

# Longfellow's WHALE Tales

## Water Habits Are Learned Early

### Lesson 4

# Don't Just Pack It, Wear Your Life Jacket

## ABOUT THIS LESSON

Participants will learn about when to wear a life jacket in, on or around the water. This includes always wearing a life jacket when boating regardless of swim skill level. This lesson also covers some basic boat safety guidelines.

## GUIDANCE FOR THE LEADER

Please refer to the section How to Lead Longfellow's WHALE Tales for full guidance on how to teach this lesson and the Longfellow's WHALE Tales Water Safety for Children program. Leaders are encouraged to follow the lesson plan provided. However, use of the course presentation and videos is optional. You should also adapt the language and activities as needed based on the age and learning level of participants, the teaching setting, local references and available time. In some cases, options are offered for activities based on these factors.

## KEY TERMS

**Buoyant:** Able to float

**Capsize:** To turn upside down in the water (e.g., a boat that tips over)

**Life jacket:** A buoyant jacket or vest that is worn as a personal flotation device (PFD) to help a person stay afloat in the water

**Open water:** An area of water, such as in an ocean or a large lake, that is far from any land or other structure

**Watercraft:** A vessel that floats and is meant to transport people in the water (e.g., a boat, raft, paddleboard, jet ski)

## TEACHING OBJECTIVES

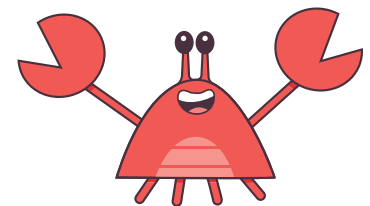
After completing this lesson, participants will be able to:

- Explain the importance of wearing a life jacket and when to wear it.
- Explain how to select the correct life jacket.
- Understand why a life jacket should fit properly.
- Demonstrate how to put on a life jacket (optional).
- Understand some basic rules of safe boating.

## MATERIALS, EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

Review the lesson plan prior to leading it to determine which items you'll need for the options you choose. Materials may include:

- Course Presentation 4: Don't Just Pack It, Wear Your Life Jacket
- Poster: Don't Just Pack It, Wear Your Life Jacket
- Longfellow's WHALE Tales animated video: Don't Just Pack It, Wear Your Life Jacket
- Longfellow's WHALE Tales live action video: Let's Talk Life Jackets
- Monitor or computer, projector and screen (for use with downloadable course presentation and videos)
- Dry erase board and marker or other method to record answers for all to see (newsprint and marker, chalkboard and chalk, etc.)
- Selection of different life jackets (sizes) for participants to try on
- Sticker badges (one for each participant)
- Coloring Sheet: Don't Just Pack It, Wear Your Life Jacket (one for each participant)
- Activity Sheet 4-1 (one for each Level 1 participant)
- Activity Sheet 4-2 (one for each Level 2 participant)
- Caregiver Letter 4-1 (one for each participant)



# TOPIC: INTRODUCTION

Time: 1 to 5 minutes, depending on whether optional video is used



**Leader's Note:** If needed, start by introducing yourself to participants and allow them to introduce themselves.

## SHARE AND TELL DISCUSSION



### LEVEL



### MATERIALS

Course Presentation 4, Slide 1

#### ■ Tell participants:

- Sometimes, it's fun to go underwater and see things from a whale's point of view, and sometimes it's much better to just stay on top of things, at the water's surface. One good example of that is if you are still learning how to swim! Or, if you are in a boat.
- Today, we'll learn about how one very important kind of jacket can help give you the ability to float, even if you don't yet know how to swim or aren't intending to be in the water.
- We'll also learn some basic safety rules for when you go boating, paddleboarding, rafting or use another type of watercraft.

## VIDEO



### LEVEL



### MATERIALS

Course Presentation 4, Slide 2

Dry erase board and marker or similar

#### ■ Tell participants: We are going to watch a short video.

#### ■ Play animated video: Don't Just Pack It, Wear Your Life Jacket



**Leader's Note:** After watching the video, pose the following questions and allow a few participants to provide answers. If desired, and as appropriate for your participants and setting, you can create a Notice and Wonder chart for all to see by making a column for each and writing down what the participants say. You can refer to this throughout the lesson as you cover topics where relevant.

