

# Mayday, Mayday

A resource to help you stay  
safe in, on and around water.

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# Mayday, Mayday

## A resource to help you stay safe in, on and around water.

In 2024, the RNLI celebrates its 200th anniversary and as part of the lead up to this anniversary the lifesaving charity is launching this resource in collaboration with Girlguiding North West England.

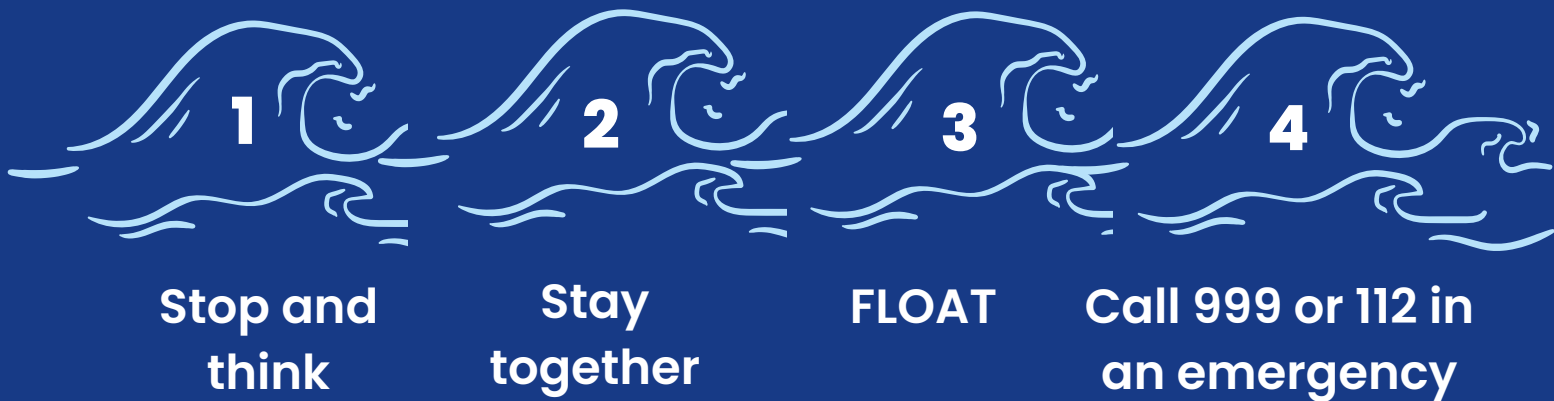
Girlguiding North West England and the RNLI have partnered to deliver a water safety resource for Rainbows, Brownies, Guides & Rangers with a focus on the 4 key safety messages which the RNLI has adopted as part of the Water Safety Code.

Educating young people and their families about water safety is fundamental to saving lives in, on and around water, and is a core part of the RNLI's prevention work. The more young people we can reach with our water safety messages, the more lives we can save now and in the future. As a Girlguiding volunteer, you really can make a lifesaving difference.

Finally, a special thanks to Girlguiding South West England who created this pack alongside RNLI.



# Be safe, have fun



This resource will offer the girls an opportunity to have fun, learn and discover all about water safety so that they can:

- Reduce the chances of getting into danger in, on or around the water.
- Understand the risks surrounding water environments and be able to keep themselves, and those they are with, safe.
- Identify and recognise the importance of planning ahead when heading to a waterside location.
- Explain the effects of cold water whilst swimming, or after having fallen in, and how to prevent going into cold water shock.
- Understand self-rescue techniques, especially the FLOAT position and how to implement it.
- Feel confident with who to call in an emergency should they or someone else get into trouble in, on or around the water.







# Support and guidance

The RNLI offers a network of volunteer presenters across the UK who would be able to visit your unit meeting place to work with our young members on all elements of Part 1 of this badge. These free presentations can be booked by going to **[rnli.org.uk/education/arrange a presentation](https://rnli.org.uk/education/arrange-a-presentation)**.

