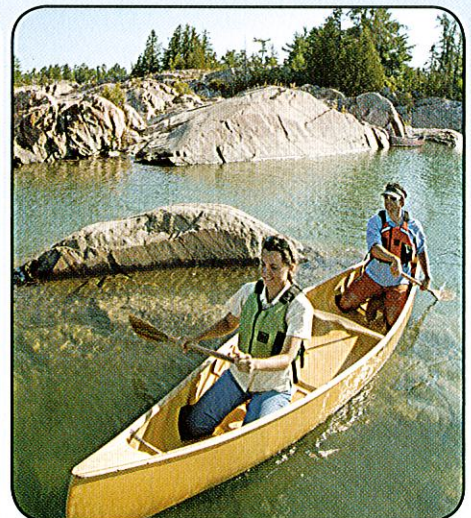
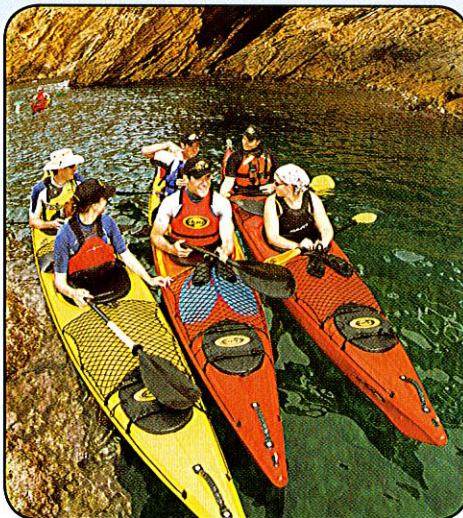
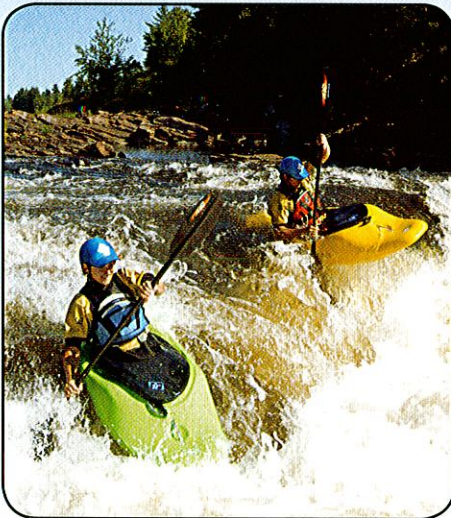


American Canoe Association's

PADDLING 101

A NEWCOMER'S GUIDE TO SAFE CANOEING AND KAYAKING

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PAUL VILLECOURT



Whether you're planning to paddle on easy calm water, or see how high you can take your game in roiling rapids, paddling is a life-changing way to get exercise, enjoy the beauty of nature, and become part of a fraternity of like-minded enthusiasts. The world you're entering is a special one. Unfortunately, this world isn't always safe. There are hazards in paddlesports, and you have the responsibility of keeping yourself, and those with whom you're paddling, safe on the water. But here's the good news—with the right equipment (Nothing says "Amateur On Board," like a paddler without a lifejacket, by the way), proper instruction, and good judgment, you increase your safety immensely. The hazards are not the same in size or scope for everyone. Flatwater paddlers, for instance, don't need to know how to perform the advanced skills of a Class V river-runner. So the following pages provide a wide range of safety information to help you stack the odds in your favor and make you a better, safer paddler. And that's when this special world gets even better.



Funding Provided by a Grant from the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund Administered by the U.S. Coast Guard

www.americancanoe.org



The Value of an Education

A FEW DAYS OF LESSONS SHOULD HAVE YOU FEELING A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR PADDLING. WOULDN'T THAT BE WORTH IT?

REDUCE THE CHANCE OF A BAD EXPERIENCE

Paddling is different than other sports because it's often counterintuitive, and trial-and-error learning can be cold, wet, and a lot less fun than learning correctly. To roll, for example, you don't pull down on the paddle, you don't lift your head, and you don't reach way out. A practiced instructor can save you the pain of learning from bad experiences.

A THREE-DAY INVESTMENT

You don't have to stay in instruction for long. Three or four days is ideal for learning the basics and impacting your progress, letting you develop a solid foundation of skills far quicker than if you learn piecemeal from friends or by trial and error. Let someone else handle the logistics and pick the location. You just paddle.

THE MONEY ARGUMENT

The cost of a paddling school varies, usually depending on the length of the course. Classes can be as low \$30 for a short session. Many schools offer certificates or discounts toward your next purchase. And besides, what use is that boat if you can't enjoy it fully? A few tips might help.

