

NORTHWEST LIFEGUARD CERTIFICATION TEST

GRADING CRITERIA

A detailed black and white illustration of a lifeguard stand on a beach. The stand is made of wood and has a ladder leading up to a platform. A life preserver is hanging from the stand. In the background, there is a small boat on the water and a person walking on the beach.

SPONSORS:

Seattle Parks and Recreation,
King County Parks, and
City of Covington

Revised: 11/20/2024

GRADING CRITERIA REVIEW

NORTHWEST LIFEGUARD CERTIFICATION TEST

Candidates will perform the 5 skills detailed in this document and will receive a pass/fail rating for each section. Candidates must pass all 5 sections to receive certification.

Purpose

The purpose of this test is to examine your ability to perform a series of lifeguard, rescue, and physical skills required by many northwest aquatic agencies, including King County Parks and the Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation, and City of Covington. Portions of the test include skills to be used if “things do not go as planned” as stated in the American Red Cross Lifeguard Training Manual. An example would be the rescue of a victim without the use of a rescue tube.

Levels

The first two test sections have separate certification requirements for ‘Full’ and ‘Modified’ standards to represent the demands of different types of aquatic facilities more accurately. Please check with your hiring agency for which level of certification they require.

Full Certification: 45 seconds or less on the Timed Head High Crawl Stroke, and three breaths or fewer for criteria ‘d’, underwater swim, of the 100 Yard Medley

Modified Certification: More than 45 seconds for Timed Head High Crawl Stroke, or more than three breaths for criteria ‘d’, underwater swim, of the 100 Yard Medley

Retesting

At the conclusion of section V, candidates will have the opportunity to reattempt up to (1) section of the test in which they were unsuccessful or received a modified pass. Candidates will not be able to reattempt more than (1) test section. If candidates are unsuccessful in more than (1) section, or if they are unsuccessful in their reattempt of a section, they will need to retake the entire test at a later date. If a candidate needs a full certification, but receives a modified pass on a test section, they would still only be allowed to reattempt (1) test section, so if they fail a later section, they would not be able to receive full certification unless they retake the full test at a later date.

Safety

The safety of test candidates and testers is crucial. For this reason, we ask that candidates taking the test, immediately release any grasp if you are pinched. When acting as a drowning person for a skill being tested, you may use pinching as a signal that you are being held in a grasp that makes you feel unsafe in anyway.

Equipment & Jewelry

Specialized equipment (i.e. goggles, nose plugs, swim caps, fins, etc.) are not allowed during any portion of the test. Jewelry, watches, earrings, bracelets, or body piercings must be removed or covered to prevent potential injury. Please bring a towel out on deck with you.

Additional Information

Candidates will be expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner throughout the test. While you are waiting please keep your conversations low and be ready when your name is called. The test results are non-negotiable and tester’s decisions are final.

I. Head High Crawl Stroke – 50 Yard Timed Swim

- A. Rescuers must swim 50 yards demonstrating head high crawl stroke
 - a. Crawl stroke arm movements must be performed, with arms fully clear of the water on the recovery portion of the stroke.
 - b. Eye contact with the end of the pool must be maintained.
 - c. A shallow head first dive is allowed, however the head must break the surface of the water immediately after.
 - d. The turn must be an open turn performed with the head above the water. Swimmers may push off the end wall during their turn, but must do so with their eyes clear of the water.
 - e. A time of 45 seconds or less is required for full certification.
 - f. A time of 1:30 or less is required for modified certification.
- B. Elements that would result in a fail for this section
 - a. Taking longer than 1:30 to complete the swim
 - b. Swimming a stroke other than head high crawl stroke
 - c. Standing or pushing off from the bottom of the pool
 - d. Using the lane lines or walls to advance, other than during the turn
 - e. Swimming with head or eyes submerged, eyes closed, or with extensive side to side motion that does not maintain forward eye contact
 - f. An extended dive or underwater kick out upon entry