#### ■ Ask participants:

- Who can tell me one thing they noticed when watching the video?
  - *Allow two or three participants to answer.*
- Who can tell me one thing they are wondering after watching the video?
  - *Allow two or three participants to answer.*

#### ■ Tell participants: As we go through this lesson and we learn more about this topic, think about what you saw in the video we just watched to help you in our discussions and activities.

# TOPIC: DON'T JUST PACK IT, WEAR YOUR LIFE JACKET

Time: 5 minutes

## SHARE AND TELL DISCUSSION



## LEVEL



## MATERIALS

Course Presentation 4,  
Slides 3–5

Poster: Don't Just  
Pack It, Wear Your Life  
Jacket

OR

Course Presentation 4,  
Slide 6

### ■ Tell participants:

- A life jacket is what we call a personal flotation device (or PFD). Its job is to help a person float at the top of the water. It also helps a person keep their head out of the water, even if they are very tired.
- Life jackets may be different depending on what kind of water activity you are doing. For example, will you be canoeing or going on a jet ski? Will you be in a calm lake or in the ocean?
- All life jackets, however, should share an important feature. They should be approved by the U.S. Coast Guard.
  - The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) protects our country's waterways and the people who use them. So they are experts on things like life jackets.
- A life jacket also shouldn't be substituted with water toys that may float but are meant for fun rather than safety.
  - NEVER use a pool noodle, blow-up toy, water wings, a raft or any other type of water inflatable as a substitute for a life jacket.



**Leader's Note:** Display the poster: Don't Just Pack It, Wear Your Life Jacket.

### ■ Ask participants: In the poster, everyone is wearing a life jacket, including the adult. Can you think of why they might be wearing one in this scene?

- *Allow a few participants to guess the correct answers.*

### ■ Tell participants

- There are a few reasons to wear a life jacket. Everyone should wear a life jacket:
  - If you will be in, on or around the water and don't know how to swim or can't swim very well yet.
  - Any time you go on a boat or other watercraft (like a paddleboard or jet ski), or are in the ocean or open water, even if you do know how to swim well.
  - Any time there are posted rules requiring life jacket use, for example when doing certain water activities.
- When you don't wear your life jacket in these situations, you are taking a chance with your safety and your life.

- **Ask participants:** Who can think of a situation where a person might be around the water or on a boat and end up falling in the water by surprise?



**Leader's Note:** Provide prompts if needed to help participants come up with examples such as those below. Make sure answers include both boating and nonboating scenarios.

- *Answers may vary but should include things like:*
  - *A person could be fishing from a dock and slip and fall into the water.*
  - *A nonswimmer could be playing in shallow water but accidentally enter water that's too deep.*
  - *A person could be doing an activity like surfing or paddleboarding and lose their balance while far from the land.*
  - *A boat or watercraft could capsize (turn over).*
  - *A person could be thrown from a boat or watercraft if it hits something.*
- **Tell participants:**
  - In many cases, when someone has drowned, especially while boating, they had a life jacket with them but were not wearing it at the time they needed it.
  - That's why we say what it says on this poster: "Don't Just Pack It, Wear Your Life Jacket!"
- **Ask participants:** Now let's say it together.
  - *Don't just pack it, wear your life jacket.*




**Level 1 Variation:** As you restate the rule learned in Lesson 1, have participants repeat the rule using the same gestures taught: (*Say as you wag your figure no*) **Don't just pack it,** (*Act as though you are putting on a jacket*) **wear your life jacket.**

- **Tell participants:** A life jacket just doesn't work if you don't put it on!

