

23. SAFETY AFLOAT

Scouts, what do the following merit badges have in common: Canoeing, Motorboating, Rowing, Small-Boat Sailing, and Water Skiing? I'll give you a hint - they all have the same first requirement.

You guessed it. All those badges require that a Scout be classed a "swimmer" before he even gets started on the badge. It's pretty obvious why you must be a swimmer before you can go out into the deep water in a canoe or other craft.

As I think you all know, to be classed as a swimmer you have to be able to swim 100 yards, do the elementary backstroke, and be able to rest in water by floating. To those who swim well, that's a piece of cake. To those who don't it could be a challenge.

You're not going to be able to go canoeing or rafting until you can meet the test. We're going to spend time this month helping the non-swimmers and beginners so that by the time of our Water Rendezvous, most of you - maybe all - will be able to swim the hundred.

Being able to swim well will unlock the door to those other badges. It will also give you a life-long sport, one that you will be able to enjoy for many years after you no longer have the ability to play other sports. That's one of the reasons we go swimming now. The other of course is that it's fun.