II. Tow Medley and Underwater Swim – 100 Yards

- A. Rescuers must demonstrate 25 yards each of the following 4 skills, in the order listed
 - a. Passive Front Rescue with rescue tube
 - i. Turn the person face up using the passive front rescue procedure (ARC Skill Sheet 6-12).
 - ii. Tow the person to the opposite end of the pool, maintaining consistent forward momentum, and keeping the person's nose and mouth out of the water.
 - b. Passive Rear Rescue with rescue tube
 - i. Turn the person face up using the passive rear rescue procedure (ARC Skill Sheet 6-13).
 - ii. Tow the person to the opposite end of the pool, maintaining consistent forward momentum, and keeping the person's nose and mouth out of the water.
 - c. No equipment passive tow
 - i. Tow the person to the opposite end of the pool using any tow technique that maintains consistent forward momentum and keeps the person's nose and mouth out of the water.
 - ii. Avoid towing the person by the head or neck.
 - d. Underwater swim
 - i. The rescuer has 5 seconds after reaching the wall to begin the underwater swim. After that pause, every 3 seconds of delay will count the same as 1 breath.
 - ii. The rescuer must submerge vertically down feet first and may push off underwater from the wall.
 - iii. When the rescuer comes up for air, 3 seconds are allowed to get a breath and submerge again. Rescuers must submerge feet first. After the initial 3 seconds, every delay of 3 seconds will count as an additional breath.
 - iv. Any part of the body breaking the surface is counted the same as a breath.
 - v. The rescuer may not advance their position in the water (stroke at surface), when coming up for air or push off the bottom of the pool after submerging.
 - vi. The underwater swim must be completed with 3 breaths or fewer for full certification.
- B. Elements that would result in a fail for this section
 - a. Using the bottom or sides of the pool to advance in the water, other than an initial push from the end wall at the beginning of each length
 - b. Standing on the bottom of the pool before reaching the end wall
 - c. Failing to turn the person face up or position the rescue tube to support the person for segments (a) and (b)
 - d. Losing contact with the person being rescued while turning the person over or during the tow
 - e. Allowing the person's nose or mouth to go under the water after towing has been initiated
 - f. Swimming along the surface for segment (d)
 - g. Repeated inability to stay in the assigned lane
 - h. Towing the person in a manner likely to cause injury, such as towing by the head or neck

III. Face Down Spinal Injury Recovery in Shallow Water

- A. Rescuers must enter using a slide in entry, approach the injured person in a manner that minimizes water disturbance, rotate the person face up, assess their condition, and prepare for backboarding. Rescuers will not be required to backboard the person, as backboarding is a team skill and this test only assesses individual skills.
 - a. The water entry and approach should minimize disturbance of the water to reduce movement of the person's head, neck, and spine.
 - b. The head splint technique for a face-down person at or near the surface must be used to stabilize the person's spine and turn them face up (ARC Skill Sheet 11-2).
 - c. Once the person is face up, rescuers must check for breathing and consciousness by attempting to communicate with the person, and leaning forward to look, listen, and feel for breathing (ARC Skill Sheet 11-2). The injured person's status must be communicated to backup rescuers.
 - d. After checking for breathing, hands must be repositioned to the overarm head splint position (ARC Skill Sheet 11-2).
 - e. Forward momentum should be maintained throughout, in order to keep the person's body as horizontal as possible.
 - f. Do not release the person until the tester prompts you to let go.
 - g. The person's nose and mouth must stay out of the water once they have been turned face up.
- B. Elements that would result in a fail for this section
 - a. Entering the water in an unsafe manner, or with excessive water disturbance
 - b. Failure to demonstrate the head splint technique
 - c. Allowing the person's nose or mouth to go under the water after turning them face up
 - d. Excessive movement of the person's head, neck, or spine at any point during the rescue
 - e. Failure to check for responsiveness or breathing, or failure to communicate this information to backup rescuers
 - f. Releasing contact with the person at any point between initial contact and the tester prompting you to let go

