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## Fact Sheet: Drowning

It may not be immediately apparent that someone is drowning. A person who is drowning may be very quiet as they struggle to keep their head above water. They may be physically unable to wave for help or cry out.

- They will often be vertical, not attempting to kick.
- They may appear to be trying to climb an invisible ladder.
- Their gaze may become glassy or unfocused.
- Their head may tilt back and mouth will hang open very close to the waterline.
- Monitor anyone who is entering the water; periodically call out to them to assess ability to respond.
- If they are unable to respond, you may have between 20-60 seconds to respond before they go under.

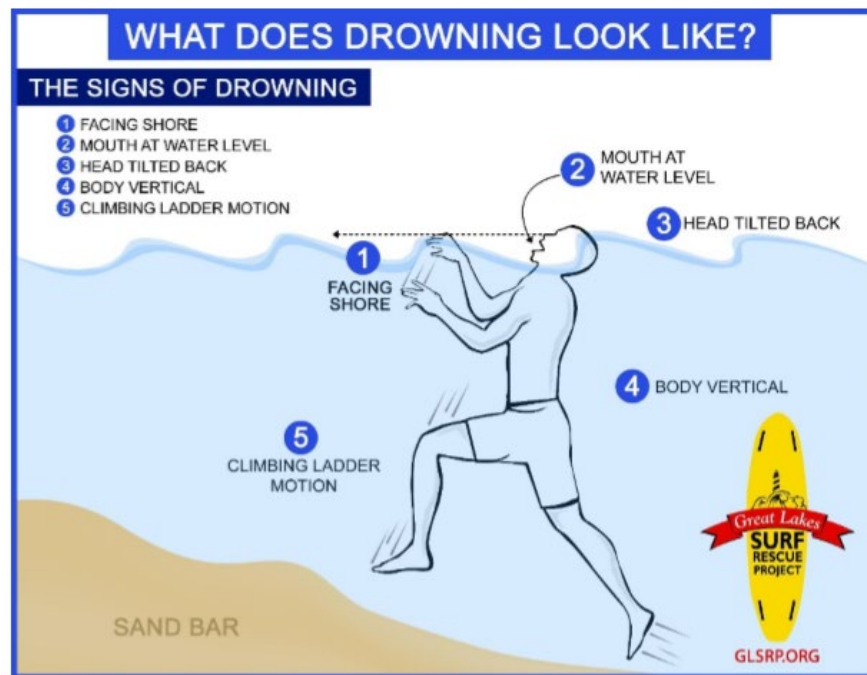


Image Source: <https://glsrp.org/signs-of-drowning/>

## Preparation and Training

- Consider taking a Water Safety Surf Rescue course.
- It is recommended you always have a first aid kit with your gear and take courses in: Basic First Aid and CPR

## Emergency Response

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- If you have identified that someone is drowning, immediately shout for help. The more people responding to this situation, the better.
- Have someone call emergency services.
- If possible, throw them a ring buoy and pull them to shore.
- Only attempt an in water rescue if you are a strong swimmer.
- If you enter the water to attempt a rescue, make sure you have something they can grab onto and that you can pull to safety. This can be a ring buoy, rope, or even just a towel.
- Do not attempt to grab the person from the front, as they may panic and push you under. If you must, grab them from behind.
- If the drowning victim is not breathing and there is no pulse, start CPR.
- Even if they seem to be fine, seek medical attention immediately. There may be residual water in the lungs, which can be fatal if left untreated.
- How to survive a rip current?
  - Relax. Rip currents don't pull you under.
  - Trying to swim against a rip current will only use up your energy; this is the energy you need to survive and escape the rip current.
  - Do NOT try to swim directly to the shore.
  - Swim along the shoreline until you escape the current's pull.
  - When free from the pull of the current, swim at an angle away from the current toward shore.

## References and Additional Resources

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- Great Lakes Surf Rescue Project [Water Safety](#)
- National Weather Service [Before You Go in the Water](#)
- Adapted from *Drowning Fact Sheet*, by University of Maryland: Department of Environmental Safety, Sustainability & Risk (<https://essr.umd.edu/about/research-safety/field-research-safety/planning>) with permission.