

# 2025 River Quest: Twin Ports Rip Current Station Teaching Template

## River Quest Rip Current Example Script (modify to suit your style!)

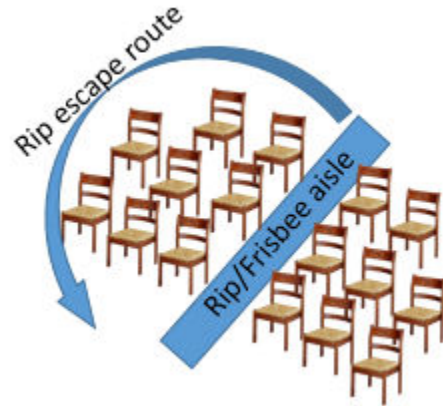
TIME: 10 minutes

MATERIALS (see photo below for recent setup):

1. Rip Current Display case
  - a. Case contains 4 beach signs, including: Flag sign, Dangerous currents sign, structural current sign, and safety station signs
  - b. One piece of the display, showing the number and locations of drownings over past 10 years, can be updated from this [site](#); select Lake Superior, enter most recent 10 years, and it will display a map and # of drownings.
  - c. A powerpoint in this same google folder contains the graphics used on the display.
2. Rip current flags (red-yellow-green)
3. 2-3 ParkPointBeach.org Frisbees
4. Throw Ring and rope
5. ParkPointBeach.org lawn banner
6. Life jacket (optional but nice)

SETUP:

1. Chairs set up with an aisle down the middle, 3-4 rows deep (see fig. to right)





## OBJECTIVES:

By the end of the presentation, students will:

1. Know what a rip current is, and that they can happen on Lake Superior
2. Be able to explain how to escape from a rip current, if caught
3. Know how to avoid rip currents, including having an understanding of what the beach flags mean and how to find info before going ([ParkPointBeach.org](http://ParkPointBeach.org))

Science Standard we should try to incorporate (under the substrand "Motion" in the strand "Physical Science"):

**6.2.2.2.1: Forces have magnitude and direction & affect the motion of objects. Recognize that when the forces acting on an object are balanced, the object remains at rest or continues to move at a constant speed in a straight line, and that unbalanced forces cause a change in the speed or direction of the motion of an object**

(DRAFT; modify to suit your style, but time goes fast! Just make sure each of the above objectives are covered; see ALTERNATE script below as well for a modification made for 2022)  
[introductions; who both of you are, where you work; ask them about their school]

Before we start, I'd like you to write something in your passport for this Station, D1... write [PARKPOINTBEACH.ORG](http://PARKPOINTBEACH.ORG). Have any of you been to Park Point before? What do you do there in the summer? Swim, yeah. Do any of you like to swim? Yeah, me too; can't wait for summer!

Anyone ever notice these flags flying along the road to the beach out there? (point to rip flags) Do you know what they mean?

Good job! The flags are used to warn about unsafe beach conditions due to rip currents; [explain different colors and what they mean] *(Note to facilitators: Flags do not mean it's "SAFE" to swim; cold water, bacteria, etc could make the beach unsafe; flags mark rip current risk, and green means LOW, not NO risk)*

Has anyone heard of rip currents before? *(note to facilitators: it would be SO COOL to track how many raise their hands for this; i.e. "5 out of 12 kids...")* (if so) can you explain what a rip current is?

Yes, they are strong currents of water flowing away from shore, caused typically by waves piling water up on the shore at sandy beaches or along piers or other things sticking out from the shore.

Now, there's a couple of particularly interesting things about Rip Currents:

1: they can move really fast; they can move **faster** than Olympic swimmers can swim! Think you could outswim a Rip Current? Nope.

2: they tend to be fairly narrow currents; 10-30 meters (@ 30-90 ft) wide, though sometimes wider

3: they slow down and fade away as the water gets deeper, so they only extend out into the lake typically a few hundred yards, maybe a bit further.

So; now that you know what rip currents are, we need a volunteer to try and escape from a rip current! *(note: may be best to not select the largest kid in class; we don't want anyone hurt by a kid trying to bull his/her way through the other kids!)*

Excellent; thank you, *(Sara, or whatever their name is)*, So, let's play a little Frisbee, how's that sound? So, let's say all the rest of the kids are the water; they're so nice and calm! How about you go out into the lake? *(Sara walks down the aisle; and you and them throw the Frisbee back and forth)*

*(Meanwhile, the other presenter starts telling the rest of the kids that the wind's picking up, and the waves are getting bigger; encourages kids to start making "waves" with their hands; the waves get bigger and bigger!)*

Frisbee-playing presenter says to *Sara*: Oh, no; the waves are getting pretty big! You better come back in!