# TOPIC: THE RIGHT FIT FOR YOUR LIFE JACKET

Time: 5 to 13 minutes, depending on whether optional Try It On for Size activity is used


<p><b>SHARE AND TELL DISCUSSION</b></p>  <p><b>LEVEL</b></p> <p><b>LEVEL 1</b> <b>LEVEL 2</b></p> <p><b>MATERIALS</b></p> <p>None</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ <b>Tell participants:</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Another thing you need to know about life jackets is that they aren't one size fits all. Life jackets come in different sizes for different sized people.</li><li>● Information about the weight and size of the person a life jacket is made for, as well as what type of activity it's meant for, can be found on the label.</li><li>● The label will also tell you if the life jacket is U.S. Coast Guard-approved. Remember: That's important.</li><li>● If you aren't sure if you have the right life jacket for you, ask the adult who is supervising your water activity for help.</li></ul></li></ul>
--	--



**Leader's Note:** For the next section of the lesson, there are several options for how participants are taught. Choose the one that works best for your setting, participant learning level and resources:

- Option A: Let's Talk Life Jackets (Video)
- Option B: How to Find the Right Life Jacket (Share and Tell Discussion)

An optional follow-up Aquatic Activity, Try It On for Size, is also included for use with either Option A or B for settings where resources and time allow for participants to try on life jackets for fit.

<b>Option A: Let's Talk Life Jackets</b>	
<p><b>VIDEO</b></p>  <p><b>LEVEL</b></p> <p><b>LEVEL 1</b> <b>LEVEL 2</b></p> <p><b>MATERIALS</b></p> <p>Course Presentation 4, Slide 7</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ <b>Tell participants:</b> We are going to watch a short video to learn more about how to find the right fit for a life jacket.</li><li>■ <b>Play live action video:</b> Let's Talk Life Jackets</li><li>■ <b>Tell participants:</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Remember: When wearing a life jacket, you'll want to choose one that:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Fits snugly so that it won't slip off.</li><li>○ Is meant for someone who weighs what you weigh. You can check the label to see if it's meant for someone your size.</li><li>○ Is in good condition. A damaged life jacket may not work.</li></ul></li><li>● If you're not sure if a life jacket fits you right, ask the supervising adult to help you.</li></ul></li><li>■ <b>Ask participants:</b> Does anyone have any questions about what we just watched?<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <i>Answer any questions.</i></li></ul></li></ul>

## Option B: How to Find the Right Life Jacket

### SHARE AND TELL DISCUSSION



#### LEVEL



### MATERIALS

Course Presentation 4,  
Slides 8–9

#### ■ Tell participants:

- When wearing a life jacket, you'll want to choose one that:
  - Fits snugly so that it won't slip off.
  - Is meant for someone who weighs what you weigh. You can check the label to see if it's meant for someone your size.
  - If you're not sure if a life jacket fits you right, ask the supervising adult to help you.
- To check the fit of a life jacket, you can have someone give a gentle tug on the shoulders. It should not ride up over your chin or ears.
- Before you put a life jacket on, you should also check it to be sure it is in good condition.
- If the life jacket is damaged, it may not work well enough to keep you afloat if needed.
  - Make sure the buckles and straps work.
  - Make sure the life jacket is not ripped, torn or otherwise not in good condition.
- Finally, to work best, life jackets must be worn with all straps, zippers and ties fastened. Once this is done, tuck in any loose strap ends to avoid getting caught on something.

## Try It On for Size—Optional Activity

### AQUATIC ACTIVITY



#### LEVEL



### MATERIALS

Life jackets in a variety  
of sizes

- **Set up activity:** Have several sizes of life jackets available for participants to try on. Depending on how many life jackets you have available, have the participants come up in several small groups or all together. Each participant should attempt to select a life jacket that fits their size and properly put it on. Once they are all done, guide them in checking the fit.
- **Tell participants (once they have life jackets on):** Let's check the life jackets and how they fit together. Do as I say:
  - Check that all straps, zippers and ties are fastened and that the loose ends are secured.
  - Make sure there is no extra room above the arm openings and that the life jacket does not ride up over your chin or face.



**Leader's Note:** If time allows, check the fit for each participant individually by having them raise their arms straight over their head. Give a tug on the life jacket at the shoulders. It should not ride up over their chin or ears. You can also have participants pair up and do the tug test as described for each other if appropriate for your group.