Or, if within travelling distance, you may be able to arrange a visit to a RNLI station. **To arrange a local visit:**  
**<https://rnli.org/find-my-nearest/lifeboat-stations>**

## What do you need to do to complete the badge?

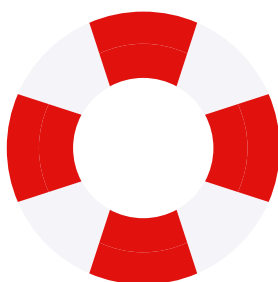
This resource is totally flexible and most activities can be adapted to be appropriate for any age group. Those that are intended for specific age groups are marked G for Guides and Ran for Rangers. Girls should be allowed to choose which activities they prefer within these guidelines.

Those marked with an asterisk (\*A – \*L) are supported by a link to the relevant part of the RNLI website. All links can be found in the appendix to this document.

# Part 1 – The key water safety messages

All participants are required to complete **at least one** activity for each of the 4 key safety messages in Part 1. They will learn the key water safety messages through a variety of activities based on their choices.

*They must complete **at least 1 activity** per key safety message to complete this part of the 'Mayday, Mayday' badge.*



***It is very important that the girls understand the key safety messages***

You may like to use the **True and False quiz** with your unit when they have completed Part 1 to remind them of what they have learned about the 4 key messages. The quiz can be found in the appendix to this document.



# Part 2 – The RNLI

In this part of the resource young members will learn about the life saving work of the RNLI. It is based on their 3 themes for the Bicentenary celebrations; **Past, Present and Future**. We suggest that they complete at least 1 activity from each of these three sections.

- *Leaders are welcome to adapt any of these activities in Part 2 as they like to make them suitable for their units or circumstances.*
- *Make sure that you have the correct photo permissions and follow the relevant guidance in the Digital Safeguarding Policy if the girls choose to use mobile devices to complete any of the challenges in this section.*
- *It is the responsibility of leaders to complete the appropriate risk assessments for any of the activities undertaken whilst completing this challenge.*



# Additional learning

The RNLI has created resources to complement their education work and further resources can be found out:

<https://rnli.org/youth-education>

<https://rnli.org/youth-education/education-resources>

There are many other organisations who have created additional water safety resources that can support the delivery of this challenge if required.

These include:

## **RLSS UK –**

<https://www.rlss.org.uk/pages/category/water-safety-education>

## **Canals and Rivers Trust –**

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/safety-on-our-waterways>

## **Stay Wise –**

<https://staywise.co.uk/teachers/resource?page=1>

## **HM Coastguard –**

<https://hmcoastguard.uk/on-the-beach>

# Part 1 – The key water safety messages

Complete at least **one** activity for each key message.



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# Part 1



## Stop and think

- Be able to talk about at least 5 possible dangers in, on and around water, either at a beach, near an inland waterway or at an artificial body of water such as a reservoir. \*A
- Draw a poster to tell other young people about staying safe near water. \*A
- Put together a bag of items you would take with you for a trip to the seaside and be able to tell others about what you should wear and take with you. \*B
- Explain to your group why it is as important to Stop and think when you approach any water eg. frozen lakes, deep riverbanks, or mud estuaries. Try to think of at least 5 dangers of an inland waterway. \*C
- Create a podcast interview between a journalist and an expert from the RNLI, discussing what to look for when arriving at a lifeguarded beach. Share this with the members of your unit. (G & Ran only)
- Find out what is meant by a rip current and be able to explain what to do if you found yourself caught in one. Accompany your explanation with diagrams to illustrate the correct safety procedures. \*D

