



Canoeing is part of the national fabric, and it's a classic Scouting activity. In fact, **Paddling** is one of the **Outdoor Adventure Skills**. Practising these competencies is a great way to become a safe paddler. Here are some of the most important ways you can stay safe on your next paddling adventure!

Can You CANOE SAFELY?



1 Share Your Plan

Whether heading out for an afternoon, a weekend, a week or even longer, be sure to submit a **Camping and Outdoor Activity Application** to your Group Commissioner. **AdventureSmart's Online Trip Plan** makes it easy to let people know your intentions when your outing isn't a Scouts Canada activity.

2 Check the Weather Forecast

Even on a clear day, the wind can make heading out unsafe. Paddle within your capabilities and stay close to land whenever possible. Get off the water immediately at the first sign of lightning, and wait at least **30 minutes** after a storm before heading out again. Be prepared with an emergency plan in case of bad weather or another incident—know how to get help if you need it.

4 Dress for the Weather

A hat and sunglasses are musts for any season. For hot, sunny days, be prepared with breathable clothing that will protect you from the sun. Wear sunscreen! Dress in layers when paddling in cold, wet weather—keep your core warm and dry with a breathable waterproof jacket.

3 Know Your Stuff

Master some basic canoeing skills with the **support of an experienced paddler**. Know how to enter and exit a canoe, navigate while on the water, paddle with proper strokes and react responsibly if you capsize. Be sure to practise rescues, too.

5 Know Your Limits

When learning to paddle, do it on a small, calm body of water. Work your way up gradually to bigger water and longer outings—this is especially important for young paddlers who don't have a lot of upper-body strength and stamina.

Be prepared — Paddling Gear Checklist



2. Whistle 3. Painter (15m) 4. Throw Rope
5. Bailer 6. Waterproof Flashlight 7. Flares

Personal Floatation Device (PFD) or Lifejacket: It only works if you wear it!

8. First Aid Kit 9. Compass
10. Communication Device (e.g. EPIRB)
11. Spare Paddle 12. Drinking Water and Snacks

6 Play It Safe

Always portage around rapids unless you have had expert whitewater instruction and you have the right safety equipment (including helmets and throw bags). On windy or stormy days, stay off the water altogether—wait for calm conditions before heading out.

8 Be Visible

Choose bright colours for your canoe, and for your lifejacket or PFD. Your lifejacket or PFD should have reflective elements, and it's a good idea to attach your whistle to it.

7 Learn the Rules of the Road

Especially when paddling in areas with heavy traffic, know how to share waterways responsibly with other vessels. Consult **Transport Canada's guidelines** for more information.

9 Keep a Line of Sight

When paddling as a group, ensure that each canoe can see at least the one ahead of it and the one behind it. Take regular breaks all together—raft up to have a snack and drink some water. Make sure that everyone is ready to continue before setting out again.

10 Portage Carefully

- Use the buddy system when portaging. Help your buddy with putting on his or her pack, or with lifting and setting down the canoe. Carry a load you can manage, and make two trips if you need to.
- Stick to the trail. Be prepared with a whistle so that you can signal to others if you and your buddy get lost or need help.

