

Paddling Checklist (Beginner and Intermediate)



THE TEN ESSENTIALS

1. **Navigation:** Waterways Map, Flow/Tide Chart (GPS optional)
2. **Hydration:** Water Bottles or Hydration Pack, and Treatment Method
3. **Nutrition:** Extra Food for emergency (extra nutrition bars)
4. **Sun Protection:** Sunscreen, Sunglasses, Hat, Lip Balm
5. **Insulation:** Hat and Gloves, Light weight jacket, Extra layers
6. **Warmth:** Lighter/Matches, Fire starter or Stove and Fuel, Wool or Fleece clothing
7. **Illumination:** Headlamp/Flashlight, Extra Batteries
8. **First Aid (for self and gear):** Personal Flotation Device, Bandages, Knife, Medicine, etc
9. **Shelter:** Canoe/Kayak, Tent, Sleeping Bag, Sleeping Pad, Dry Bag
10. **Communication:** Whistle (For emergency signals)

Not all items listed will be needed on every trip. Pack only what you need and leave the rest.

THE BASICS

- Canoe or Kayak
- Paddles
- Personal Flotation Devices
- Hydration & Water Treatment Method
- Signaling devices (whistle, mirror, flares)
- Emergency Throw-line
- Dry Bags for all carrying items

CANOE CLOTHING

- Swimsuit
- Quick Dry Pants/Shorts
- Quick Dry Shirt
- Quick Dry Long-Sleeve Shirt
- Fleece or Wool Sweater
- Rain Gear (jacket/poncho)
- Sun/Rain Hat (with wide brim)
- Bandana

COLD WEATHER CLOTHING

- Wool or Fleece Gloves
- Wool or Fleece Cap/Hat/Headband
- Wool or Fleece Socks

DRY BAG ITEMS

- Snacks/Lunch
- First-Aid Kit
- Pocket Knife
- Map/Charts in Waterproof Case
- Headlamp or Flashlight with extra batteries and bulbs
- Matches/ Fire Starter
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen and Lip Balm
- Hand Warmers
- Cell Phone
- Camera

SPEAK THE LANGUAGE

1. **Portage:** A portage is any obstruction between you and the next body of water. To portage is to empty your canoe of its contents, hoist the barge onto your shoulders, and carry it until you reach your destination or drop from exhaustion--whichever comes first.
2. **Bridge Me:** Usually exclaimed in conjunction with foul language midway through a portage, while gasping for air under an overturned canoe. It means, "Please brace the front end of the canoe so I can get out from underneath it before I die."
3. **Gunwale:** Nautical lingo for the upper edge of either side of the canoe.
4. **Gunwale Up:** What guides shout when they want to dole out Snickers bars or give directions in the middle of the water. It means to get together, side-by-side, with the other boats in your party--close enough to reach anything being passed or to hear instruction.

SAFE PADDLING

- Obtain a well-fitted, type III or V personal floatation device (PFD), and wear it properly, with zippers zipped, and straps fastened. Before getting in your boat, test to see that your PFD won't slip off over your head.
- Dress appropriately for the weather and water conditions. Even at the height of summer, the water can be cold enough to cause hypothermia to the capsized paddler, so dress in fabrics that retain body heat like fleece and wool. Check the weather forecast.
- Wear appropriate footwear. This will not only keep your feet warm in cold water, but protect them from rocks during portage and low water situations.
- Pack a dry bag with a change of clothes.
- Never paddle alone, and leave a float plan with a friend or family member. Avoid conditions for which you are not prepared-learn about your route in advance.
- Check the weight capacity of your boat and abide by it. Remember that cargo in the hatches can affect your boat's performance. Distribute weight evenly and securely.
- Avoid waterways with rapids and hazards beyond your ability to manage them.
- Avoid Strainers (fallen trees) and portage around lowhead dams.
- Don't paddle under the influence of alcohol or recreational drugs.
- Carry a supply of food and water adequate for the length of your trip.
- Always carry a first aid kit.
- Learn to read the water effectively, know how to steer your boat away from hazards, and learn how to rescue yourself and others.
- Obey all rules and regulations including licensing and trespassing
- Be considerate of others on the water. As on a roadway, look before paddling in reverse, and don't stop where you will block other boats, especially on narrow waterways. Give anglers a wide berth, and don't scare the fish!
- Leave no trace. Pack your trash, and dispose of it properly. On long trips, know the rules for disposal of human waste. Consult [Leave No Trace](#) for details.
- Clean your equipment between trips to avoid introducing non-native species to the environment.
- Travel and camp on durable surfaces wherever possible. Minimize damage to the shore when launching, portaging, and scouting.