THE BEST PART

Class atmosphere is fun. Learning happens best when everyone lets down their guard and loosens up. Good instructors know this and frequently are able to spark a group's spirit. Best of all, by taking a class you can meet other people from your area who are at your skill level, so you can continue getting out on the water. It's fun and you'll probably meet some fascinating people.

WHERE SHOULD YOU LOOK FOR A LESSON?

The best schools have glowing reputations, so ask other paddlers, particularly in the local club, about where to go. If you want to do a little poking around on your own, here are some caveats to think about:

Instructor-Student Ratios: Five-to-one is the industry standard.

Class Size: Eight to 10 is ideal. When instructors teach together, they tend to have more tricks that, in turn, help you, the student.

Teaching Staff: A paddling school with a good mix of young rodeo stars, high school teachers, racers, and well-traveled and hardened veterans is likely to be better than one with less diversity. Also, find out if the instructors have formal training and experience outside your area. Ask if they have safety and rescue training. ACA certification is a good symbol of professionalism.

LEARNING FROM FRIENDS

If you have friends who can be patient and professional in introducing you to the sport, it might be your best choice. But it can be a gamble. Are they really going to start you with at least half a day of flatwater strokework, then take you on an easy enough section so you can get comfortable with basics before you get gripped with fear?

All too often, people get dragged too quickly into paddling that isn't conducive to learning. Some end up quitting the sport. As for safety instruction, you'll want a set of explanations that are at least more comprehensive than the typical commercial-trip safety briefing. When was the last time you had that sort of thorough instruction from your friends? In paddlesports, many hazards may not be obvious unless pointed out. Knowing what is dangerous helps you realize how much is good clean fun. You want someone showing you the difference, so you can enjoy the fun parts without uncertainty.

Kent Ford is an ACA Instructor Trainer Educator who has produced 16 instructional paddling videos (www.performancevideo.com). Ford's background includes 20 years of teaching, racing, coaching for the U.S. whitewater team, and working as the public-address announcer at the Olympic Games.

Visit the eSchool at Performance Video
www.performancevideo.com/performance_video_e-school



Great ACA PROGRAMS

WHAT WILL I LEARN?

Courses include a full range of useful information, such as: What to Wear, Essential Gear and Supplies, Trip Planning and Preparation, Safety on the Water, and Paddler Responsibility

Paddlers also learn specific skills, including: Boat Balance and Trim, Loading and Launching, Use of Lifejackets and other safety gear, Paddle Selection and Use, Paddling to Avoid Injury, and Boat Maneuvers (including spins, turns, forward in a straight line, and controlled stops)

WHY INSTRUCTOR CERTIFICATION?

Certified instructors follow a specific and proven standard of practice. ACA-certified instructors are recognized as the "gold standard" of paddlesports instruction in the United States. ACA Instructors offer skills workshops in a variety of craft and venues, including river canoeing, touring canoeing, river kayaking, coastal (sea) kayaking, surf kayaking, rafting, and swiftwater rescue. There is also programming for adaptive paddling, rolling, canoe camping, sea kayaking traditional skills, and a variety of others.

Lifejackets Matter

WHY YOU NEED IT

Expect to capsize and swim occasionally when paddling a canoe, kayak, or raft—it's part of the sport! But when you hit the water unexpectedly, even strong swimmers need a lifejacket, also known as a PFD (Personal Flotation Device). It allows you to concentrate on doing what's needed to execute a self-rescue or to assist others.

Lifejackets not only provide additional flotation in case of a capsize or unexpected swim, but they also provide an essential layer of warmth in cold water. Boat safe. Boat smart. Wear it.

WHAT TYPE IS FOR ME?

Many people think that a lifejacket, or PFD, is bulky, smelly, and uncomfortable, but that stereotype just isn't true anymore. The U.S. Coast Guard has a labeling system designed to make comparing features easier and to allow the consumer to make the best choice for his/her type of boating. The labels feature categories of buoyancy and a symbol to indicate if the jacket will turn the wearer face up, or will have no impact on the wearer's position, other than to float.

FIND THE PERFECT FIT

Because paddlers wear their lifejackets at all times on the water, make sure yours has a secure, yet comfortable, fit. When wearing a lifejacket properly, you will hardly know you

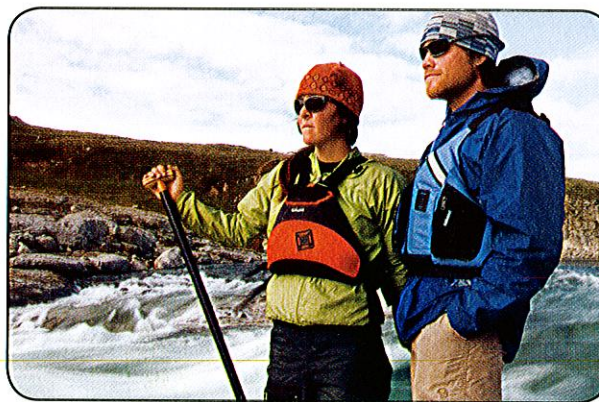
have it on. Although all USCG-approved lifejackets meet certain strength and buoyancy standards, they are NOT all the same. It's worth it to spend some extra money for a higher-quality model. It will have softer foam, a more comfortable fit, and improved adjustability.