# Part 1



## Stay together

- Be able to tell others what safety signs and flags might be found at a beach or inland waterway. \*E
- Draw some of the safety flags that are used by the RNLI and independent lifeguards. Be able to say what each means. \*E
- Be able to say why it is important to stay with an adult on a trip to the beach or an inland waterway. \*F
- Make up a short rap to explain why it is important to stay with your group when near water. Demonstrate your rap to your unit or another group of young people. \*F
- Working in a group, decide what you would do when faced with different dilemmas near a beach or inland waterway. For example:
  - a red flag is flying at a lifeguarded beach
  - you are having great fun rock pooling but the tide is coming in
  - a strong wind suddenly picks up when you are paddleboarding

Think of some other situations that might present similar decision-making. What advice would you give? \*G



# Part 1



## FLOAT

- Be able to demonstrate the 'star' floating position and say when you might need to use this. \*H
- Tell others why the float position is important in keeping you safe in water. \*H
- Using the strap line 'Float to live', create a short presentation to demonstrate its importance. This may be mime, spoken word, virtual or sung. \*H
- Try the 'Cold Water Impact' experiment (G & Ran) \*I
- Test your instinct. Complete the 'Risky Business' RNLI activity here: <https://rnli.org/youth-education/education-resources/upper-secondary/risky-business> (B, G & Ran) \*I
- Create a short video, suitable for children of Brownie age (7 – 10 years) to demonstrate the STAR position used in FLOAT. Remember that some of these children may have only just learned to swim or may not be able to swim at all (G & Ran). Use this video to help: <https://rnli.org/video-download?videoid=E7BF4CDD-578C-4824-B3DBE55B922BE143>

# Part 1



## Call 999 or 112

- Learn how to call for help at an incident in or near water using 999 or 112. \*K

- Find out about the part the RNLI plays in a rescue in, on or around water. \* L

- **If the incident is at the sea call 999 or 112 and ask for the Coastguard.**
- **If the incident is on inland water call 999 and ask for the Fire Service.**

- In small groups, create and act out a scene in which it might be necessary to call 999 or 112. Make sure you include a casualty, the coastguard and RNLI crew.

- Show your awareness of the emotions that might be felt by a) a casualty at a waterway incident, b) the person dialling 999 or 112 for help and c) a relative of the casualty who witnesses the incident. Explain how you could support each of these people in this situation. You can use the scenarios below as examples to practise. (Ran)

**Scenario 1** – Somebody is at the beach and hasn't noticed the tide is coming in. There is no access for them to leave the beach and they need help to get out.

**Scenario 2** – Somebody has twisted their ankle on a rock in an inland river and is struggling to walk out safely.

# Part 2 – Celebrating the RNLI: Past, Present and Future



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Lifeboats

# Part 2



## Past

Find out when and how the RNLI was founded and design something to commemorate the bicentenary e.g.

- A commemorative mug
- A flag
- A Bicentenary cake
- Compose a song. Perform it to your unit or make a recording
- Another item of your own choice with which you could celebrate the heritage of the RNLI.



### **Introducing: The Water Women**

<https://rnli.org/video-download?videoid=5ECBD8CE-97BE-4772-83BC909637973984>



# Part 2



## Grace Darling

Grace Darling was one of the most celebrated Victorian water heroines. On 7 September 1838, at the age of 22, she risked her life to rescue the stranded survivors of the wrecked steamship *Forfarshire*, showing great bravery despite the dangerous circumstances.

During the rescue, her father William leapt out of the boat to rescue people, leaving Grace to look after the boat alone. She had to take both oars and row backwards and forwards, trying to keep the boat safe from the rocks in order to bring the survivors home.

Her extraordinary act of bravery became internationally known, making front page news and even reaching Queen Victoria. She became the media celebrity of her day and was celebrated for her bravery. Grace received the RNLI's Silver Medal for Gallantry for her quick thinking and courage.

Grace is still remembered today for her courage, and the bravery she demonstrated that night continues to inspire today. In 1938, a museum was opened to commemorate her life. The Grace Darling Museum still stands today in Bamburgh.

