

Sandray Safety Tips



#1 piece of advice:

Know your limits. Always keep CALM. NEVER panic. Swim with the group. Listen to the experienced swimmers. If in doubt, choose the safest option. The water will still be there tomorrow.

#2 piece of advice:

If at any point during the swim you start to feel like you're not ok, speak up, let someone know and someone will gladly swim back with you (even right at the start!). Don't wait until it's too late.

Newcastle Rips

Newcastle usually has three permanent rips:

- At the northern end of the beach known known as "Shark Alley".
- Just south of "King Rock" which usually joins up with the Shark Alley rip
- Just north of "Divider Rock" which is between Newcastle Beach and South Newcastle Beach.

Using the Rip to get out

Shark Alley is the point at which we usually enter the water for our swim so we can use the Shark Ally rip to get out through the break.

- Be aware of rocks in the shore break. There are usually large sections of sand between the rocks that you can use to wade out.
- Wade out as far as you can. Stand sideways when wading through a broken wave – this will make you a smaller target and you won't get knocked back as far by the whitewater.
- When chest deep in the surf, start to **slowly** swim out. It isn't a race.
- If you feel the rip dragging you out ...RELAX... enjoy the ride. The rip will lose power a few metres beyond the back of the break.
- When at the top of swells, have a good look around to see what the waves and the rip are doing
- When out the back of the wave zone, swim to the "mustering" position (behind the outer surf break in line with "King Rock").

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Coming back in after the swim

Swim behind the outer surf break parallel with the beach till you are in front of the round fronted “Watch Tower” in front of the surf club. There is nearly always a good sand bar in this area which creates the wave zone. We use the waves to help push us towards the shore.

When at the top of swells look around, get your bearings and check for waves. When swimming in be careful to stay in line with the Watch Tower.

Water runs off both sides of the sand bar and creates the rips south of King Rock and north of Divider Rock. You must be careful not to get caught in the runoff water. Should you get caught in it, it will drag you into those rips.

Continually check where you are in relation to the Watch Tower and recalibrate when necessary to stay online with it. You may find yourself in one of three scenarios:

1. If the rip is dragging you sideways towards King Rock or Divider Rock, recalibrate and swim towards the Watch Tower until you have swum out of the rip. Swim at an angle to the rip that gets you heading towards the Watch Tower. Don't swim directly against the rip.
2. If the rip is running strongly parallel to the beach and you can't swim against it ... RELAX ... go with the rip until it starts to go out to sea. When the rip is running out to sea, at right angles to the beach, then swim parallel with the beach towards the Watch Tower until you get out of the rip and are back in the wave zone on top of the sandbar. Then head directly for the Watch Tower again.
3. If you are drifting quickly and you are tired and feel like you are going to panic then RELAX tread water or float on your back and try to breathe deeply and steadily, keep your head out of the water, don't swim anywhere, don't fight the rip and let the rip take you out. Focus on asking for assistance from other swimmers or raise one hand for other Sandrays or the lifesavers to assist you. Don't worry, anyone can get caught in this situation.

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Swimming in big surf

If the surf is big and you are unsure, don't swim.

Swimming out through the shore break

- When a large wave approaches, take a deep breath and dive deep under it holding onto the sand if you can.
- Push back up off the seabed with your feet after you feel or see the wash of the wave has passed
- Don't swim immediately after, look and see if there is another wave approaching. If so, do the same thing.

Swimming out through the outside break

- There is generally a "gutter" between the inside break and the outside break.
- The waves run into the deeper water in the gutter and lose their size and strength.
- When there is a large set breaking just stay at the edge of the gutter where the waves die out, monitor the breaking waves and look for a gap in the set.
- Waves generally come in sets of 3, 5 or 7 – wait it out. When you see a break in the waves swim a little harder to get out.
- But don't swim too hard – you need to be in good condition to dive under waves.
- If you don't get out in time, then just let the wave push you back into the gutter and wait for the next break in the set and try to get out again.

Swimming back to the beach

- Do not wear yourself out swimming against the rip.
- Generally, the bigger the surf, the wider and stronger the rip.
- When you stop swimming, you aren't stationary. You are moving with the current/rip.

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- Wait at the back of the wave zone until a wave comes, let it break between you and the beach, then swim just behind the wave and use the broken swell to help drag you towards the beach while you are swimming.
- By getting a lift on the back of the broken wave, by the time the next broken wave gets to you it should have lost a lot of its energy
- Don't get caught IN the wave zone where the waves are breaking. If you get caught under the breaking waves you have two options:
 - Go in towards the beach
 - Go back out behind the break
- Staying in the break zone getting smashed by waves is not an option.
- When you are in past the break zone, let the broken white water push you towards the beach.
- This will get you to shore with very little actual swimming
- When you are out of the break zone and being tumbled around in the white water of broken waves ...RELAX... don't try to fight it. The wave will let you go in a few seconds then you can surface, take a breath and look for the next wave to push you in further.
- Don't rush your swim into shore, relax, rest and let the waves do most of the work. Take your time and save energy.
- Should you get dumped by a wave and feel like you are being held down DON'T PANIC. The wave will let you go in a few seconds and the air in your lungs WILL float you to the surface. Enjoy the ride!
- If you panic, you will chew up more oxygen.

Remember, we are here to stay fit while sharing the experience with mates in a dynamic, ever-changing part of mother nature. Never take it for granted, don't do anything you aren't comfortable with and look out for your mates.