



## CANOE-KAYAK-SUP-RAFT-RESCUE

The American Canoe Association (ACA) is a member-based nonprofit organization 501(c)(3) that promotes fun and responsible canoeing, kayaking, stand up paddleboarding, and rafting. Founded in 1880, the ACA actively advocates recreational access and stewardship of America's water trails. For more information and to become a member, visit [www.americancanoe.org](http://www.americancanoe.org).



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Making the world a better place to paddle! Since 1880.



# Paddler's Safety Checklist

### PADDLERS NEED TO PREPARE:

- Low light conditions
- Ways to contact help
- Minor medical emergencies
- Outings which extend past the estimated return time
- Weather pattern changes
- Other traffic



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*Produced under a grant from the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund, administered by the U.S. Coast Guard.*

Part of ACA's Paddle Safe - Paddle Smart Series

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# Be A Leader!

## Pre-Trip Planning

Know the waters to be paddled. River guide booklets and topography maps are valuable references. 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.

Equipment—What you take with you is all that you have to survive and rescue yourself. This includes water, food, maps and charts, rescue equipment and extra clothes.

File a Float Plan with someone who will notify others if you don't return on time.

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

## On-Water Behavior and Etiquette

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

Have a properly fitted lifejacket (Personal Flotation Device—PFD), and Wear It!

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

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.

## Know the Conditions

### *For Flatwater*

Remember to watch for water and weather changes—beware of fog.

Keep an eye out for other boat traffic.

Pay attention to all safety warnings.

Be sure you are visible



### *For Whitewater and Rivers*

Stay on the inside of bends - Beware of strainers! Strainers are fallen trees, bridge pilings, undercut rocks or anything that allows the current to flow through it while holding you. Strainers are deadly.

Walk around low-head dams.

Watch for hydraulics—Looking downstream, if a hole is “smiling” it is probably friendly. If it’s “frowning,” it is probably unfriendly.

If in doubt, get out and scout!

### *For Coastal Areas*

Stay close to shore.

As you travel away from shelter, make sure you have the necessary skills to travel back.

Watch conditions for winds and fog.

Understand wave height, wind speed (Beaufort Scale), fetch and how it will impact your travel.

Stay aware of all boats and traffic patterns.

Learn re-entry techniques BEFORE you need them, know how to re-enter your boat and how to assist others back into their craft.

Stay apprised of tidal currents and their effects on you and your boat.

Watch for landing in surf or passing through the surf zone to shore.

## PADDLER'S CHECKLIST

- Be a swimmer
- File a Float Plan
- Wear your lifejacket
- Assess your boat's flotation needs
- Spare paddle
- Wear appropriate clothing—Always dress for immersion in cold water (wetsuits/drysuits)
- Wear a hat or helmet
- Compass and chart or map
- Whistle or sound signaling device
- Throw bags and other rescue gear
- “River” knife
- Bilge pump and/or bailer
- Self-rescue devices (paddle float, sling, tow rope)
- Sunscreen
- Drinking water & snacks
- Light/signal (for low light conditions)
- Proper footwear
- UV eye protection
- Drybag with extra clothing
- First-aid kit with matches
- Small repair kit with duct tape
- VHF radio and GPS locator