



United States Power Squadrons®  
Contact Susan Ryan [GreenwichSquadron@gmail.com](mailto:GreenwichSquadron@gmail.com)



## ABC3 FOR YOUTH

**Hypothermia**  
**HELP**  
**50-50 Rule**  
**GASP**



This lesson can be given over two hours as an example of 'Safe Boating' or used in conjunction with teaching the ABC3 course to young students. Explain the meaning of **hypothermia**, a condition where your body temperature drops too low to perform normal functions. It can cause damage to hands and feet or the body's core.

Explain the heat escape lessening position (**HELP**) – that it is a way to position oneself to reduce heat loss in cold water. You draw your knees to your chest and hug them. Have them do this and say that every time they hear the word **HELP** in the class, they should get into that position. Then say **HELP** several times during the class. They love the interruption!

Have an ice chest filled with water and a few ice cubes (put a little sand and some shells in the bottom for authenticity). Tell them you passed by the sea/lake on the way to class to collect the water, took its temperature, and found it to be at 50°F.

Tell students not to be worried, but you want to explain how cold water might feel if they fall off a boat in winter. Have each student put his/her arm into the water up to his elbow and have everyone count slowly to ten. Dry the arm quickly and hold it up for everyone to see the color that is different from the other. 'Imagine if your **WHOLE** body was in cold water and felt and looked like that!'

Explain the **50-50 rule** to emphasize how rapidly hypothermia can occur. You have a 50-50 chance to swim 50 yards in water at 50 degrees. Demonstrate a distance of 50 yards.

Explain **GASP** - a sudden unexpected fall into cold water causes an involuntary gasp (or torso) reflex and you can swallow water. It takes less than ½ cup of water in your lungs to drown.

***Engage, entertain and interact with the students as much possible.***  
***Ensure there's a member of their school/organization in class with you.***  
***Ensure they understand the vocabulary used.***

PDC Susan Ryan, JN  
Greenwich Sail & Power Squadron/D2