

# DON'T GET SUCKED IN BY THE RIP



**Don't be fooled by calm, flat sections in the surf, because these are often rips.**

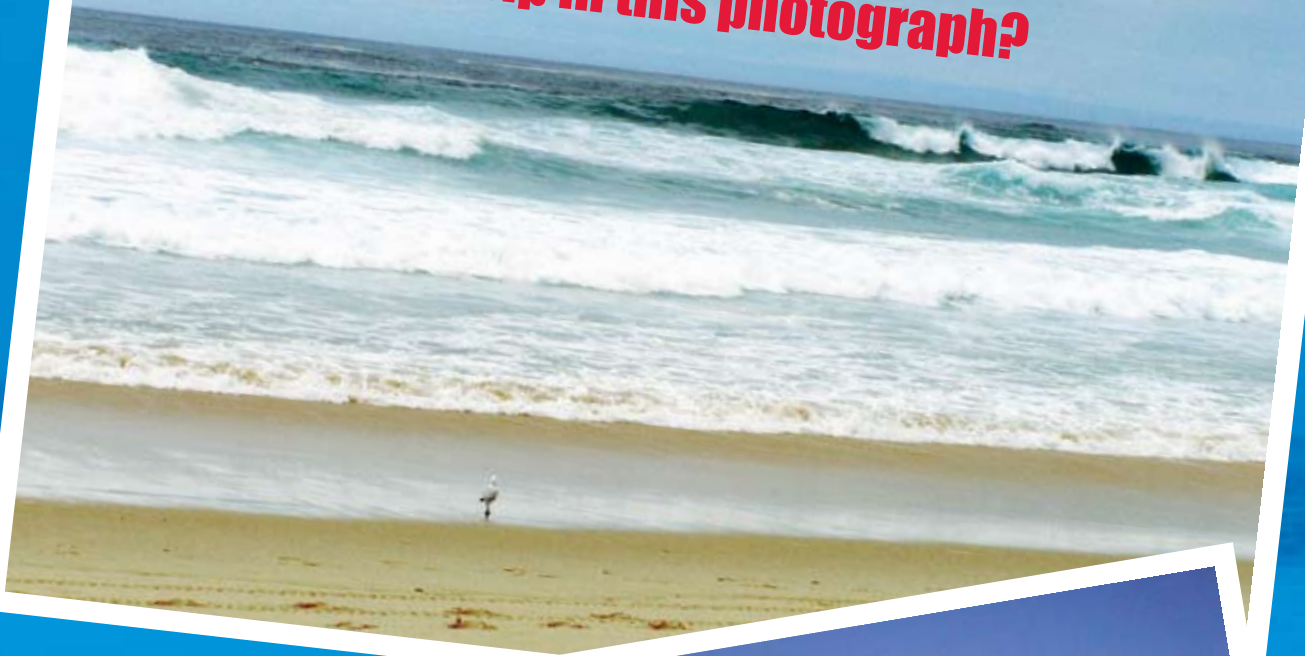
**Rips are dangerous because they suck swimmers out to sea very quickly. The safest place to swim is between the flags!**



**UNSW**  
THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

**TAKE OUR 2 MINUTE  
"CAN YOU SPOT  
A RIP?"  
QUIZ INSIDE**

**Can you spot a rip in this photograph?**



**What about in this photograph?**



**And in this one?**



**Can you spot a rip in this photograph?**



# Hands up who didn't spot the rip!

Purple arrows mark the rips in these photographs



Nearly 60 people drown at Australian beaches every year and up to 600 people end up in hospital after almost drowning

Rips are a major cause of drowning on Australian beaches.

A rip is a current of water moving away from the beach that carries water back out to sea.

Rips are dangerous because they can suck even the strongest swimmer out to sea very quickly.



There may be many rips along a beach and they can be difficult to recognise.

Even if you think you know what a rip looks like, there is a good chance you don't.

In our recent beach safety survey on NSW beaches, only 40% of people could confidently identify a rip in a picture - even though 80% thought that they could.

Some people who have drowned in rips swam in the rip because they thought it looked calm.

Don't get sucked in by the rip! Rips often look like a calm break between the incoming waves.

This can fool people into thinking that it is safe to swim exactly where the rip is!

Don't swim in a calm-looking break between incoming waves.

Only swim where you are sure it is safe. If you are not sure, don't swim!



In our beach survey we showed people a photo like the one above and asked them where they would swim. Nearly half of the people pointed to the rip! They explained that they would swim there because it looked calm.



**The safest place to swim is between the flags.  
They take the guess work out of avoiding rips.**

Our survey showed that most people know what to do if they get caught in a rip. Unfortunately, it is easy to panic when you feel like the water is taking control of you.

If you do get caught in a rip:

- **Remain calm.** A rip won't pull you under, and it will get weaker as it gets further away from the shore.
- **Take your time to remember what you need to do.** If you don't panic you can take control of the situation.
- **Float with the rip** until it weakens enough for you to **swim across it** (parallel to the shore) into an area where waves are breaking into shore.



- **Swim back to the shore.** The breaking waves should help to wash you back to the beach.
- **Raise your hand and call for assistance** if you think that you cannot get away from the rip and into the beach by yourself.

The real danger with rip currents is not being pulled away from shore, but panicking.

**Remember, the rip will not pull you under  
and it will weaken. Then you can take control of the  
situation and get back to the beach.**

**A purple arrow marks the rip in this photograph**



**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

[www.irmrc.unsw.edu.au](http://www.irmrc.unsw.edu.au)

University of New South Wales (NSW Injury Risk Management Research Centre,  
Department of Aviation and School of BEES)

Surf Life Saving Australia

NSW Health

NSW Department of Sport, Recreation and Tourism