- **Ask participants:** Does anyone have any questions?
  - *Answer any questions as needed.*

# TOPIC: STAYING AFLOAT WHEN YOU'RE GOING TO BOAT

Time: 7 minutes

## SHARE AND TELL DISCUSSION



## LEVEL



## MATERIALS

Dry erase board and marker or similar

### ■ Tell participants:

- Now that you know how to put a life jacket on and that you should always wear a life jacket when going on a boat or other watercraft, let's turn our attention to a few other things a water smart kid should know about boat and watercraft safety.
- First, there are many different kinds of boats and watercraft.



**Leader's Note:** Ask participants the following discussion question. As answers are given, write them down for all to see, if desired. If your group doesn't have much experience with this topic, offer prompts to encourage answers similar to those below.

### ■ Ask participants: What are some different types of boats or other watercraft a person could ride on?

- *Answers will vary but should include things like:*
  - *Motorboat*
  - *Fishing boat*
  - *Inflatable raft/boat*
  - *Canoe*
  - *Sailboat*
  - *Kayak*
  - *Wave runner*
  - *Ship*
  - *Raft*
  - *Jet Ski*
  - *Stand-up paddleboard (SUP)*
  - *Ferry*
  - *Cruise ship*

### ■ Tell participants:

- These are all great answers.
- On some types of watercraft like a motorboat, ferry boat or cruise ship, there may be a skipper or captain who is in charge of the boat and the passengers. They will tell you what to do for your safety.
- Other times, like on a kayak, canoe or paddleboard, you might get to be the captain of your own watercraft!



## Before Shoving Off

### SHARE AND TELL DISCUSSION



#### LEVEL



### MATERIALS

None

#### ■ Tell participants:

- To make sure a boating trip or activity using another type of watercraft is as safe as possible, the captain of the boat will do things like:
  - Inspect the boat and the safety equipment to be sure everything is in good condition.
  - Check weather reports and be aware of storm warnings.
  - Make a float plan with details about where the boat is going and how long it will be out.
- As a kid, when you take a boat or other type of watercraft out, you'll have responsibilities, too. These include:
  - Making sure you have permission to use the watercraft and that there is an adult who is supervising you.
  - Following the rules and staying within any boundaries given.
  - Not going out on a watercraft by yourself unless it's meant to be used that way like a paddleboard or a one-person kayak. In that case, someone else should still be on the water with you in a separate watercraft.
  - Putting on your life jacket before you get on the watercraft and wearing it until you are safely back on land.
- You should follow any instructions given about things like how to board (get on) the boat safely, how to disembark (get off) the boat safely, and how to move around the boat safely if needed.

## On a Motorboat

### SHARE AND TELL DISCUSSION



#### LEVEL



### MATERIALS

Course Presentation 4,  
Slide 10

#### ■ Tell participants:

- If you are a passenger on a motorboat, there are additional safety rules to know.
- A motorboat has a propeller, which is a device that has blades that spin around and cause the boat to move.
  - The propeller is located in the back of the boat and the blades on the propeller are sharp. They could cut someone very badly when they are spinning in the water.
  - Always stay away from the propeller.
  - Never board or exit a motorboat when the engine is on.
  - Never swim in water near a boat when a propeller is on.



**Leader's Note:** Additional content about what to do in a boating emergency is included in Lesson 7: Think So You Don't Sink.

# TOPIC: WRAP-UP

Time: 3 minutes

## SHARE AND TELL DISCUSSION



### LEVEL



### MATERIALS

Sticker badge

Coloring Sheet: Don't Just Pack It, Wear Your Life Jacket

Activity Sheet 4-1 or 4-2

Caregiver Letter 4-1

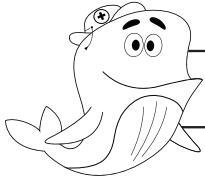
- **Tell participants:** In today's lesson, we all learned an important saying: Don't just pack it, wear your life jacket!
- **Ask participants:** Can anyone remind me why that's important?
  - *Answers should include:*
    - *It can help you float/keep your head above water if you don't know how to swim well.*
    - *It can keep you safer when you go boating, fishing or do other water activities in case you end up in the water.*
- **Tell participants:** We also learned some basic things about boat safety. But if you really want to learn how to boat safely, you need to listen to and follow all additional instructions you get before you head out on the water.
- **Ask participants:** Does anyone have any questions about what we learned today?
  - *Answer any questions.*
- **Tell participants:**
  - You've all earned a safety champion badge to add to your collection.
  - If you have Internet access at home, you can also view and share videos about what we learned today by following the link on the activity sheet I am going to hand out.



