

An Introduction to Canoeing and Kayaking

Introduction

People have used canoes for 10,000 years.

So, there must be something pretty good about canoes for us to still be using them after all these years!

You have been invited canoeing, so you'll get the chance to find out for yourself!



Boats

A canoe is a small boat that is powered by someone using a paddle.

The two main types used by youngsters are Canadian canoes and kayaks.

Canadian Canoes

This is a Canadian canoe:



This is a Canadian Canoe paddle



Canadian canoes can normally be paddled by more than one person at a time.

Kayaks

This is a kayak.



This is a kayak paddle. Its two ends don't match. This makes paddling easier!



Kayaks normally only have one person paddling them.

The rules

There are only main rules that help us have a safe and happy session.

1. Listen to the adult's instructions
2. Stay close to the adult instructors
3. Do your best!



Instructors - adults who help

There will be some adults who help us to learn to paddle.

The groups are fairly small. Having small groups helps keep everyone safe. This means that there's usually two instructors for a group of eight youngsters.

Adults help us and give us tips whilst we're on the water.

They will also give us some tips before we get in.

Safety



We all wear helmets.

These mainly protect our heads from being accidentally hit by other people's paddles.



We all wear buoyancy aids. These are like thick jackets or jumpers that help us keep afloat if we fall in.

The insides of a buoyancy aid are made out of foam. Inside the foam are lots of air pockets. It's the trapped air that helps keep us afloat.



Sometimes when people go canoeing on a big lake or at the sea, they wear a wet suit.

This is a special type of clothing that keeps you warm.

We don't normally wear wet suits on a river in summer because it's warm enough. We just need to wear the right amount of normal clothes.

Wetsuits are allowed, but clothes are fine too.



Padding your kayak

It's tricky to paddle your kayak and no one gets it perfect at first. It takes time and practice to become a good paddler.

These tips will help you paddle in a straight line.

1. Sit up straight
2. Bend your knees (when you use kayaks on rivers and lakes, there is often space in the kayak for you to bend your knees out to the side and this makes it easier to balance)
3. Put your paddle in to the water as far forward as your toes.
4. Pull the paddle down the side of the boat and then take the paddle out when it reaches level with your hips.

Paddle in by your toes



Paddle out by your hips



Falling out of your boat

The rivers and lakes that we use are nice and calm. This means that the water doesn't normally wash people out of their boats.

If people do get off-balance and their boat tips over, they need to get out of the boat.

In lots of places, the water is shallow, so you just need to get out of the boat and stand up.

Then catch your breath - the water can be chilly and give you a bit of a shock.

Then get your boat and paddle and tow your boat to the side.

Be very careful when walking in rivers or lakes as the floor can be very slippery. Make sure you walk slowly so you don't slip.