Make sure the lifejacket adjusts easily and fits snugly over clothing worn for different weather conditions. Few universal-sized lifejackets fit as well as models sized small, medium, large, extra large, and extra extra large.

Check the length of the jacket to make sure that it fits while you are paddling. A jacket that hits the backrest in a kayak with each stroke will get annoying by the end of the day.

We all have different shapes and torso lengths. Take the time to find your perfect fit. Several companies now make lifejackets designed specifically for women. Kids' lifejackets are now available in more options than ever before, and the same goes for kayak fishing, so there is no excuse to skip the lifejacket.

You should be able to lift children by their lifejackets without having them fall out! With very young children with flat torsos, a crotch strap is



a great idea to help hold the lifejacket in place. The U.S. Coast Guard places people less than 90 pounds into a separate sizing category. If a child is heavier than that, look for an extra-small adult lifejacket. The bottom line is, make sure it fits the intended wearer.

IT'S THE LAW!

State law dictates when PFD use is necessary. Where state laws do not exist, federal law requires that children under the age of 13 wear a lifejacket on a recreational boat, unless the child is below deck, in an enclosed cabin. Since kayaks and canoes don't have decks below or cabins, this means all the time when in use. Check with your state boating officials regarding state requirements. And remember, wearing a lifejacket sets a good example for youngsters.

PHOTO BY MOE WITSCHARD

WHAT IS AVAILABLE?

Here is a list of the skills courses available by an American Canoe Association certified instructor:

KAYAK: SmartStart Paddling Orientation, Quickstart Your Kayak, Introduction to Kayak, Essentials of Kayak Touring, Essentials of River Kayak

Coastal Kayak Specialty courses include:

Basic Strokes and Rescues, Strokes and Maneuvers Refinement, Open Water, Surf Zone, Tidal Current Rough Water Maneuvering, Towing & Rescues, and Advanced Surf

River Kayak Specialty courses include:

Whitewater Kayak, Advanced Whitewater Kayak

CANOE: SmartStart Paddling Orientation, Quickstart Your Canoe, Introduction to Canoe, Essentials of Canoe Touring, and Essentials of River Canoe Touring Canoe Specialty courses include: Freestyle River Canoe Specialty courses include: Whitewater Canoe, Advanced Whitewater Canoe

ADDITIONAL CLASSES ARE AVAILABLE IN:

Canoe Camping, Kayak Camping, Canoe Rolling, Kayak Rolling, Adaptive Paddling, Flatwater Kayak Safety and Rescue, Coastal Kayak Traditional Skills, Coastal Kayak Day Trip Leading Skills Assessment Course, Coastal Kayak Skill Assessment Course, River Canoe Trip Leading Skills Assessment Course

FOR MORE INFORMATION

contact the American Canoe Association:
www.americancanoe.org
instruction@americancanoe.org
(800) 929-5162
7432 Alban Station Blvd. Suite B-232
Springfield, VA 22150

ACA PRO SCHOOLS CANOE KAYAK AND PADDLE COMPANY (CKAPCO)

Description: ACA Instructor and Trainer certifications in Kayak or Canoe as well as skill development classes for beginners through advanced paddlers. CKAPCO also offers ACA and BCU Skill and Safety Assessments, as well as full- and half-day trips just for fun! Top-end boats and gear provided. CKAPCO is proud to be the first ACA Pro School! DC and Baltimore metro locations.

Contact: miikearonoff@aol.com
Website: www.ckapco.com

OSPREY SEA KAYAK ADVENTURES

Description: Comprehensive sea kayak instruction, guided tours, environmental education, and team-building programs, kayak rentals, and unique adventure trips along coastal Massachusetts, Cape Cod, Rhode Island, the Bahamas, and Belize.

Contact: westport@ospreyseakayak.com
Website: www.ospreyseakayak.com

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA-DULUTH RECREATIONAL SPORTS OUTDOOR PROGRAM

Description: Dedicated to promoting healthy, active lifestyles, and connections to the natural world through personal and professional experiences.