For more information: [RNLI.org/gracedarling](https://www.rnli.org/gracedarling)

# Part 2



## Present

Learn more about the current work of the RNLI by;

- Visiting a lifeboat station
- Inviting a member of the RNLI to visit your unit
- Watching a video or TV programme about the RNLI
- Researching the UK and International work of the RNLI and telling others in your unit about what you have discovered
- Visiting a beach, pond, river, canal, lake or reservoir and having fun. Identify the hazards and talk about how you can keep yourself safe. You can use the Spot The Dangers sheet below to identify hazards.



For access to activity sheets & posters:

<https://rnli.org/youth-education/education-resources/activity-sheets-and-posters>

## Part 2

# Spot the Dangers

**SPOT THE DANGERS**

**AT THE BEACH**

**WHO IS SAFE IN THIS SCENE AND WHO ISN'T?**

SEE IF YOU CAN SPOT ALL 15 DANGERS AND USE YOUR SAFETY KNOWLEDGE TO MAKE SURE YOU HAVE A GREAT TIME EVERY TIME YOU'RE AT THE BEACH



# Part 2

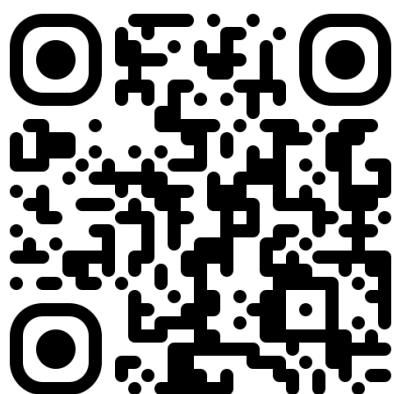


## Future

Supporting the work of the RNLI beyond their Bicentenary by;

- Holding a fundraising event
- Designing a poster promoting the charity
- Acting out an advert about the RNLI that you would like to see on TV
- Making a video or digital presentation about the lifesaving work of the RNLI
- Could you volunteer for the RNLI in the future?

Watch the YouTube clips here about some women in RNLI volunteering roles, and tell your unit how and why you might want to volunteer for either an operational or non-operational crew role in the future.



Dawn Hodges, Bembridge RNLI:  
[https://youtu.be/zs4z\\_f3V57M](https://youtu.be/zs4z_f3V57M)





Some of the activities in this resource can help towards UMAs and Skills Builders. Here are a few suggestions.

