

Follow the...

# RIVER

## SAFETY RULES

Play it **SAFE**



Play it **COOL**



Grand River Conservation Authority





## RESPECT OUR RIVERS

Rivers are fun places to visit and are important to us and the environment in many ways.

Rivers and streams can also be very dangerous, and too many people have been hurt or drowned because they did not follow safety rules.

## RIVERS ARE ALWAYS CHANGING

Rivers and streams are part of nature and are always changing. Change can come very quickly at times especially when fast flowing water undercuts the banks, or reshapes the riverbed.

-  A river that flows slowly close to the bank may have a strong current very close to the shore.
-  A shallow, gentle river can quickly become a raging torrent of water after heavy rains. So can all the small streams and ditches that lead to the river.
-  A river bed that is shallow, gravelly and easy to walk on near the shore may become muddy, or have a deep hole just a short step away.
-  River flows can be very strong and can push and pin you hard against structures like bridges, walls and trees that overhang the river.

## BE WITH A BUDDY

Never visit the river alone. Go with a grownup or older buddy. Tell your parents where you are going and when you will be home.

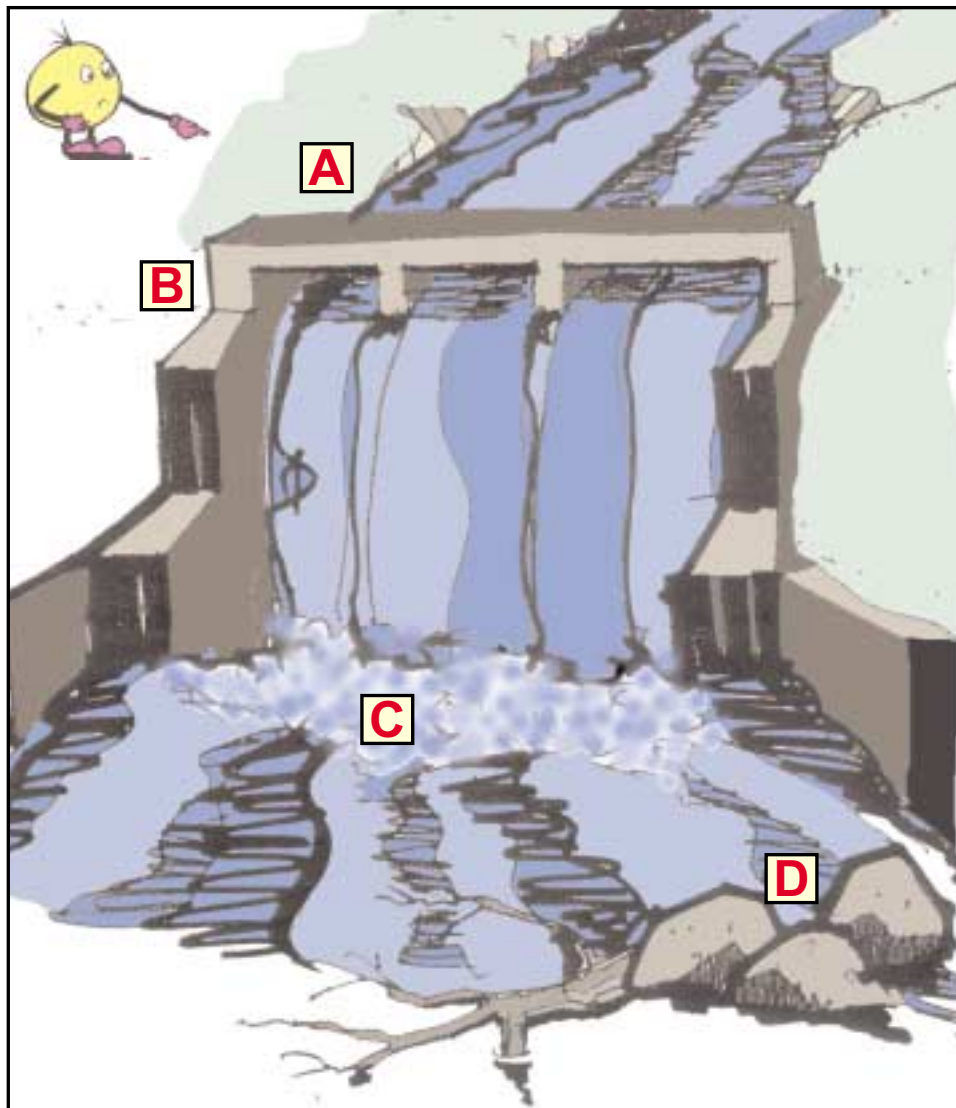
Play safely away from the river's edge. Say "NO" to pushing, shoving, or daring others to do dangerous things.