Contact: Randy Carlson: rcarlso6@d.umn.edu
Website: www.umdrsop.org

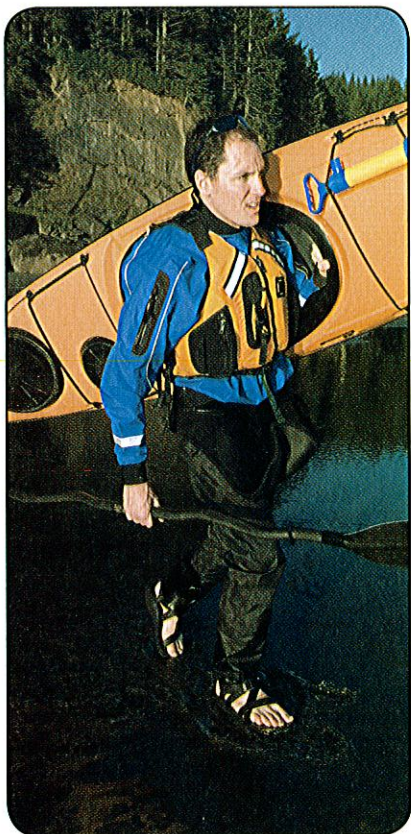
THE RIVER CONNECTION

Description: Connecting a broad range of experience and specialized training with their instructional team: ACA-certified kayak instructors; naturalists; geologists, and artists. Members of the team provide a unique and perceptive view to the beauty and function of the waters that surround the Hudson Valley, New York region and abroad.

The River Connection is proud to specialize in putting people, all people, on the water with some of the most highly trained watersports instructors in the Hudson Valley region. The River Connection conducts the only ACA-certified Whitewater Program and Adaptive Kayaking program for people with disabilities in the region.

Contact: Marshall Seddon: (845) 229-0595
Website: www.the-river-connection.com





Get Into Gear

Your gear carries you out and home, protects you from the elements, and assists you in emergencies. All of it should be in good condition and fit your body, skill level, and setting. Putting a small child in an adult PFD isn't a smart idea, for example. Make sure the gear is right before you start because once out on the water, it may be too late.

PERSONAL FLOTATION DEVICE: It's widely held that humans have difficulty breathing underwater. Wear a properly fitting PFD religiously. The overwhelming majority of serious accidents (deaths and close calls) occur when the paddler is not wearing a Coast Guard-approved PFD.

PADDLE: Though the boat may seem the most elemental piece of equipment, it's the paddle that connects your muscle motor to the water.

DESIGN: Different paddles are made for each discipline of paddlesports. The best one for a lazy family river trip may not handle a long-distance race.

LENGTH: Kayak paddles are usually measured in centimeters, with touring ones longer than those for whitewater. Canoe paddles usually come with overall length in inches, but some specialists prefer to use shaft length alone as the main

indicator in matching a paddle to a person. Your boat width affects paddle size, too.

BLADE SIZE: The bigger the blade, the more work you'll do with each stroke. Racers use low surface area blades so they can stroke at a high rate of repetition without stress injury. Larger blades are better suited to a slower cadence.

MATERIAL: Plastic and aluminum paddles are everywhere. They are inexpensive, durable, and low-maintenance. Wood is prized for its beauty and warmth but can vary greatly in weight, strength, cost, and symmetry, and it requires attentive upkeep. Fiberglass and carbon fiber make for pricey, stiff, and super-lightweight high-performance paddles.

A BUDDY: Beginning canoeists and kayakers should never paddle alone. There's safety in numbers, especially when someone needs to go for help in an emergency.

THE MUST HAVES DON'T LAUNCH UNLESS YOU HAVE THESE ITEMS

Securing items to your craft avoids the "paddler's garage sale" syndrome, which sends group members scrambling to recover your stuff as it spreads downstream after a capsize. Bring drinking water, snacks, and an extra layer. Store these items—along with your sunscreen, bug repellent, and first-aid kit—in a waterproof dry bag. If you wear eyeglasses or sunglasses, you'll need a strap for attaching them to your head. A large car-washing sponge is good for eliminating puddles.

For safety, you may want to carry rescue gear (rescue sling, throw rope, tow system) specific to your craft and setting. String a plastic whistle onto your PFD, and pack a spare paddle.

Electronic devices—GPS, cellular phones, VHF radios—are becoming more common, especially in offshore and wilderness settings.

Wherever you paddle, know local laws and Coast Guard regulations pertaining to signaling devices and nighttime visibility.

THE GEAR BAG DRESSING THE PART

Looking cool is one matter. Being too cool is another. Because immersion is a major cause of hypothermia, dress for it. When the water temperature is below 65 degrees, or the sum of air

and water temperatures is below 120 degrees, check out specialized paddling wear like wet suits, dry suits, and the variety of fuzzy, rubbery apparel.

Think in layers. Layers trap air (which provides insulation), and allow for personal climate control. Synthetic materials dry quickly, wick moisture away from the body, and retain their insulating ability when soggy. A coated nylon or Gore-Tex paddling jacket guards against wind and spray. Top yourself with a fleece or wool hat to reduce heat loss.

