

The Scottish Surfing Federation

Surf safe



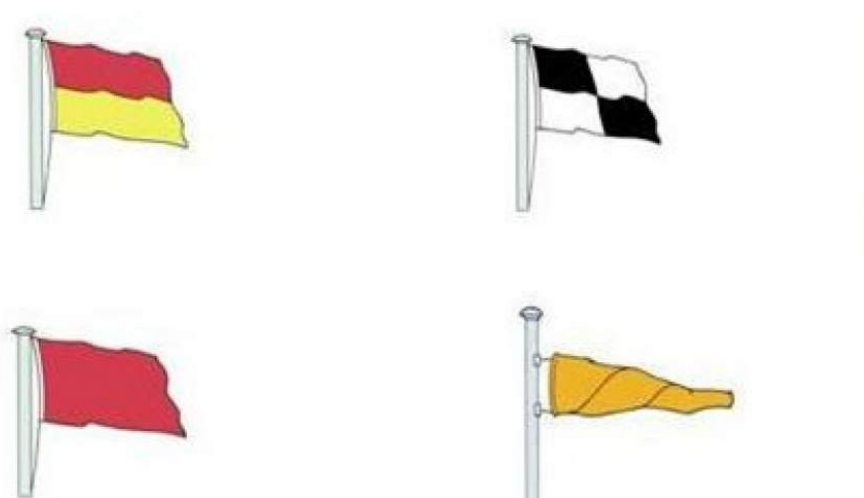
Prepared by
The Scottish Surfing Federation
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SSF SURF SAFE

The **RNLI** recommends that prior to starting any watersport you should seek advice from an accredited training centre or recognised school. Once you've received training in your chosen watersport and you want to practise, you should always choose a lifeguarded beach. To find your nearest lifeguarded beach go online and visit goodbeachguide.co.uk The opening pages of this guide are packed full of useful tips to help you understand the beach environment and keep you safe in the surf.

On arrival at a lifeguarded beach you'll need to know your flags:



- **RED FLAG** Danger! Never go in the water under any circumstances when the red flag is flying.
- **RED AND YELLOW FLAGS** Lifeguarded area. Safest area to swim, bodyboard and use inflatables.
- **BLACK AND WHITE CHEQUERED FLAGS** For surfboards, stand-up paddleboards, kayaks, and other non-powered craft. Launch and recovery area for kitesurfers and windsurfers. Never swim or bodyboard here.
- **ORANGE WINDSOCK** Indicates strong winds. Never use inflatables when the windsock is flying. When learning, do not kitesurf, windsurf or use stand-up paddleboards.

UNDERSTANDING RIPS AND WAVES

RIPS

rips are strong currents that can quickly take you from the shallows out of your depth
Lifeguards will show you how you can avoid rips but if you do get caught in one:



- Stay calm – don't panic
- If you can stand, wade don't swim
- Keep hold of your board or inflatable to help you float
- Raise your hand and shout for help
- Never try to swim directly against the rip or you'll get exhausted
- Swim parallel to the beach until free of the rip, then make for shore
- If you see anyone else in trouble, alert the lifeguards or call 999 or 112 and ask for the Coastguard.

WAVES

Waves are formed by the wind blowing across the surface of the sea. How steeply a beach shelves will also affect the size and type of wave. Spilling waves are ideal for beginner board riders as they break consistently. Start off in the shallow white water before progressing to deeper water and unbroken waves. Dumping waves or heavy shore break should be avoided. These waves break quickly with a lot of force making them dangerous for beginners.

TIDES

A beach can seem like a vast playground but the tide can come in surprisingly quickly. Many lifeboat and lifeguard rescues are to people getting cut off by the rising water. To prevent this happening to you, get local tidal information from the Harbour Master, the tourist information centre and some seaside retail outlets, or visit bbc.co.uk/weather/coast/tides. Always keep a look out for the tide's direction while on the beach.

