

BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO SAFER PADDLING



# WAYS WEAR OUR LIFE JACKET

### Wear it Like a Pro

The first sign of a rookie paddler is someone who isn't wearing a life jacket. Experienced paddlers wear life jackets whenever they're on the water.

## <u>Make it Fit</u>

# Don't Tempt the Odds

85% of fatal canoeing accidents and

48% of kayaking fatalities involve people who were not wearing a life jacket. FOR MORE ON FITTING LIFE JACKETS, GO TO: safeboatingcampaign.com/life-jackets



# **KNOW YOUR LIMITS**

#### Be Honest With Yourself Good paddlers know their limits. If you don't feel comfortable in a given set of

conditions, return to shore.

#### The Right Boat for the Conditions Most kayaks, canoes and SUPs are designed for use on protected waters and

moderate currents. Specialized boats are used for whitewater, surf and exposed lakes or ocean. Know

the capabilities of your craft. These venues require additional training. Explore Your Limits Safely

### Improving your skills is one of the joys of paddling. Practice in safe conditions with instructors or expert paddlers to expand your personal performance envelope.

includes recreational canoes, kayaks and SUPs.

Impairment = Accidents Do not go paddling if you should not be driving. Drinks and drugs are even more hazardous on the water. Coast Guard and state BUI laws apply to all vessels, which



## Safety <u>Communications</u>



#### Keep signaling devices (whistle,

pocket of your life

paddle float and



will relay your precise location to Carry a cell phone in a waterproof

friend before you go.

**Comfort** 



For longer outings, bring energy bars or a lunch.

"dry bag."

Treat the Forecast as

**PLAN FOR CHANGING WEATHER** 

the Best Case When the forecast calls for ideal paddling weather, it will probably be a beautiful day-just

don't count on it.

note the time the sun will rise and set. Prepare for the Worst Case

Be aware of how changing weather affects paddling, and plan accordingly.

Don't forget to check tides or river levels, and

Have an exit strategy at all times. If a fast-moving thunderstorm appears, where is the nearest safe landing? Pay Attention

Scan the horizon for dark clouds, and

be aware of changing temperatures and wind directions, which often precede a squall or thunderstorm.

Don't wait for bad weather. If you sense a change for the worse, get off the water right away.



### **DRESS FOR IMMERSION**

### Cold Kills

The human body loses heat about 25x faster when immersed in cold water than it does when

Avoid cotton clothing like t-shirts and jeans, because they retain water and accelerate cooling when wet.

### <u>Modern Miracles</u>

Today's paddling gear uses high-tech fabrics and technology to keep you dry, comfortable and looking

A wetsuit or drysuit allows you to stay warmer when immersed in cold water.

Ask your local paddling shop to recommend clothing for the conditions you plan to paddle in.

#### Dress Your Children Well

Remember: Children lose body heat faster than adults. Smaller adults lose body heat faster than large adults.



# TELL A FRIEND

### Share Your Plan

Telling a trusted friend where and when you plan to paddle ensures that someone will know where to send help if you get into trouble.

# Make it Routine

Keep a basic float plan on your computer or phone, and make a habit of filling it out and sending it to a friend every time you paddle.

### Include the Four Ws

Who: Your name and the name of everyone paddling with you.

Where: Your planned put-in, takeout and paddling route.

When: Your estimated launch and return time-and when to notify authorities if you don't check in as scheduled.

What to Do: A plan for what to do if you don't return or check in as scheduled.



# MAKE YOURSELF SEEN

## Dress For Visibility

Choose a brightly colored life jacket and paddling clothing that will make it easier for others to see you on the water.

Carry a light, especially if there's a chance you'll be on the water early or late in the day. High visibility strobes and running lights are available at your local paddling shop

#### Practice Defensive Paddling Never assume that power boaters can see you. Avoid high-traffic areas whenever

possible, and proceed with caution when you can't avoid them. Be aware of factors like fog and glare that make you more difficult to spot. If you're

between a powerboat and the sun when it's low on the horizon, the operator almost certainly won't see you. Know the Rules of the Road

# Learn the 'Rules of the Road' that govern all boat traffic, from kayaks to container

ships. Knowing these simple rules will help you anticipate where other boats will go, and allow you to stay out of trouble.



# What You'll Learn

TAKE A PADDLING CLASS

#### Safety: You'll learn and practice the skills that make paddling safe and enjoyable. Style: You'll learn good paddling technique from skilled instructors.

Who You'll Meet

Your class mates are likely to be safety-minded and have similar skills and interests.

A paddling course is the best place to meet fellow paddlers.

A good instructor can become a mentor who will help you become a better paddler. Why It's Fun

You'll be on the water, learning new skills in a safe and friendly environment. Where to Find a Class

# list of ACA-certified instructors at americancanoe.org/instruction

In California, certified paddling courses are available at aquatic centers from Humboldt to

Check with your local paddle shop for a list of paddle classes in your area. You can find a



canoekayak.com/safety americancanoe.org/instruction

uscgboating.org

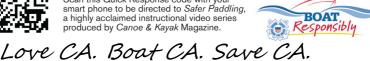
San Diego. Check them out at BoatCalifornia.

Rescue and the United States Coast Guard.

LEARN MORE Watch the 8-part Safe Paddling Video Series, and find paddling tips, gear lists and safety resources from Canoe & Kayak magazine, the ACA Canoe-Kayak-SUP-Raft









Scan this Quick Response code with your smart phone to be directed to Safer Paddling, a highly acclaimed instructional video series produced by Canoe & Kayak Magazine.