**Leader's Note:** Hand out a sticker badge to each participant along with the coloring sheet, activity sheet and caregiver letter.

If this is the final lesson you will be teaching in Longfellow's WHALE Tales, allow time to do the Closing Ceremony at the end of this lesson to celebrate what participants have learned. You can find this in the Closing Ceremony section of Longfellow's WHALE Tales.

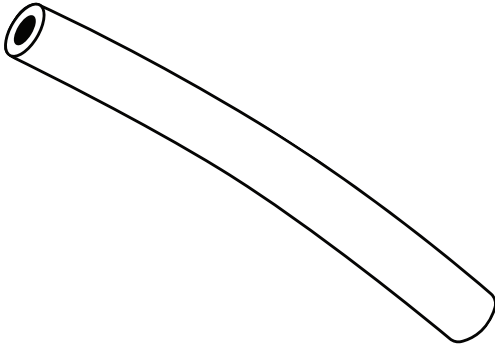
Name: \_\_\_\_\_



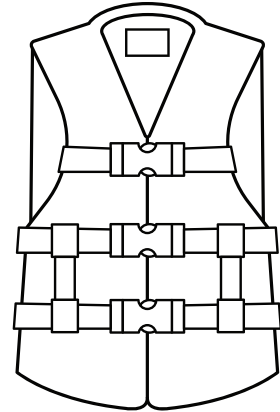
## Safer Ways to Stay Afloat

Not everything that helps you float is a good choice for staying safer in the water. Can you spot the difference? Circle or color the items that are made to keep you safer in the water. If the item is just meant as a toy, put an 'X' through it.

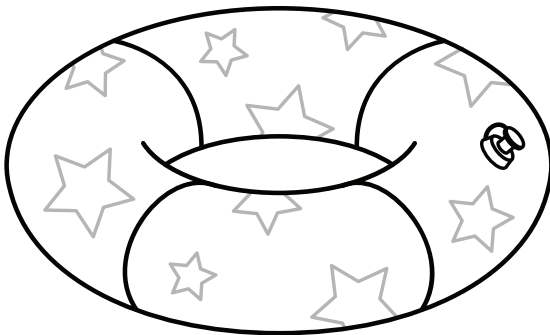
1.



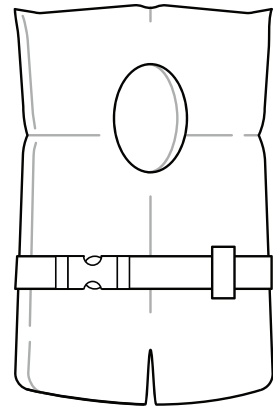
2.



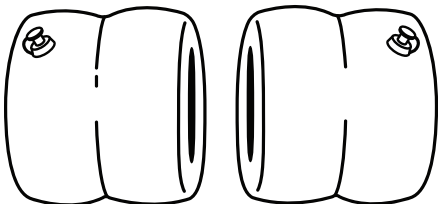
3.



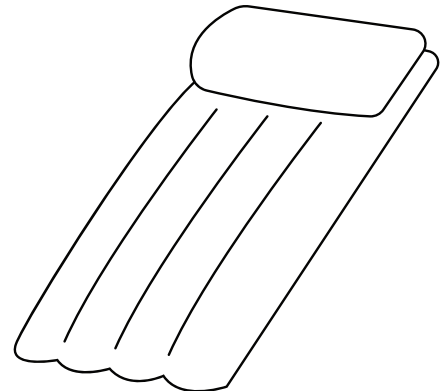
4.



5.

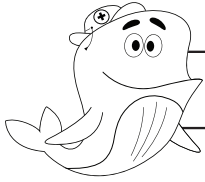


6.



See the answer key, plus learn more at [redcross.org/watersafetyforkids](https://www.redcross.org/watersafetyforkids).