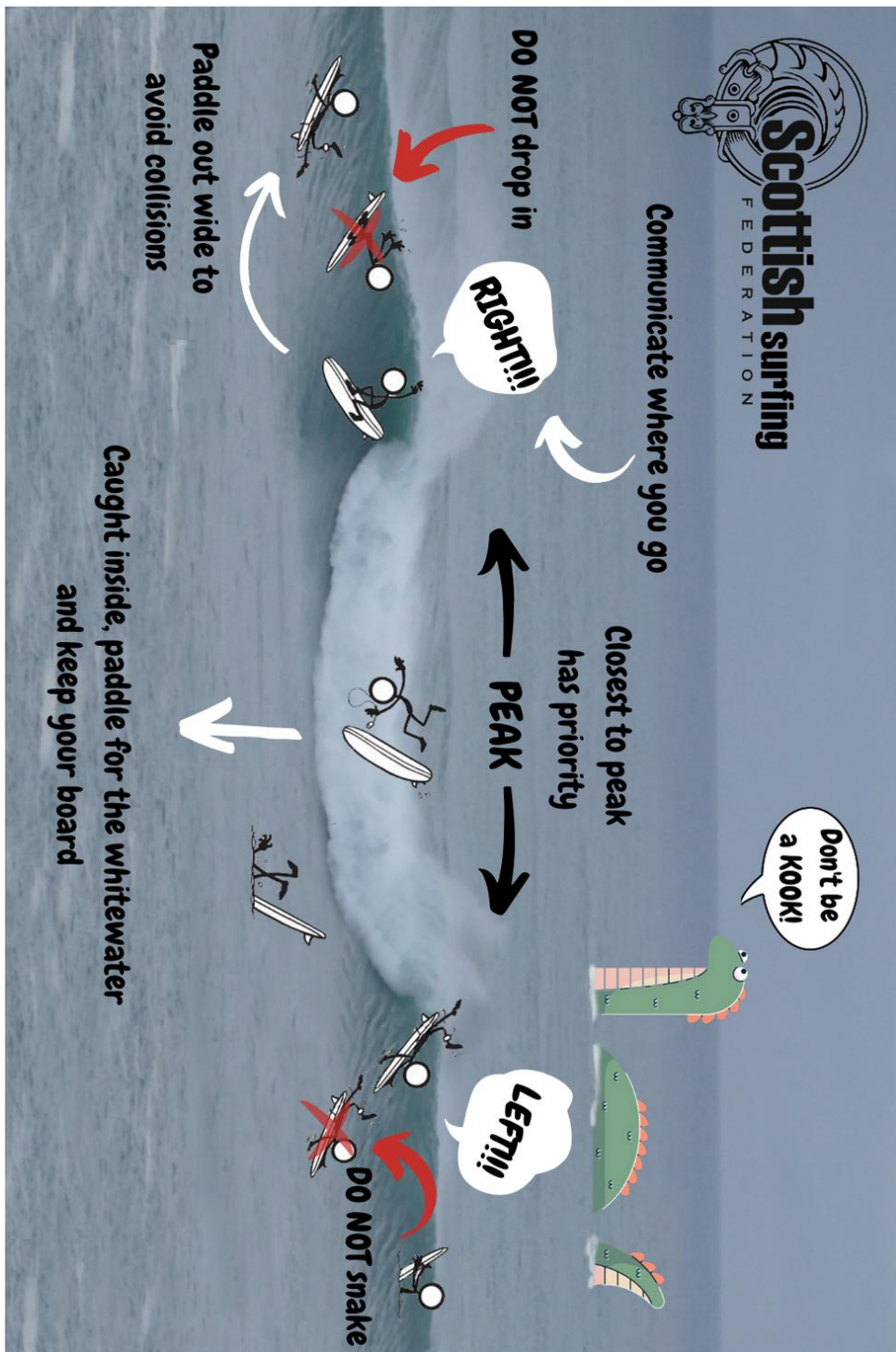
HEALTH AND FITNESS

Before you get in the water it's important to consider your personal fitness as the sea can be a very demanding environment. Swimming is one of the best year-round activities to help prepare your body so we'd recommend you get in the pool and start practising now! Just be aware that sea swimming can be more challenging than the pool so before you start a watersport it's worth jumping in between the red and yellow flags and familiarising yourself with the conditions.



SURF ETIQUETTE

To maximise your enjoyment and keep yourself and others safe when riding waves it's important to understand surf etiquette. Here are a few basic tips that apply to all boardriders catching waves. If you are unsure, ask a lifeguard to explain.





EQUIPMENT

SURFING and BODYBOARDING

Wetsuit – A wetsuit will keep you warm and comfortable allowing your body to perform more efficiently. Wetsuits are generally made from neoprene and are designed to maintain your body's core temperature and protect you from the elements. They work by letting a small amount of water in, holding it next to your body, which then heats up from the natural energy produced during exercise. For this reason it's vital to choose a well-fitted suit to avoid being flushed with cold water. **Remember a wetsuit is usually worn with the zip at the back!** Wetsuit thickness is measured in millimetres of neoprene: the thicker the suit the more insulation. As a general rule in the UK most people use full suits, which means long arms and long legs:

- 5:3 = Winter suit approx Nov–Mar (5mm neoprene core, 3mm limbs)
- 4:3 = Spring suit approx Apr–Oct (4mm neoprene core, 3mm limbs)
- 3:2 = Summer suit approx June–Sep

Board – when selecting a board you need to consider your height, weight and ability. When starting out, a soft foam board is ideal as it is thick and wide, making it easier to float, paddle and catch waves.

Leash – always wear one around the ankle of your back foot so you don't lose your board if you fall off!

Wax – apply this to the deck of your board to give you grip.

Fins – these are vital when bodyboarding to help you catch waves and swim against strong currents.

STAYING SAFE

Always:

- Follow the advice of the lifeguards.
- Wear your leash so you don't lose your board.
- Check your equipment for damage before use.
- Bodyboard between red and yellow flags but surf between the black and white flags.
- Consider other water users – learn surf etiquette and rights of way.

Never:

- Ditch your board – it will keep you afloat in an emergency and make you easier to find.
- Go alone.
- Get on the water in conditions above your capability.



STAND UP PADDLEBOARDING

Together with the basic safety equipment, you'll need the following kit to get started:

EQUIPMENT

Paddleboard – many sizes and shapes from around 2.5m to 5.5m. It's ideal to start with a board around 3.4m long by 75cm wide.

Paddle – you need a good paddle, as long as your height plus 20cm.

Leash – use a heavy-duty leash the same length as the board.

STAYING SAFE

Always:

- Tell someone where you're going and when you'll be back
- wear your leash so you don't lose your board
- launch and recover between the black and white flags
- check the weather forecast and tide times
- consider other water users – learn surf etiquette and rights of way
- find a quieter spot if the line-up is really busy.

Never:

- Leave without a signalling or communication device
- paddle in offshore winds without safety boat cover
- underestimate the forces of nature but be aware of your environment
- ditch your board – it will keep you afloat in an emergency and make you easier to find
- get on the water in conditions above your capability.