

THE WATER PLAY SAFETY CHECKLIST

A 2-page printable for backyard water tables and beach days

BEFORE WATER PLAY

A 60-second setup reset

Use this quick check before little feet get wet. It supports, but never replaces, close and capable adult supervision.

1 Name the Water Watcher

- ☐ One adult is on duty now (and can swim for swimming/open water).
- ☐ Phone away; no reading, alcohol, or other distractions.
- ☐ Keep young children within arm's reach in or near water.
- ☐ Say the handoff out loud before another adult takes over.

2 Set Up the Space

- ☐ Follow the product instructions and check for recalls or safety notices.
- ☐ Check chairs, tables, umbrellas, and play areas for damage, loose parts, tipping, and sharp debris.
- ☐ Move unused buckets and other water-holding containers out of children's reach.
- ☐ Keep drinking water, shade, and a charged phone within the supervising adult's reach.

3 Choose the Water Rules

BACKYARD WATER TABLE

- ☐ Fill it only when an adult is ready to supervise.
- ☐ Plan to drain, rinse, and air-dry it after play.

BEACH OR OPEN WATER

- ☐ Check local beach, surf, rip-current, and weather advisories.
- ☐ Choose a lifeguarded area and follow flags and instructions.

READY TO PLAY

Fill this in before the water comes out

Water Watcher

Handoff partner

- ☐ Local conditions checked

- ☐ Emergency phone available

DURING + AFTER WATER PLAY

Stay close, know when to stop, and leave the space ready for next time

DURING PLAY

Close, constant, distraction-free

- ☐ Stay within arm's reach of young children in or near water, even with a lifeguard present.
- ☐ The Water Watcher does not multitask. Make every handoff explicit.
- ☐ At open or natural water, use a properly fitted, fully fastened U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket.
- ☐ Check the life-jacket label for the child's size and activity. Floaties and water wings are not substitutes.

STOP AND RESET IF...

Pausing is part of the plan

- ☐ The Water Watcher must step away or cannot keep full attention on the water.
- ☐ A lifeguard closes the area, flags change, or surf and current conditions worsen.
- ☐ Thunder or lightning: leave the water and beach for a substantial building or hard-topped vehicle. Wait 30 minutes after the last thunder.
- ☐ A child becomes very cold, tired, distressed, or unwell.

AFTER BACKYARD WATER PLAY

Drain it before the adult walks away

- ☐ Drain the water immediately after play and remove debris.
- ☐ Rinse away dirt with fresh water, then let the table air-dry completely.
- ☐ Store the table so it cannot refill with rainwater or stay accessible while holding water.
- ☐ Follow the maker's cleaning directions. Use CDC guidance for fecal or vomit contamination.

EMERGENCY PREP

If a child is missing, check nearby water first and call emergency services. Caregivers should learn CPR before an emergency and keep their skills current.

Use this checklist with product directions, local warnings, lifeguard instructions, and professional first-aid/CPR training.

OFFICIAL SOURCES

[CDC: Summer Swim Safety](#)
[AAP: 2026 Drowning Prevention](#)
[USCG: Life Jacket Wear and Fit](#)

[NWS: Rip Current Safety](#) [Lightning Safety](#)
[CDC: Small Pool Hygiene](#)
[CPSC: In-Home Drowning Prevention](#)