**Rainbows:**

Safety superheroes SB  
Rain or shine SB

**Brownies:**

'S.T.O.P.' UMA  
'HELP' SB

**Guides:**

'HELP' UMA  
Temperature  
terror SB

**Rangers:**

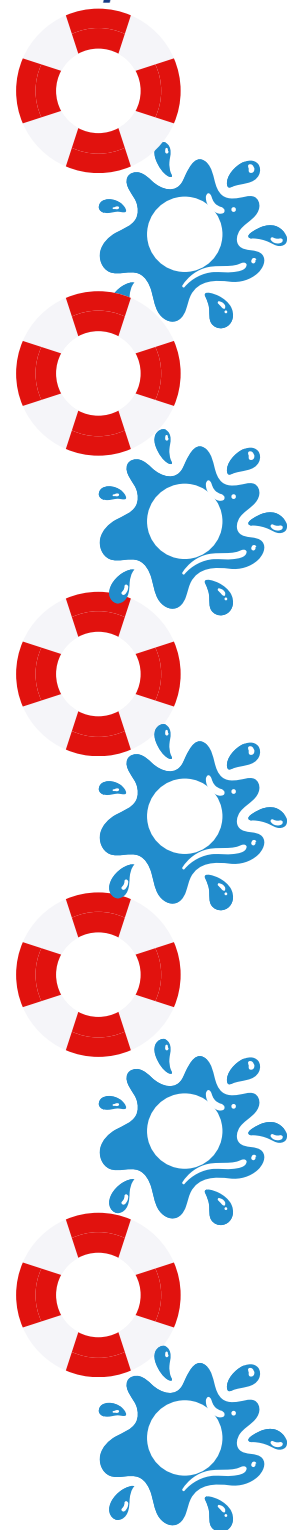
Miss the risk SB

# True or false water safety quiz

## Questions

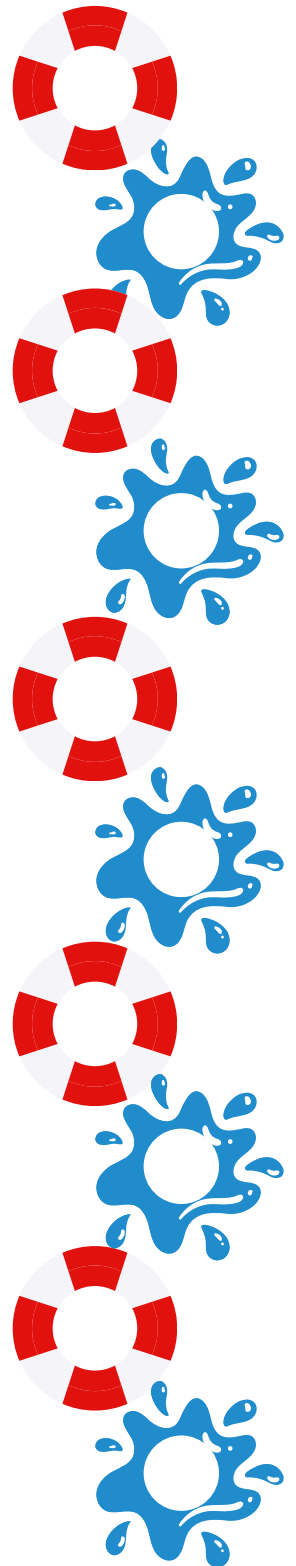
1. You should always stop and think and look for dangers when near water.
2. If you are a good swimmer there is no need to wear a life jacket when kayaking or boating.
3. Rocks, rubbish, and strong currents are hidden dangers which lurk under the water.
4. When red flags are flying you should not enter the water as it is unsafe.
5. If your dog falls into the water you should not jump into the water but find an adult to call for help.
6. Always swim with a friend.
7. When the tide starts to come in it is OK to continue playing in a rock pool at the bottom of a cliff.
8. If you fall into cold water, you should scream and start swimming straight away.
9. If you can swim, you do not need stay near an adult when in the water.
10. Lifeguards normally wear black polo shirts.

## True/False



## True/False

11. When red and yellow flags are flying, it is safe to enter the water between them.
12. If someone is in trouble in the sea you can call 999 or 112 and ask for the coastguard.
13. Swimming in the sea is less dangerous than swimming in a swimming pool because sea water is salty.
14. If your dog can run across a frozen lake, it is safe for you to do it too.
15. As well as wearing a leash, you should always try to hold on to your personal craft if you get into trouble in the water.
16. Since the RNLI was founded in 1824 the lifeboat crews and lifeguards have saved over 140,000 lives.
17. You are allowed to surf in between the black and white chequered flags.
18. You cannot get cold water shock in the summer if you fall into the water.
19. You should never swim in a canal even when it looks clear.
20. Most RNLI lifeboat crew members are volunteers, which means they do not get paid.



# **ANSWERS**

1. You should always stop, and think and look for dangers when near water.

**A. True. Look for signs, flags & any visible hazards such as rocks in the water. Take note of the weather & tide times.**

