



## **Moving Water and Whitewater Equipment and Gear Policy**

Proper equipment is essential for safe paddling. ACA's Safety and Rescue Committee recommends the following equipment for paddlers on moving water or whitewater:

### **Helmets**

Helmets are recommended for all paddlers on class II or harder sections of rivers

Helmets are required for:

- All participants in Swiftwater Rescue (SWR) classes
- Any paddler in moving water using a skirt, thigh straps, or other systems that would prevent immediately falling out during capsize
- Any paddler on class III- or harder whitewater

### **Life Jackets**

- Life jackets are required for all paddling activities. Life jackets must be appropriate for the venue as shown on their label, must be in good shape, and must be fitted properly
- Whistles should be secured to every life jacket as a sound-producing device

### **Throw Ropes**

All river paddlers should carry a throw rope and learn how to use it. The minimum standard for a throw rope is 40 feet of 1/4" diameter floating line, stored in a nylon or polyester bag, or a bag of similar material, with flotation adequate to keep the bag at the surface. Longer lines and thicker diameters are preferred. 75 feet of 3/8" diameter line is the largest that might reasonably be carried by most paddlers.

- Throw rope line must float and should be brightly colored
- Polypropylene and Dyneema/Spectra lines are the most commonly used materials. Each has advantages and limitations:
  - Polypropylene lines are dynamic, stretching under load, and reduce strain on the rescuer and the person or object in the water. These are less expensive than Dyneema/spectra lines.
  - Dyneema/spectra lines have much less stretch, and thus do not stretch very much under large loads. These lines are more appropriate for unpinning boats.

### **Cutting Tools**

- All paddlers should carry a readily accessible knife or another cutting tool capable of cutting commonly occurring and potentially entrapping materials such as fishing lines, ropes (3/8 inch or larger diameter), and webbing
- Cutting tools should be immediately available and stored on or in a paddler's life jacket

### **Unpinning kits**

Paddlers should learn to unpin boats and how to carry an appropriate pin kit. The minimum pin kit should include one throw bag, one 15 to 20-foot length of webbing, one prusik, and three locking carabiners. A more thorough kit would contain at least one throw bag, one length of webbing, two prusiks, 3 pulleys, and 4 locking carabiners.

Paddlers should store their pin kits and related gear in a secure and accessible location. Ideally, unpinning gear should be stored on a paddler's person, rather than in the boat, to ensure it is available if a paddler is separated from their boat. However, paddlers must balance factors including ease of access, risk of separation from their boat, and the impact of adding hardware in/on a life jacket – and choose a storage system that works best for their particular circumstances.

### **Clothing**

- All paddlers should wear close-toed shoes. All students participating in swiftwater rescue classes must wear close-toed shoes
- All paddlers must have thermal protection appropriate to the paddling venue, as well as the weather and water conditions

### **Boat Design**

All boats in moving water should have secured flotation or sealed bulkheads