In the tropics, or anywhere it sizzles, lightweight full coverage and frequent application of waterproof sunscreen are your best defense. A hat with a wide brim shields you from harmful UV rays. Sturdy footwear is a must, but bulky shoes won't fit inside most kayaks, are cumbersome under canoe seats, and can seriously compromise swimming. Try lightweight, low-profile watersport shoes, river sandals, or neoprene booties.

ADDITIONAL GEAR FOR KAYAKING

SPRAY SKIRT: Wearing a spray skirt keeps water out of your kayak, but be sure you know how to attach it and practice detaching it quickly. Made of coated nylon or neoprene, spray skirts have specific sizes for both kayakers and their boats.

BILGE PUMP: A hand pump helps get water out of recreational and touring kayaks. Make sure you carry some device that can get water OUT of the boat.

PADDLE LEASH: By attaching your paddle to your touring boat, you can keep better track of it if you drop it, or when you stop to take photos—or pass out cookies.

PADDLE FLOAT: An inflatable or foam device that assists in solo re-entry into a touring kayak from deep water is a must.

HELMET: For those venturing onto whitewater or into the surf, take care to protect your head.

—*Becky Molina is an ACA Instructor Trainer Educator. She won two silver medals in the North American Interpretive Freestyle Canoeing Championships (1994, 2000) and two golds and two silvers at the 2004 Greenland National Kayaking Championships.*



PHOTO BY GARY LUHM



Basic Paddling Practices

- Always wear a properly fitted PFD (lifejacket) while on the water.
- Never go boating while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Do not stand up in a canoe or kayak, and avoid weight shifts that may cause capsizing.
- Avoid weather or water conditions beyond your skill level.
- Be able to effectively steer and propel your boat.
- Never float or paddle over a low-head (submerged) dam, fallen tree, or other in-stream obstruction.
- Do not paddle alone. Inform others (friends, family, co-worker) of your trip plan.
- Carry a supply of food and water adequate for your trip length.
- Learn about your route in advance, especially potential hazards, such as rapids, low-head dams, or dam releases.
- Never overload the boat with more weight or persons than it is designed to safely accommodate.
- Plan for—and know where to go in case of—emergencies.

SAFETY SKILLS

- Learn how to self-rescue in the event of a capsize.
- Be proficient in proper paddling technique and learn to read the water.
- Only take on challenges for which you

- are physically and mentally prepared.
- Learn rescue skills necessary to assist others.

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

- Obey all rules and regulations.
- Only use public lands and access points.
- Be considerate to others on the water.
- Never change clothes in public view.
- Respect local culture and standards of conduct.
- Give back to the waterway.

ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

- Never litter. Always pack out trash.
- Conduct all toilet activity at least 200 feet from any water body.*
- Pack out human waste in sensitive or heavily used environments.
- Do not disturb wildlife.
- Minimize impacts to the shore when launching, portaging, scouting, or taking out.
- Avoid building campfires, except in established fire rings, or in emergencies.
- Consult the Leave No Trace website (www.lnt.org) and local resource managers for additional guidance.

**Exact procedures vary depending on the specific environmental characteristics (climate, soil, etc.) of your paddling or camping location.*

Equipment Vocab

Amidships: The area in the center of a kayak or canoe, lengthwise.

Back Band (back rest): Part of the seat that provides support for the lower back while kayaking. Usually made of padded fabric, plastic, or foam.

Beam: The width of a kayak or canoe.

Blade: The broad part at the end of a paddle.

Bow: The forward end of a kayak or canoe.

Bulkhead: A cross-sectional wall inside a kayak, made of composite, plastic, or foam. Bulkheads provide structural support and create watertight compartments for buoyancy and storage.

Cockpit: The enclosed central compartment of a kayak in which the paddler sits.

Deck: The top part of a kayak that keeps the hull from filling with water.

Foot Pegs (also known as foot braces): The adjustable structures inside the cockpit on which a kayaker places her feet.

Grab Loop: The safety pull strap attached to the front of a spray skirt.

Hull: The bottom part of a boat. Its shape determines how it will perform in various conditions.

PFD: Personal Flotation Device, or life-jacket. In the U.S., PFDs must be approved by the Coast Guard. Wear it!

Put-In: The beginning point of a trip.

Roll: The technique of righting a capsized kayak while still inside.

Shaft: The long skinny part of a canoe or kayak paddle.

Sit-On-Top (SOT): A kayak without a cockpit. Sit-on-tops are usually self-bailing. Many are for recreational use, but some are designed for touring and racing.

Spray Skirt: A neoprene or nylon skirt you wear that attaches to the rim (coaming) of the cockpit to keep water out.

Stern: The rear end of a canoe or kayak.

Take-Out: The ending point of a trip.

Thigh (Knee) Braces: Usually found in whitewater and touring kayaks, these structures inside the cockpit give the paddler points of contact for boat control.