2. If you are a good swimmer there is no need to wear a life jacket when kayaking or boating.

**A. False. Everyone should always wear a life jacket when on the water in any craft.**

3. Rocks, rubbish, and strong currents are hidden dangers which lurk under the water.

**A. True.**

4. When red flags are flying you should not enter the water as it is unsafe.

**A. True.**

5. If your dog falls into the water you should not jump into the water but find an adult to call for help.

**A. True. If you jump into the water to save your dog then you could get into difficulty yourself.**

6. It is OK to swim on your own.

**A. False. Always swim with a friend so you can help each other if you get into difficulty in the water.**

7. When the tide starts to come in it is OK to continue playing in a rock pool at the bottom of the cliff.

**A. False. The tide can come in very quickly especially if you are distracted and you may get cut off.**

8. If you fall into cold water, you should scream and start swimming straight away.

**A. False. The initial shock of falling into cold water can cause you to gasp and panic. You should float until you feel calm, raise your hand and shout for help, or swim to safety if you can.**

9. If you have learnt to swim, you do not need to stay near an adult when in the water.

**A. False. You should always be near an adult as they can help you if you get into difficulty.**

10. Lifeguards normally wear black polo shirts.

**A. False: They wear yellow polo shirts, with red trousers or shorts, so they can be easily seen.**

11. When red and yellow flags are flying, it is safe to enter the water between them.

**A. True. Red & yellow flags tell you that this is a lifeguarded beach.**

12. If someone is in trouble in the sea you can call 999 or 112 and ask for the Coastguard.

**A. True. If by the sea, ask for the Coastguard and give clear information. If inland, call 999 and ask for the Fire Brigade.**

13. Swimming in the sea is less dangerous than swimming in a swimming pool because sea water is salty.

**A. False. The sea is open water, has many hidden dangers and the water temperature is colder.**

14. If your dog can run across a frozen lake, it is safe for you to do it too.

**A. False. You should never walk on a frozen lake. The ice may break and you will be plunged into ice cold water.**

15. As well as wearing a leash, you should always try to hold on to your personal craft if you get into trouble in the water.

**A. True. You should always be wearing a leash and holding on to your craft will help you to float.**

16. Since the RNLI was founded in 1824 the lifeboat crews and lifeguards have saved over 140,000 lives.

**A. True.**



17. You are allowed to surf in between the black and white chequered flags.

**A. True. you are permitted to surf but not to swim.**

18. You will not get cold water shock in the summer if you fall into the water.

**A. False. The temperature in open water is always cold throughout the year and you will gasp whenever you fall into water, warm or cold.**