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



## Read the Life Jacket Label

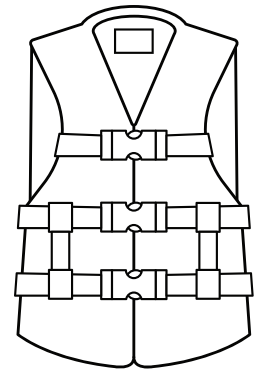
A life jacket should have a label on the inside that looks similar to the one shown here. It gives you information about who the life jacket is for and what kind of activities it is for. Answer the questions that follow based on what you see here.

# ADULT UNIVERSAL

User Weight: >40 kg (>88 lbs)  
Chest Size: 76-132 cm (30-52 in.)

- Drowning hazard if not worn.
- Must be fastened and properly adjusted to float the wearer.

Choose and wear the device which fits you and your activity,  
visit [www.wearitlifejacket.org](http://www.wearitlifejacket.org).  
Read and keep the owner's manual and tags for info on wear and care.



Company Name  
Company Address  
Company website if available  
Made in XXXXX

Lab  
Certification  
Mark

Certifying Lab  
Identification  
and address

**USCG Approved 160.064/XXXX/X**  
**TC Approved XXXXXX-X**  
**ANSI/CAN/UL 12402-5**

Model: XXXX    Style: XXXX  
Lot No: XXXX

Approval conditions state that this device must be worn to be counted as equipment required by vessels meeting Transport Canada or USCG regulations.

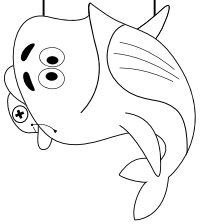
**Use:**  
Fasten all closures and adjust for a snug fit.

**Inspection:**  
Inspect your life vest before each outing. Do not use if your life vest shows signs of weathering, damage, or rot.

**Care and Storage:**  
Dry thoroughly after each outing.  
Store in a dry, cool place out of direct sunlight.

- |  |     |    |
|--|-----|----|
| 1. Is this life jacket approved by the U.S. Coast Guard?<br>(Hint: It should say "USCG Approved" somewhere). | Yes | No |
| 2. Should a child who weighs 65 pounds wear this life jacket?  | Yes | No |
| 3. Should an adult who weighs 100 pounds wear this life jacket?  | Yes | No |
| 4. Should a person who is going jet skiing wear this life jacket?  | Yes | No |
| 5. Is it OK to store the life jacket wet?  | Yes | No |