Be smart and take swimming classes and other recreation programs that teach about water safety.

## DAMS ARE DROWNING MACHINES

Even very small dams are dangerous places to play. Many of the dangers cannot be seen from the riverbank. There are fast moving water currents both above and below all dams. These currents can pull you off your feet very quickly, carrying you under water or pinning you against rocks or concrete walls. Stay away from dams and remind your friends of the dangers of the “drowning machine”.

### DANGER ZONES AT DAMS



**A** Currents and undertows above and below dams

**B** Slippery and wet/icy concrete walls

**C** Backwash (boil) below the dam

**D** Strainers, rocks and debris

## DANGER - THIN ICE!

Ice is nice, but only on the skating rink or in cold drinks. Winter is an especially dangerous time around the river.

The frozen water may look inviting and safe, but the ice on a river or stream is never evenly frozen. It may be thick enough to walk on in patches, but there will always be thin spots where the current is fast, or where culverts and ditches drain into the river.

Skate with adult permission on ice rinks or shallow, well-frozen ponds and leave the rivers for the fish.



**IN WINTER: BEWARE OF  
THIN ICE & SLIPPERY BANKS!**



## CRUMBLY & SLIPPERY SLOPES

Spring is a sloppy, slushy time. The water is very cold as melting snow rushes into ditches and streams to fill the rivers. These soon become a turmoil of racing water, filled with tree branches and other debris torn from the banks by the enormous force of the current. It's easy to see that the river is dangerous, but easy to forget that the banks are slippery and frozen. An unlucky or careless step will bring the very real danger of falling into the river. Stay well clear of the river banks at this time of the year.

## HAVE FUN AND STAY SAFE!

Canoeing, fishing, hiking, or biking riverside trails are just some of the fun things that we can do on or close to water. Whatever you choose to do, remember the water safety rules.

### **If you are canoeing:**

- ✓ Follow Boating Safety Regulations and always wear a lifejacket when boating. Make sure it fits well and is fastened properly.
- ✓ Check the river conditions before leaving. If the water is very fast and strong, perhaps the outing should be changed or postponed. Remember, nature is much stronger than you are.
- ✓ Stay seated and never fool around in a boat.
- ✓ Avoid boating near dams or other dangerous places.
- ✓ Leave the water if a thunderstorm or lightning is approaching.

### **If you are swimming:**

- ✓ Swim only at marked beaches or pools if possible, and always swim with a buddy.
- ✓ Stay away from dams and other water structures.
- ✓ Wear thick-soled shoes or sandals when wading. You may not see broken bottles or other dangerous debris on a sandy or muddy river bottom.
- ✓ Know the depth of swimming areas before you dive, and never dive from bridges or other structures.

### **If you are fishing:**

- ✓ Wade only where you can see the bottom. Be aware that there may be holes or deeper areas close to you.
- ✓ Be extra careful on slippery or loose stone banks.
- ✓ Handle hooks, knives and other sharp fishing equipment with care.

## LOOK OUT BELOW

Sometimes it is what you can't see that will hurt you. Trees, rocks and branches, partly or completely submerged, can trap and hold an unwary boater or swimmer. Even a moderate current can sweep a person into an underwater obstacle and pin them there.

 **UNDERWATER DANGERS!**



## DID YOU KNOW?

You can find out about daily flows and river conditions for boating and fishing by calling the **Grand River Conservation Authority** at (519) 621-2763 ext. 519, or by checking the [www.grandriver.ca](http://www.grandriver.ca) website and clicking on "Real-Time River Data".



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