

Longfellow's WHALE Tales Water Safety for Children Fact Sheet

Course Purpose

The primary purpose of the American Red Cross Longfellow's WHALE Tales Water Safety for Children program is for use as a drowning prevention initiative to reduce drowning incidents among children in kindergarten through 5th grade. This program is composed of nine unique water safety lessons to educate young children in a dryland (non-pool)/classroom environment, with support for teachers, youth leaders and others teaching children about safe behaviors in, on and around the water. WHALE is an acronym for Water Habits Are Learned Early.

Longfellow's WHALE Tales lessons teach children about water safety in different environments such as pools, waterparks, oceans, lakes and rivers. It also looks at potential water hazards around the home and neighborhood, and touches on sun safety, boating safety and weather concerns. To keep participants engaged, group discussions are complemented by entertaining videos, helpful visuals, fun activities and more. To support learning, there are take-home activity sheets and caregiver letters. Fun stickers and certificates help children share and celebrate what it means to be water smart.

Course Prerequisites

None

Course Length

No minimum hours suggested. Lessons are designed to be 30 – 45 minutes in the classroom with options to adapt to the teaching setting and time available.

Course Materials

Longfellow's WHALE Tales Leader's Guide (How to Lead WHALE Tales and Lesson Plans), Course Presentations. *Optional:* Activity Sheets, Coloring Sheets, Caregiver Letters. Posters and stickers are available for purchase at the Red Cross store (redcross.org/store).

Certification Requirements

None

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Certificate of completion (three versions; available on Red Cross Learning Center and www.redcross.org/WHALETales)

Leaders

Those currently certified as a Water Safety Instructor® or anyone who has an interest in drowning prevention or works or volunteers with children in any learning, education or service environment. No prior experience is necessary. Leaders must orient to the materials. An optional, free online course, Becoming an Ambassador for Water Safety Ambassador, can be found on www.redcross.org/take-a-class.

Teaching Objectives

- Understand what it means for a kid to be water smart, which is knowing how to be safer when in, on and around the water.
- Understand why there should always be a lifeguard and other capable water watcher present when in, on or around the water, along with a water buddy.
- Understand why it's important to learn how to swim.
- Understand pool rules and identify designated swimming areas.
- Understand why it's important to protect the skin and eyes from too much sun exposure.
- Understand the benefits of putting on sunscreen, covering up and seeking shade when outdoors.
- Explain the importance of wearing a life jacket, how to select the proper one and when to wear it.
- Recognize what pool drains and other suction openings are and know to stay away from these openings while in a pool or hot tub.
- Understand some special hazards of swimming in an ocean, river, lake or pond including currents, aquatic life, dams and spillways.
- Explain ways to help oneself if having trouble in the water by staying calm and being water smart.
- Explain how to escape if caught in an ocean or river current and how to prevent these situations from happening.
- Understand when to use the HELP and huddle positions to stay warmer in a cold-water emergency and demonstrate how to do these positions.
- Explain how to more safely help someone who is in trouble in the water or is drowning by calling for help and using a reaching or throwing assist.
- Know what a thunderstorm is and what dangers may be related to thunderstorms.
- Understand basic facts about floods.
- Know how to rescue oneself after falling through the ice or how to help a friend if they fall through the ice by calling for help and using a reaching or throwing assist.

Longfellow's WHALE Tales Content

Being Water Smart – The Basics

- Lesson 1: Do Your Part, Be Water Smart
- Lesson 2: Swim as a Pair with a Lifeguard There
- Lesson 3: First Look Around: Is the Scene Safe and Sound?
- Lesson 4: Don't Just Pack It, Wear Your Life Jacket

A Deeper Dive into How to be Water Smart

- Lesson 5: Play It Smart at Your Home, Pool or Park
- Lesson 6: Wave, River or Tide, Water Smarts are Your Guide

Being Water Smart in a Water Emergency

- Lesson 7: Think So You Don't Sink
- Lesson 8: Reach or Throw, Don't Go
- Lesson 9: Stay Calm, Think It Through and You Can Know What to Do

Closing Ceremony

This lesson plan provides an opportunity to review and reinforce information learned and to celebrate achievements.