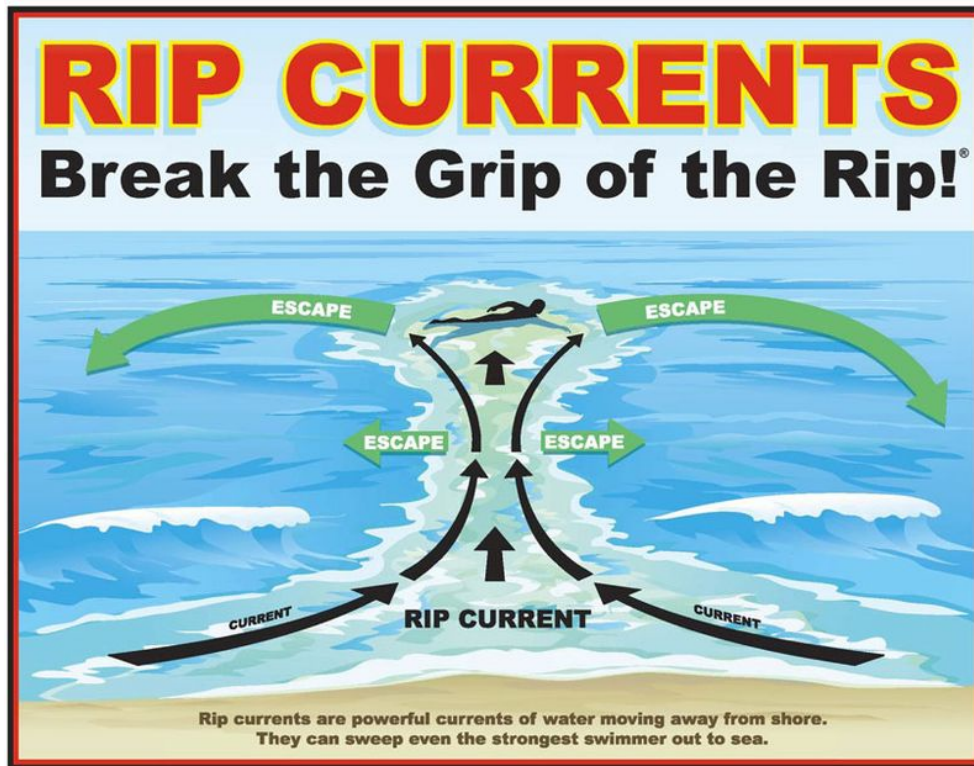


# To Escape Rip Currents: Swim Parallel to Shore

Analysis by [Christina Reed](#)



Father's Day is coming up on June 17, and when I saw this new graphic from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) I couldn't wait to share with you advice from my dad, Pete Reed, a former lifeguard at Newport Beach, Calif., and All-America collegiate swimmer at the University of Southern California. To escape rip currents, "swim parallel to shore," Dad always says.

If you try to swim back to the beach when you find yourself getting sucked by the current out to sea, you will just exhaust yourself. You have to get out of the current first, and then you can safely swim back to the beach.

Keep in mind rip currents are changeable and can form at any given time and not necessarily in the same place. You don't need a hurricane offshore to kick one into gear. Lifeguards will often post flags to alert swimmers of the risk of rip currents at a beach, but the currents themselves can come and go without any advanced warning.

Rip currents are prone to hitting beaches with sandbars in front of them; the receding waves can build up enough energy to break through the sandbar and rush out to sea. Sandbars are not

always easy to spot though as they can be just below the surface. Surfers often lookout for sandbars by watching to see if waves break early before hitting the beach. But sandbars also shift with changes in waves and weather and a sandbar in one spot in the morning may be somewhere else in the afternoon.

Just like a rip current.

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