Trim: The bow-to-stern leveling of a kayak or canoe that affects boat control.

Wet Exit: Exiting a capsized kayak.





Navigation Rules

FRIENDLY FUN

All boaters, whether recreational or commercial, powered or human-powered, have common interests. All boaters love water, need safety and security, and everyone desires unimpeded access to their waterways.

Conflicts often arise between various boating groups because of craft size, education and training of the operators, maneuverability, geographic constraints, and the sheer numbers of recreational users of the waterways. Paddlers do need to be aware of a few of the "Rules of the Road" when sharing resources with other marine traffic.

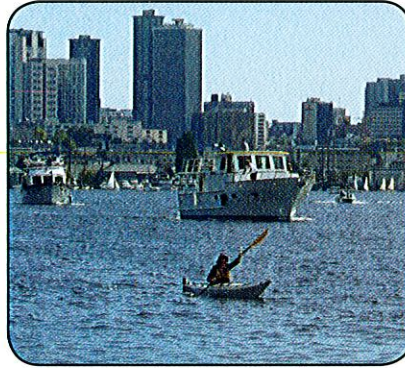
BE AWARE!

First and foremost, be aware of your surroundings. You may be the only craft on the water, or you may be sharing the channel with a large container ship. Whatever the circumstance, your awareness of other traffic may make the sole difference in the safety of everyone on the water.

POWERBOATS

Paddlers do not travel as fast as motorized craft. If you see a powerboat, do not assume that you can pass ahead of it if traveling across its path. The safest way for paddlecraft to cross the path of powerboat is astern.

Remember to cross other boats as a group instead of straggling across a river and blocking



other traffic. Don't let your safety depend on others finding YOU on the water.

BE SEEN

Always assume that powerboaters don't see you. Kayaks and canoes do not show up on radar, and many powerboaters miss seeing you on the horizon. They tend to keep watch to the right forward side of their boat and may miss those approaching on the left when low to the horizon. Help them by being obvious. Wear bright noticeable colors and even consider buying a boat in a fun neon color. Use reflective tape on the paddle or boat and always have a white light ready for use.

Keep a sound-signaling device handy and at the ready so that you can attract attention if you feel that a boater in a larger vessel may not

notice your position.

Remember, in shared waterways, the more boaters watching out for others, the safer everyone will be.

RIGHTS OF PASSAGE

Learn the channels in your area and what the buoy markers mean. While onboard and facing downstream or leaving a harbor, green lights indicate starboard (right) and red lights indicate port (left). When returning or heading upstream, red lights or buoys should be on your starboard side. Remember, "Red Right Returning."

The markers are for the larger craft, so if you stay between the light or buoy and the shore, you are out of the way of many of the larger, faster craft and less likely to encounter wake and turbulence from commercial vehicles.

Since the events of 9/11, recreational boating in the United States has changed. Now, many harbors and waterways have security zones surrounding different resources.

In ports and harbors, there are now restrictions on crafts within 100 yards of all U.S. Navy vessels. On local lakes and rivers, there may be restricted areas around bridge abutments, large dams, and some shore-based facilities, such as power plants. Some jurisdictions also have law enforcement personnel stationed near drinking water reservoirs to protect against biological incidents. As an American citizen, please cooperate with those individuals and understand that we all need to work together in public and private to keep our nation safe. Safeguard all the things we value, including our boating resources.

Remember to be courteous to other boaters and law-enforcement officers. They're there to help you to be safe and have fun!



Coastal Kayaking

THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWLEDGE

TIDES AND TIDAL CURRENTS:

What you don't know about these can leave you high and dry, or carried out to the ocean.

WIND, WAVES, WEATHER:

Understanding these three forces is vital for a safe sea-kayaking trip.

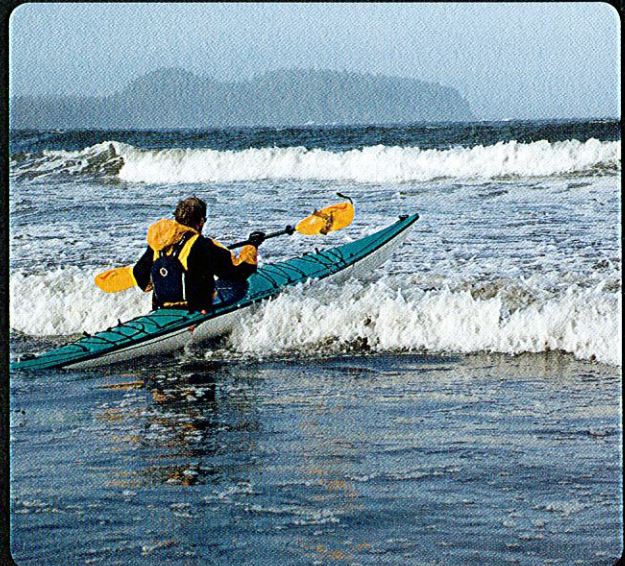
SURF ZONE: Know where and how to safely beach your kayak.