IV. Submerged Recovery and CPR

- A. Rescuers must enter the water feet first, recover a submerged person from 10-12 feet of water, tow them to the end of the pool, perform a rapid assessment and multiple cycles of CPR.
 - a. Rescuers will be provided with a hip pack and gloves. Rescuers must wear the hip pack, and stock it with gloves and their own pocket mask prior to initiating the rescue procedure. Gloves and pocket masks must be used where appropriate during the rescue procedure.
 - b. A head-first or feet first surface dive may be used to descend, and the bottom of the pool may be used to push off when ascending. The submerged person must be recovered to the surface on the first dive.
 - c. Once the person has been brought to the surface, contact must be maintained, and the person's nose and mouth must remain out of the water.
 - d. Any appropriate tow technique may be used to move the person to the end of the pool. Rescuers may walk on the bottom of the pool once the water is shallow enough to do so.
 - e. Once rescuers have reached the end of the pool, they must raise one of the person's arms towards the pool edge as if handing them off to a backup responder, being sure to support the person and ensure their mouth and nose are clear of the water until the tester prompts you to move to the mannequin. Rescuers would then exit the pool, move to the mannequin, and continue with their rapid assessment (ARC Skill Sheet 7-3).
 - f. The rapid assessment must include checking for responsiveness, ensuring 911/EMS have been called (even if you called for 911 while in the water or upon entry), opening the airway, checking for breathing and a pulse, and giving two ventilations for the case of a person who is not breathing as the result of drowning (ARC Skill Sheet 7-3).
 - g. The tester will give prompts with the results of the breathing and pulse check. They will not prompt you to begin CPR but will simply prompt that the person has no breathing or pulse once the rescuer demonstrates an adequate check. If the tester is not prompting you, do not assume the result, continue to check until they give you a prompt.
 - h. CPR must be administered, continuing with effective breaths and compressions in the correct ratio until the tester prompts you to stop (ARC Skill Sheet 9-1).
- B. Elements that would result in a fail for this section
 - a. Failure to recover the submerged person on the first dive
 - b. Allowing the person's nose or mouth to go under the water after the initial recovery
 - c. Failing to use required PPE (gloves and pocket mask)
 - d. Failure to open the person's airway, properly seal the rescue mask, or otherwise being unable to effectively cause the mannequin's chest to rise and fall with each breath
 - e. Failure to perform all steps in rapid assessment
 - f. Checking for breathing and/or pulse in the wrong place, or too quickly
 - g. Incorrect ratio of compressions to breaths for CPR
 - h. Incorrect hand placement, compression depth, compression rate, or otherwise being unable to deliver effective chest compressions during CPR
 - i. Releasing the person at the wall before prompt from tester, stopping CPR before prompt from tester, or other inability to follow instructions from tester

V. Struggling Active Rescue Without Equipment

- A. Rescuers must enter the water from the shallow end of the pool, perform a rescue on an active drowning person who is scared and struggling, and move them to the nearest wall.
 - a. Any approach stroke may be used, but must be with a sense of urgency, and must maintain eye contact with the active drowning person.
 - b. Swimming underneath or around the person for a rear approach is acceptable.
 - c. The person must be placed in a secure hold that supports them with their nose and mouth above the water. Any appropriate technique may be used.
 - d. If the person escapes from the initial hold, or is able to grab onto the rescuer in a way that limits their mobility, the rescuer will have one attempt to escape the person's grasp and regain control.
 - e. If the person cannot be secured in two attempts, or is left with their face underwater for more than 5 seconds in between attempts, it will result in a fail.
 - f. The person will continue to struggle until they feel they are secure and supported above the water. Communicating with the person can help them to feel secure more quickly.
 - g. Once the person has been secured, the person's nose and mouth must remain above the water until they are on the wall.
 - h. Rescuers must ensure the person has a grip on the wall before releasing contact. Testers will prompt you when you can release them.
- B. Elements that would result in a fail for this section
 - a. Unsafe technique for entry into shallow water
 - b. Failure to approach with urgency and maintain eye contact
 - c. Failure to secure the person by the second attempt
 - d. Securing the person in a way that could injure them, such as securing them around the head or neck, digging in with fingernails, or gripping excessively tight
 - e. Securing the person in a way that does not keep their nose and mouth above the water
 - f. Inability to maintain forward progress and reach the wall
 - g. Releasing the person before they are on the wall and the tester has prompted you to release them