



Choosing the Right Life Jacket

The primary function of a life jacket is to keep you afloat, with your mouth well above water so you can breathe. It's critical that the life jacket you pick does this. Life jackets come in a variety of shapes, sizes, colors, and materials. Some are made to be more rugged and last longer while others are made to protect you from cold water. No matter which life jacket you choose, be sure to get one that is right for you, your planned activities, and the water conditions you expect to encounter. Remember, spending a little time now can save you a lifetime later.

Selecting Your Life Jacket

- Select a properly sized life jacket.
- Make sure it's Coast Guard approved.
- Try on the life jacket to see if it fits comfortably snug.
- Insure all straps, zippers, and ties are fastened.
- Raise your arms over your head.
- Have someone lift your life jacket straight up by the shoulders.
- The life jacket should stay in place. If your mouth and nose fall below the topmost edge at the shoulder or collar, or it almost comes off, the life jacket is too loose.

Buoyancy Testing Your Life Jacket

- Test your life jacket in shallow water to see how it floats you.
- Put on your life jacket and insure that all straps, zippers, and ties are fastened.
- Tuck in any loose strap ends.
- Relax your body and let your head tilt back.
- Make sure your life jacket keeps your chin above water and you can breathe easily.
- If your mouth is not well above the water, get a new life jacket or one with more buoyancy.

Child Life Jacket

Check life jacket label for proper weight range to match your child's weight.

Note: While some children in the 30-50 pound weight range who can swim may like the extra freedom of movement that a Type III life jacket provides, most children in this weight range, especially those who can't swim, should wear a Type II life jacket. To check for a good fit, place the child in the life jacket and tighten all closures and straps until snug. Next grab the jacket by the shoulders and lift straight up until the child is off the ground. If the child's mouth or nose falls below the upper most edge of the jackets collar or shoulder area, then the jacket does not fit and if the child enters the water, their mouth and nose

will be under water.

A child's life jacket should be tested in the water immediately after purchase. Children panic when they fall into the water suddenly. They move their arms and legs violently and try to climb out of the water, making it hard to float safely in a life jacket. A life jacket will keep a child afloat, but may not keep a struggling child face-up. That is why it is so important to teach children how to put on a life jacket and to teach them to relax in the water.

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