COLD WATER: Can kill! Use wet-suits, drysuits, and other protective clothing.

FOG: Can disorient you, obstruct visual navigation, and prevent larger, faster boats from spotting you.

RULES OF THE ROAD: Learn and follow all the navigation rules.

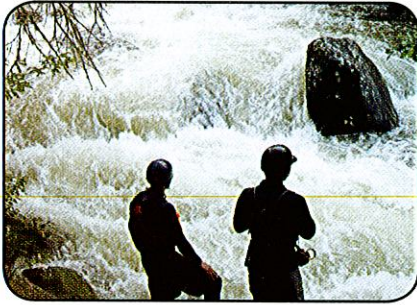
TAKE A CLASS: The best way to ensure your safety—not to mention increase your fun—is to be a well-educated paddler. The ACA (www.americancanoe.org) offers courses and certifications for all disciplines in all levels.



LEFT PHOTO BY MIKE TITTEL; ABOVE ©ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/MARY MARIN

River Talk

THINGS TO KNOW BEFORE YOU GO



Eddy: When the current flows past an object—for instance, a boulder—in the river, it creates a void behind the object. There, the current typically flows back upstream, creating an eddy.

Hydraulic: As water flows over an object, it creates a depression behind the object, and water flows back upstream to fill that depression. A hydraulic results when the water flowing upstream is pronounced and recirculates behind the object. A boil line appears where the upstream and downstream waters separate. Hydraulics can be dangerous.

Low-Head Dam: Low-head dams extend across the river and allow water to flow over the dam, creating a hydraulic that can keep swimmers until they drown. Avoid at all costs.

Hole: The area where recirculating water meets the downstream current behind an object. If the edges of a hole point upstream, steer clear!

Wave: As water flows down a chute it gains speed. When the water hits river bottom, the energy is dissipated into a series of standing waves.

Strainer: When water flows through an obstruction but does not allow solid objects to pass, this is called a strainer. Common strainers are downed trees, logs, or discarded fences. Strainers are extremely dangerous!

Undercut Rock: Water can flow under rocks because of their shape or the effects of erosion. This creates a situation where objects, or you, can be trapped under water. If the water flowing into a rock does NOT form a pillow (white, bubbly water against the upstream side of the rock), the rock is probably undercut. Make an immediate move away and steer clear.

Cold Water: Always prepare for cold-water immersion. If the air and water temperature combined equal less than 120°F, wear a wet suit or dry suit. If the water temperature—regardless of air temperature—is less than 65 degrees, wear protective gear.

High Water: During snowmelts or heavy rain, water levels can dramatically rise. Not only is the current flowing more rapidly, but there are often foreign objects being carried away by the water. Check water levels before you begin any trip. High water can be extremely dangerous.

PHOTOS BY MOE WITSCHARD



Paddler's Checklist

■ **FILE A FLOAT PLAN** Write down where you intend to put in, take out, and when you expect to return. Give it to someone who WILL call for assistance if you don't return on time.

■ **ASSESS YOUR BOAT'S FLOTATION NEEDS** For flotation to work effectively it must fit snugly into the craft and be securely tied into place.

■ **CARRY A SPARE PADDLE**

■ **WEAR A HAT OR HELMET** A helmet is important where upsets are likely or when spray skirts or thigh restraints are in use. A hat protects from the sun.

■ **CHART AND COMPASS OR MAP OF THE RIVER** Know where you are and how to get out in an emergency.

■ **A WHISTLE OR SOUND-SIGNALING DEVICE**

■ **THROW BAGS AND OTHER RESCUE GEAR**

■ **RIVER KNIFE** When there are ropes and rigging, a knife is needed. This includes throw bags and throw ropes.

■ **BILGE PUMP AND/OR BAILER** Important for those in open water, always carry some device that can get water OUT of the boat.

■ **SELF-RESCUE DEVICES** Paddle float, slings, tow ropes

■ **SUNSCREEN**

■ **DRINKING WATER**

■ **LIGHT/SIGNAL**

■ **PROPER FOOTWEAR**

■ **UV EYE PROTECTION** Choose a good pair of sunglasses and a strap.

■ **DRY BAG** Dry clothing, cameras, and cell phones are great after a long day.



■ **APPROPRIATE CLOTHING** Always dress for the weather and know what to expect. Temperature changes can occur rapidly. Layering clothes insulates in cool weather better than a single garment.