19. You should never swim in a canal even when it is clear.

**A. True.**

20. Most RNLI lifeboat crew members are volunteers, which means they do not get paid.

**A. True.**

**End of quiz answers**

# Appendix – Resource list

A. <https://rnli.org/youth-education/education-resources/activity-sheets-and-posters?page=2>

B. <https://rnli.org/youth-education/education-resources/lower-primary/beach-bag>

C. <https://rnli.org/safety/know-the-risks/rip-currents>

D. <https://rnli.org/news-and-media/RNLI-joins-forces-to-offer-safety-advice-after-rise-in-mud-rescues-off-Crosby>

E. <https://rnli.org/youth-education/education-resources/lower-primary/fly-the-flag>

F. <https://rnli.org/youth-education/education-resources/lower-primary/stay-together>

G. <https://rnli.org/youth-education/education-resources/upper-primary/making-safe-choices>

H. <https://rnli.org/youth-education/education-resources/lower-secondary/respect-the-water-fight-or-float>

I. <https://rnli.org/youth-education/education-resources/upper-primary/cold-water-impact>

J. <https://rnli.org/youth-education/education-resources/upper-secondary/tales-from-the-edge-rewind>

K. <https://rnli.org/youth-education/education-resources/upper-primary/emergency-instructions>

L. <https://rnli.org/youth-education/education-resources/upper-primary/rnli-water-safety-passport-2>



# Why is this challenge called 'Mayday, Mayday'?

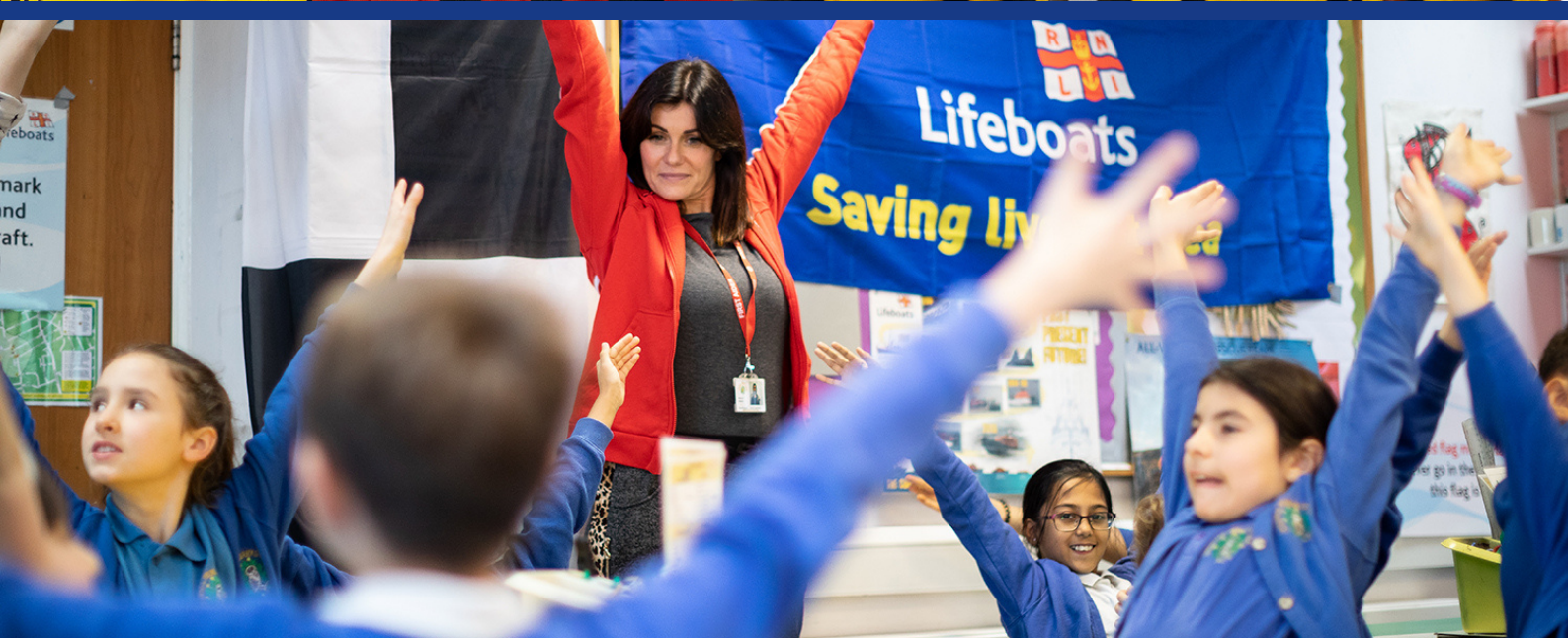
Mayday was first used as an international distress signal in 1923. Before that, the signal 'SOS' had been used but it was felt that this led to difficulties in distinguishing the letter S from F on radio-communications. It was the idea of Frederick Mockford who was a senior radio officer at Croydon Airport in London. He came up with the idea for "Mayday" because it sounded like the French word m'aider, which means "help me."

A typical distress call will start with the word "Mayday" being said three times in a row so that it is not mistaken for another similar-sounding word or phrase. This is followed by relaying the information that rescuers would need, including the nature of the emergency, the location or last known location, current weather, type and identity of craft involved, fuel remaining and the number of people in danger. The distress call has absolute priority over all other transmissions.

**Perhaps you could turn this story into a game for the girls? Maybe some actions such as these could be used as you read it out;**

**Mayday – Cross arms across chest**  
**Radio – hold hand to ear as if using a phone**  
**Distress – put one arm straight up in the air**  
**Emergency – run on the spot**  
**M'aider – hold one arm out as if taking someone's hand**





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