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Enjoy Water **Safely**  
**Free From** Drowning

# Have The Conversation

**Simple water safety guidance for  
parents and carers of teenagers.**

**When you're not there, what  
you've said matters.**

An equivalent of a classroom of children drowns each year in England\* and May 2026 drowning in 13 to 17-year-olds reached an unprecedented high.

Every year in England, enough children to fill a classroom lose their lives to drowning. As a parent, having open conversations with your teen about water safety could help prevent a tragedy.

\*2019-2025 NCMD data.

# Many incidents happen in everyday situations - with friends - in familiar places.

This guide helps you have simple, real conversations with your teens before it's too late.

## Top 3 things to remember

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- Warm weather doesn't mean warm water
- Most risk-taking and accidents happen when there is no adult supervision
- If something goes wrong: Phone 999. Float. Throw.

## Common risks for teenagers around water

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- Peer pressure in groups increases risk-taking
- Jumping into unknown water can cause serious injury or drowning
- Cold water shock affects breathing within seconds
- Being a strong swimmer does not make open water safe
- Alcohol affects judgement and reactions
- Trying to rescue a friend by entering the water is extremely dangerous

# Conversation starters

(with prompts)

These aren't lectures -  
just ways to get them thinking.

“Strong swimmers struggle in cold water - it makes you gasp without warning, and takes away power and coordination from your hands and legs.”

- ▶ ***How do you think your body would react if that happened?***

“Most accidents happen when people are showing off or going along with mates. What would you do if something didn’t feel right?”

- ▶ ***Would you feel comfortable speaking up?***

“Did you know that every year in England, enough young people to fill a classroom drown?”

- ▶ ***How would you feel if someone you know was one of those?***

“You don’t know what’s under the water - rocks, metal, or weeds you can get trapped in.”

- ▶ ***Would you ever check first, or just assume it’s safe?***

“It’s not just about swimming - it’s the cold, currents, and getting out that catch people out.”

- ▶ ***Do you think getting out would be harder than getting in?***

“Alcohol makes it much harder to make safe decisions around water.”

- ▶ ***Do you think people realise how different their decisions are after drinking?***

“Everyone’s different - just because someone else is okay doesn’t mean you will be.”

- ▶ ***Have you ever felt pressure to keep up with others?***

“If someone gets into trouble: Keep yourself safe.  
Phone 999. Float. Throw.”

- ▶ *Would you know what to do in that moment?*

## Quick checklist to share with your teen

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- Stop and think if something doesn't feel right
- Don't jump or dive into water you don't know
- Be aware: water is often much colder than it looks
- Avoid open water if alcohol is involved
- Stay away from structures like weirs, locks, and drains where water flow can trap or pull you under
- Look out for your mates.

**If it feels off, say it. Don't hype it.**

**Speak up. Be a mate.**

## Cold water wake-up call (keep it simple)

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- Cold water shock happens in seconds
- Your body will gasp and lose breathing control instantly
- You can quickly lose strength and coordination
- Even strong swimmers panic

# If something goes wrong remember this:

**Stay out of the water yourself**

**Phone. Float. Throw.**

**Phone:** Call **999** immediately

**Float:** Tell them to float on their back to control breathing

**Throw:** Throw something that floats (bottle, ball, bag, rescue aid)

Most people who try to help by jumping in get into trouble too.

## **Remember**

Teenagers don't respond to lectures - they respond to **real conversations, at the right moment.**

A short, simple chat could make all the difference.

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## **Have the conversation that could save their life.**



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