■ **FIRST AID KIT WITH MATCHES**

■ **DUCT TAPE/SMALL REPAIR KIT**

■ **VHS RADIO AND GPS LOCATOR** If venturing away from shore in a coastal area

PRE-TRIP PLANNING

■ Know the waters to be paddled. Guide books and topography maps are valuable references in trip planning. Plan alternate routes.

■ Set up locations for put-ins and take-outs along with possible lunch break stops. Consider time and distance. Arrange for the shuttle, if necessary.

■ Participant Responsibilities: Each paddler should take responsibility for personal participation, the selection of appropriate equipment, and the decision to run or scout rapids. More experienced paddlers should assist those with less experience in making proper decisions on the trip.

■ Paddle within your, and your group's, limits.

ON-WATER BEHAVIOR AND ETIQUETTE

■ Be a competent swimmer with the ability to handle oneself underwater, moving water, surf, or current.

■ Keep your boat under control: Do not enter a rapid unless reasonably sure you can navigate it or swim the entire rapid in case you capsize.

■ Be sure to keep an appropriate distance between craft (a good general rule is to keep the boat behind you in view). Normally, stay behind the lead boat and in front of the sweep boat. Both the lead and sweep boats should be experienced boaters.

■ Keep a lookout for hazards and avoid them. Watch for fog, especially on coastal waters.

■ Know your emotional and physical limitations. Group members need to constantly assess the behavior of others in their group.

■ Respect the rights of anglers and land-owners when paddling.



KAYAK FISHING SAFETY

THE FISH WILL NO LONGER BE SAFE.
BUT YOU WILL BE.



WEAR YOUR PFD

If you're on the water, have your PFD on. Inattention is one of the leading causes of mishap. And you tend to be most inattentive when you think you have nothing to worry about. If you are wearing a PFD, you'll have less to worry about.

SAVE YOURSELF

The easiest self-rescue technique for sit-on-top kayakers is BBF—Belly, Butt, Feet. Pull the kayak under you, and stabilize yourself on the kayak: first on your belly, then your butt, and finally your feet. It takes a bit of strength and intuition.

MAKE PEACE WITH THE SURF

When you become comfortable paddling in the surf zone, you'll dramatically expand your fishing horizons. The best launch sites are protected from the prevailing swell inside a bay or behind a point. Look for beaches with crumbling surf. Avoid dangerous shore breaks. Watch the

surf for several minutes before you launch. Big waves come in sets separated by periods of relative calm. Wait for one of these lulls, and then go for it aggressively. Make sure you hit the wave straight on; if you approach at an angle it's more likely to turn you sideways and surf you back to the beach. If the wave turns your kayak broadside, lean into the foam pile using your paddle for support, keeping your elbows low and close to your body. At the same time, use your legs to keep the edge of your kayak closest to the beach from catching the wave.

KEEP WATER WHERE IT BELONGS

Keep a hand-pump on board, but if you capsize off shore, you'll need the help of your buddy. Slide your water-filled boat upside-down and across your buddy's boat to its balance point.

Lift the stern of the boat to drain water out, and then lift the bow. Do this over and over again until all the water is gone.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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Springfield, VA 22150-2311
Phone: 703.451.0141
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Camping Tips

GIVE YOURSELF THE BEST SHOT AT HAVING A GOOD TIME

PICK A DATE

Spontaneity is great when everything works out. But it can be the trait of disaster when the campsites are all full or the sky is wringing itself over your tent like a dirty dishrag. Reserve your spot early, especially if you picked Memorial Day or Labor Day. Or go in the shoulder seasons. If the weather won't cooperate, water level is too high or the tides aren't right, don't be afraid to reschedule.

PICK A DESTINATION

The important thing is that you're immersed in the natural world; that your kayak brought you together with your buddies. Don't lose sight of that by searching for the best spot. Pick the best spot for the group you are with. There's a difference.

PICK A TEAM

You can refine trip logistics down to the port-a-pottie, but if the group is negative, you and your fellow campers will always remember that beautiful sunset with a gloomy cast. Pick people who can be happy in spite of leaks, capsizes, bugs, and rain. And take someone along who you know only casually. Getting to know someone new is always exciting.

PICK A SITE

Whether you're traveling by canoe or sea kayak, choose your campsite before departing so you know exactly how much distance you need to cover. Pick a site that has ample flat space for your group's tents, and a common area you can hang a tarp over for cooking, and general relaxing. Pull your boats up on shore, well above the water line, and secure them with a strong rope. Turn them over to keep the rain out. If you're sea kayaking, make sure your boats (and tents!) are well beyond the high-tide line. Use campsites to avoid additional impact on the waterway.

LEAVE NO TRACE

Bring along plenty of empty plastic bags for your garbage and any other garbage you might find. Remember that this river corridor or trail belongs to you, so take pride in it.

BE PREPARED

Take along everything you might need to survive in the woods for a week or longer.