam, stream, or swimming area safe and clean.

Scouts develop advanced skills in recognising and responding to water hazards, make safe decisions under pressure, and take responsibility for themselves and others. They mentor younger Scouts, apply practical leadership and planning skills, promote environmental stewardship, and contribute positively to their community while reinforcing water safety awareness.



registration

Troop Scouters must register their Troop for participation in the **National Challenge 2026 - Be Water Safe by 15 February 2026** using the official online registration form by clicking on the [link HERE](#) . (Ctrl + Click to follow link). It's simple quick and will only take two minutes!

deadline

- 💧 **All Be Water Safe Challenge activities must be completed by 30 November 2026.**
- 💧 All entries are to be submitted online, or to your Regional Team Coordinator: Scout Programme, by 15 December 2026.

national challenge 2026 badge

- 💧 Scouts who complete all **Be Water Safe Challenge** activities will receive the **National Challenge 2026 – Be Water Safe Badge**.
- 💧 Troops will receive a **National Challenge 2026 – Be Water Safe Certificate**.

safe from harm



While completing the tasks for the **National Challenge 2026 – Be Water Safe**, Scouts must not be placed in hazardous or dangerous situations under any circumstances. All activities must comply with the SCOUTS South Africa Safe from Harm Framework and be supervised by responsible adults. Participation should provide meaningful learning or service experiences while ensuring the safety, well-being, and enjoyment of all Scouts.

There are always potential risks that need to be considered when planning a Patrol Activity or Patrol Community Service Project. It is important that **a risk assessment should be undertaken** before the activity or service project starts and **approval must be obtained** from both the Troop Scouter and Parents.

activity permits

All activities require the correct **SCOUTS South Africa Activity Permits** and **parental consent forms**. Please ensure that all necessary permissions, parent/guardian consent forms, and SCOUTS South Africa Activity Permits are obtained before undertaking any Patrol activities or Community Service Projects.

share your impact – be a water safety champion

You can also help raise public awareness by taking advantage of the PR opportunities offered by the **National Challenge 2026**. With parental consent, share your **Be Water Safe** activities and photos on social media to inspire others. Please also share your stories with pr@scouts.org.za, so we can share some of them on our SCOUTS SA social media channels!

Suggested hashtags: #BeWaterSafe #NationalChallenge2026 #scoutssouthafrica #scoutssa #scouts #Skills4Life #YouthEmpowerment #Scouts4SDGs #jarydpayne



scout and troop tracker

A helpful *Be Water Safe* Tracker has been created to assist Scouts and Scouters in monitoring each Scout's progress throughout the **National Challenge 2026**.

The user-friendly Excel sheet makes it easy to record which requirements have been completed and shows when all three tasks, **Awareness**, **Preparedness**, **Service & Responsibility**, have been achieved, indicating successful completion of the **National Challenge 2026 – Be Water Safe**. In addition, there is also a tracker sheet for each Scout to monitor their own progress.

SCOUTS South Africa: National Challenge 2026 - Be Water Safe : Troop Tracker

	Be Water Safe - Task One: Awareness										Be Water Safe - Task Two: Preparedness										Be Water Safe - Task Three: Service & Responsibility										Completed National Challenge 2026?
	Programme on a Plate	Complete at least TWO Awareness Tasks						Task One: Awareness Complete ?	Complete ONE Training				Complete THREE Preparedness Tasks if Training/Swim badge not completed						Task Two Preparedness Complete ?	Complete at least ONE Service & Responsibility Task						Task Three: Service & Responsibility Complete ?					
		Reach, Throw & Grow	Swimming Safety Rules	Personal Protection Device	Patrol Water Safety Protocols	Water Hazard Safety	Patrol Skill Song or Poster		Watermark Water Safety Modules 1-3	SCOUTS SA Water Awareness Course	Swimming Scoutcraft / Swimmer Interest Badge	Lifesaver Interest Badge	Water Safety Equipment & Land-based Rescue	Patrol Emergency Plan	First Aid Device	Teach About Water Safety	Assist Someone to Learn Basic Swimming Skills	Visit to NSRF / Lifesaving Club		Organise a Public Awareness Activity	Water Safety Video / Podcast	Community Service Project	Environmental Service Project								
Patrol 1																															
Scout Name 1	Yes			Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes			Swimming Scoutcraft			Yes		Yes		Yes						Yes	Completed						
Scout Name 2	Yes				Yes			No		Yes				Yes	No	Yes					Yes			Yes	Incomplete						
Scout Name 3	Yes	Yes			Yes			Yes			Swimmer Interest			Yes	Yes	Yes			Yes				Yes	Completed							
Scout Name 4	Joined after PoP			Yes				No					Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes								Incomplete							
Scout Name 5	Missed the PoP				Yes		Yes	Yes			Swimming Scoutcraft				Yes	No			Yes				Yes	Incomplete							
Scout Name 6	Yes	Yes				Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Swimmer Interest	Lifesaver Interest				Yes						Yes	Yes	Completed							
Scout Name 7	Joined after PoP		Yes				Yes	Yes		Yes	Swimmer Interest		Yes			Yes							Yes	Completed							
Scout Name 8	Yes			Yes		Yes		Yes	Yes					Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes					Yes	Completed							

note to scouts

Take the Challenge – Be Water Safe!

Join the **SCOUTS South Africa National Challenge 2026 – Be Water Safe** and become a water safety hero!

Learn how to keep yourself and others safe around rivers, dams, pools, and the sea. Build practical skills, gain confidence, and work with your Patrol to share water-safe habits in your community - working as a Patrol is preferable because you can plan together, help each other, and practise teamwork while learning. Every Patrol across the country will be making a real difference - preventing accidents while having fun near water.

Remember: always get permission from your parent or guardian and keep your Troop Scouter in the loop with what you are doing.

Most importantly - have **FUN** and have a great time while learning!



national challenge 2026 - be water safe

Scout's Name: _____

Be Water Safe - Task One: Awareness

		Date Completed
Programme-on-a-Plate		Mandatory Complete at least TWO Awareness Tasks
Reach, Throw & Grow		
Swimming Safety Rules		
Personal Floatation Device		
Patrol Water Safety Protocols		
Water Hazard Safety		
Patrol Skit, Song or Poster		

Task One: Awareness - Complete

Be Water Safe - Task Two: Preparedness

Watersmart Water Safety Modules 1-3		Complete ONE Training Course	
SCOUTS SA Water Awareness Course			
Swimming Scoutcraft / Swimmer Interest Badge		Complete at least TWO Preparedness Tasks - Including Swim badge OR Complete THREE Preparedness Tasks if Training / Swim badge not achieved	
Lifesaver Interest Badge			
Water Safety Equipment & Land-based Rescue			
Patrol Emergency Plan			
Flotation Device			

Task Two: Preparedness - Complete

Be Water Safe - Task Three: Service & Responsibility

Teach About Water Safety		Complete at least ONE Service & Responsibility Task	
Assist Someone to Learn Basic Swimming Skills			
Visit to NSRI / Lifesaving Club			
Organise a Public Awareness Activity			
Water Safety Video / Podcast			
Community Service Project			
Environmental Service Project			

Task Three: Service & Responsibility - Complete

Completed National Challenge 2026 - Be Water Safe