But, before the volunteer can come back in, the kids in the aisle seats stand up, move towards the center aisle, and slowly walk out, away from the table, pretending to be the rip current.

"Oh, no, it's a rip current! *Sara*, what are you going to do? How are you going to get out of this rip current and back to shore?" *(encourage her to find a way by going to the side and around!)*

Excellent job, *Sara!* *(kids can sit back down)* So, what happened to *Sara*? All of a sudden, there was a new force acting on her, wasn't there? Where was this force pushing her? How did she eventually escape from the rip current?

Swimming sideways is a good option, because remember, the currents are narrow, if you swim sideways, you'll escape the rip current, and then can swim back to shore. Some think the safest option is to do nothing... don't fight the current at all, but wave your hand and call for help, and let the current carry you

while you tread water. You will avoid exhausting yourself, and give people on shore time to help; which leads to my last point; never go swimming alone; always swim with someone!

So, how can you know if it's a safe day for swimming on Park Point? You have two good options: The flags and electronic sign on the beach tell you when you get there; always watch for them. There's another way you can know before you drive, bike, or take the bus all the way there: visit [PARKPOINTBEACH.ORG](http://PARKPOINTBEACH.ORG) on your computer or smartphone, find it on facebook or twitter, and you can get real-time:

1. Water Temperature!
2. Wind and wave heights!
3. Beach closings (due to bacteria)!
4. Weather!
5. Webcam!
6. And, of course, Rip Current Warnings!

Check [ParkPointBeach.org](http://ParkPointBeach.org) to know BEFORE you go if today's a good beach day, or a better day to play soccer or catch a movie.

**(if you have time: )**

A couple years ago 6 people were rescued from a Rip Current in July on Park Point. The kids got caught, and when the parents went to help, they got caught, too.

What would you do if you saw someone caught in a rip current?

1. Tell an adult, call 911; do these right away!
2. If you can throw something that floats to the person, that can help, or
3. Try to get them to swim to the side.

Practice throwing Ring Buoy - bring volunteers up, and give them a chance to toss the ring on the concrete floor - have a target taped to the floor several feet away - Watch this first - [how to throw a ring buoy](#) (though this is more for the experience than perfect form!)

Does anyone know how to recognize a rip current? (Grab "Where would you Swim" photo from the Display) If you were at the beach here, where do you think the best place to swim would be? (let them vote by raising hands)

B = Rip Current!

Oftentimes, the place where a rip current is will look calmer; the deeper water makes the waves smaller. There are other signs of a rip current also; can anyone guess what those might be?

1. Channel of churning, dirty or muddier water
2. Foam or debris floating away from shore

## **ALTERNATE SCRIPT**

Before we start, I'd like you to write something in your passport for this Station, D1... write [PARKPOINTBEACH.ORG](http://PARKPOINTBEACH.ORG).

My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I work for \_\_\_\_\_ (partner introduces self also). We work with a group of folks working to make sure that people swimming on Lake Superior's beaches stay safe, because there's something that happens on Lake Superior and other Great Lakes beaches that doesn't happen on ANY OTHER beach, anywhere else in Minnesota, and this thing can be dangerous. Does anyone know what I might be talking about? Yes, that's right, Rip Currents (not Rip Tides - that's a mis-nomer). Who here has heard of rip currents before? (if so) can you explain what a rip current is?

Yes, they are strong currents of water flowing away from shore, caused typically by waves piling water up on the shore at sandy beaches or along piers or other things sticking out from the shore.

*[To save a little time, you could go directly into the frisbee-throwing part, and discuss the 3 characteristics of a rip current afterward. The students could reflect on the rip current they made as you ask about the strength of the current, it's width, and how far out it might go. This worked well, though the students were less-prepared for escaping the current doing it this way]*

Now, there's a couple of particularly interesting things about Rip Currents:

- 1: they can move really fast; they can move **faster** than Olympic swimmers can swim! Think you could outswim a Rip Current? Nope.
- 2: they tend to be fairly narrow currents; 10-30 meters (@ 30-90 ft) wide, though sometimes wider
- 3: they slow down and fade away as the water gets deeper, so they only extend out into the lake typically a few hundred yards, maybe a bit further.

