Follow the rules

All surfers need to follow basic safety rules before heading into the waves. The key to safe surfing is caution and awareness.

Study the surf

Always study the surf before going in. Select a safe beach with waves under 1 meter, and pick waves that are suitable for your ability.

Use a safe surfboard

A safe surfboard is a surfboard that suits your ability. Beginners need a big, thick surfboard for stability.

Dress appropriately and wear sunscreen

Wear a wet suit that is appropriate for the water temperature or a rash vest to help protect against UV rays. Wear at least SPF 30 broad spectrum sunscreen. Zinc cream also prevents sunburn and guards against UV rays.

Recognize a rip current

A rip current is a volume of water moving out to sea: the bigger the surf, the stronger the rip. Indicators of rips include:

* Brown water from stirred up sand
* Foam on the surface of the water that trails past the break
* Waves breaking on both sides of a rip current
* A rippled appearance between calm water
* Debris floating out to sea

Learn how to escape rips

If you are dragged out by a rip, don’t panic! Stay calm and examine the rip conditions before trying to escape the current. Poor swimmers should ride the rip out from the beach and then swim parallel to the shore for 30 or 40 meters. Once you have escaped the rip, swim toward the shore where the waves are breaking or probe with your feet to feel if a sand bar has formed near the edge of the rip. Strong swimmers should swim at a 45 degree angle across the rip.