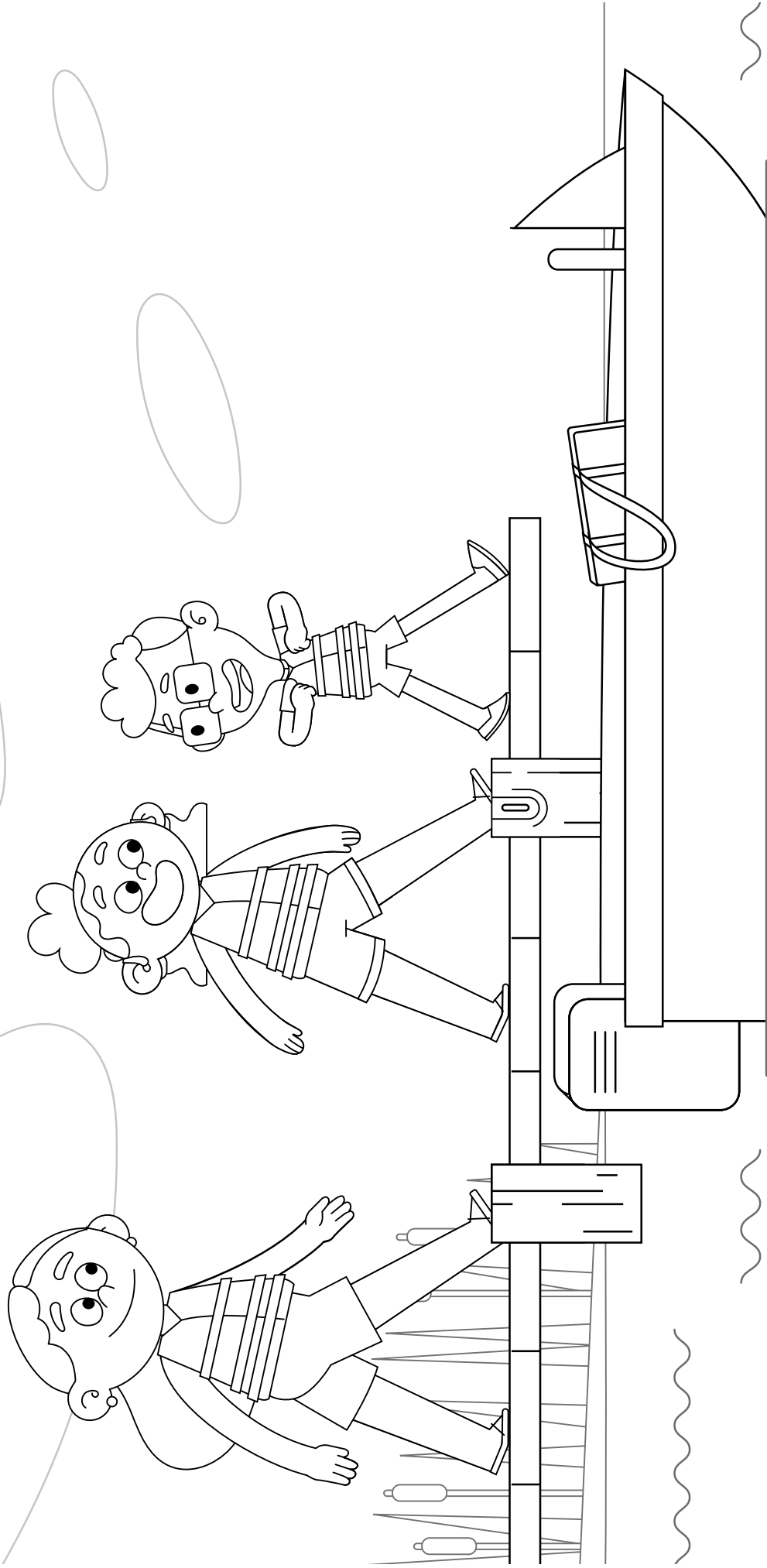
See the answer key, plus learn more at [redcross.org/watersafetyforkids](http://redcross.org/watersafetyforkids).



**DON'T JUST PACK IT, WEAR YOUR LIFE JACKET**

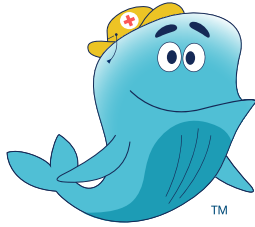


**American  
Red Cross**



Name \_\_\_\_\_

**A life jacket only works if you wear it!**



## Longfellow's WHALE Tales

### Water Habits Are Learned Early

**Dear Parent/Caregiver,**

Today, your child learned about when and why it's important to wear a life jacket in, on or around the water. But did you know? Even if you are a strong swimmer, there are times adults should wear a life jacket too.

Be a positive role model and a safety champion for your entire family by following these guidelines for life jacket use:

- **Small children and weak swimmers in your group** should wear a life jacket any time they are in, on or around water, including at pools or waterparks and when fishing on a bank or pier.
- **Everyone in your group** should wear a life jacket when boating, water skiing or doing other water sports; and doing activities around cold water and ice.

Before you or your child puts a life jacket on, you should make sure you're all using the right life jacket for the activity, in the right size for the user's weight. The life jacket should also be U.S. Coast Guard (USCG)-approved. You can find this information on the label printed inside every USCG-approved life jacket. Once on, check buckles and straps for proper function. If a life jacket is damaged or torn, it's time to throw it away.

The phrase your child learned today was: Don't Just Pack It, Wear Your Life Jacket. A life jacket doesn't work if you don't wear it. According to statistics from the USCG, among drowning deaths while boating, 85% of those who drowned were not wearing their life jacket.

To learn more about life jacket use and water safety, visit [redcross.org/watersafety](https://www.redcross.org/watersafety). You can also visit [uscgboating.org](https://www.uscgboating.org) where you can navigate to the safety page for detailed life jacket information and boating education resources.

Happy boating!

Longfellow