So; now that you know what rip currents are, we need a volunteer to try and escape from a rip current!  
(note: may be best to not select the largest kid in class; we don't want anyone hurt by a kid trying to bull his/her way through the other kids!)

Excellent; thank you, *(Sara, or whatever their name is)*, So, let's play a little Frisbee, how's that sound? So, let's say all the rest of the kids are the water; they're so nice and calm! How about you go out into the lake? *(Sara walks down the aisle; and you and them throw the Frisbee back and forth)*

(Meanwhile, the other presenter starts telling the rest of the kids that the wind's picking up, and the waves are getting bigger; encourages kids to start making "waves" with their hands; the waves get bigger and bigger!)

Frisbee-playing presenter says to *Sara*: Oh, no; the waves are getting pretty big! You better come back in!

But, before the volunteer can come back in, the kids in the aisle seats stand up, move towards the center aisle, and slowly walk out, away from the table, pretending to be the rip current.

"Oh, no, it's a rip current! *Sara*, what are you going to do? How are you going to get out of this rip current and back to shore?" (encourage her to find a way by going to the side and around!)

Excellent job, *Sara*! (kids can sit back down) So, what happened to *Sara*? All of a sudden, there was a new force acting on her, wasn't there? Where was this force pushing her? How did she eventually escape from the rip current?

Swimming sideways is a good option, because remember, the currents are narrow, if you swim sideways, you'll escape the rip current, and then can swim back to shore. Some think the safest option is to do nothing... don't fight the current at all, but wave your hand and call for help, and let the current carry you while you tread water. You will avoid exhausting yourself, and give people on shore time to help; which leads to my last point; never go swimming alone; always swim with someone!

So, how can you know if it's a safe day for swimming on Park Point? You have two good options:

1. Who here has seen these flags along Park Point (hold up red, green, and yellow flags)? These flags, along with two electronic signs, are located along the beach, are clearly visible from the road, and are updated every day, all summer long, to show you what the risk of rip currents is for that day. Red means it's a dangerous day to be in the water, because there is a high risk of rip currents that day (even if it maybe doesn't look bad right then!) Green means "LOW" risk; not no risk; you always want to watch what's going on (it is the largest lake in the world after all; it sometimes does things we don't expect!) Yellow flags means there's an elevated risk; you should be extra cautious, and if you're going in the water, a lifejacket would be an extra-good idea on those days. *(Note to facilitators: Flags do not mean it's "SAFE" to swim; cold water, bacteria, etc could make the beach unsafe; flags mark rip current risk, and green means LOW, not NO risk)*

There's another way you can know before you drive, bike, or take the bus all the way there: visit [PARKPOINTBEACH.ORG](http://PARKPOINTBEACH.ORG) on your computer or smartphone, find it on facebook or twitter, and you can get real-time:

7. Water Temperature!
8. Wind and wave heights!
9. Beach closings (due to bacteria)!
10. Weather!
11. Webcam!
12. And, of course, Rip Current Warnings!

Check [ParkPointBeach.org](http://ParkPointBeach.org) to know BEFORE you go if today's a good beach day, or a better day to play soccer or catch a movie.

**(if you have time: )**

A couple years ago 6 people were rescued from a Rip Current in July on Park Point. The kids got caught, and when the parents went to help, they got caught, too.

What would you do if you saw someone caught in a rip current?

4. Tell an adult, call 911; do these right away!
5. If you can throw something that floats to the person, that can help, or
6. Try to get them to swim to the side.

Practice throwing Ring Buoy - bring volunteers up, and give them a chance to toss the ring on the concrete floor - have a target taped to the floor several feet away - Watch this first - [how to throw a ring buoy](#) (though this is more for the experience than perfect form!)

Does anyone know how to recognize a rip current? (Grab "Where would you Swim" photo from the Display) If you were at the beach here, where do you think the best place to swim would be? (let them vote by raising hands)

B = Rip Current!

Oftentimes, the place where a rip current is will look calmer; the deeper water makes the waves smaller. There are other signs of a rip current also; can anyone guess what those might be?

3. Channel of churning, dirty or muddier water
4. Foam or debris floating away from shore