

The motion of the ocean # 1.

Waves and Large Surf.



Why is it important to know about waves and large surf?

Waves are one of the most enjoyable features of the beach and the ocean. Different conditions affect waves and it is important to understand what types of wave may be present when you visit the beach to maximise your fun and minimise the potential for you to get into difficulty.

What are waves?

Waves are the result of energy moving through the ocean that is created typically by the wind, underwater activity, earthquakes or the earth's movement. There are three typical types of waves you need to be aware of when you are at the beach:

Plunging or dumping waves



These waves break suddenly and can knock you over and throw you to the bottom with great force. These waves usually occur at low tide where sandbanks are shallow and can cause injuries to swimmers, particularly spinal and head injuries. Never try and bodysurf on a dumping wave. If in doubt, ask a lifesaver or lifeguard for some good safety advice.



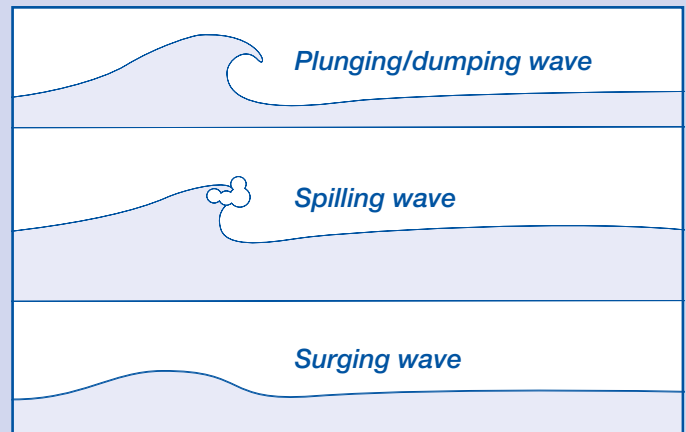
Plunging/dumping wave



Spilling waves

Spilling waves

Spilling waves have white water tumbling down the face of the wave. They usually have less force and are the safest for body surfing. They are found in sheltered bays where the sea floor slopes gradually, and near sandbanks at high tide.



Surging waves

Surging waves may never actually break as they approach the water's edge, as the water below them is very deep. These waves occur in rocky areas around cliff faces and where the beach drops off quickly. These waves can be very dangerous, as they can knock swimmers over and drag them back into deep water.



Surging wave

The motion of the ocean.

Waves and Large Surf.

Which waves are best for you?

Spilling waves are the most enjoyable. For the other types of waves you need to be sensible and have more experience. If you are unsure, check with a lifeguard or lifesaver.

Experience is particularly important if the surf is large. Only experienced swimmers should attempt to go out in large surf and always between the red and yellow flags. If the beach is closed as indicated by a sign, red flag or no presence of red and yellow flags, stay out of the water.

Additional tips for large surf conditions

- It is important that people observe all safety warnings as the surf will be more dangerous
- Swimmers should avoid creek and river mouths, as currents in these areas are often stronger when large surf is running
- Only experienced board riders should go out in these conditions and always go with a friend
- Know your limits.

Make sure you also look out for the following signs:



WARNING



SWIMMING NOT ADVISED



UNEXPECTED LARGE WAVES



SHORE DUMP



BEACH IS CLOSED



To enjoy the beach safely, remember:

FLAGS

Find the red and yellow flags and swim between them.

Look at, understand and obey the safety signs.

Ask a lifeguard or lifesaver for advice before you enter the water.

Get a friend to swim with you.

Stick your hand up, stay calm and call for help if you get into trouble.

