



# Paddler Checklist

## TRIP PREPARATION PLANNER

- |                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Be A Swimmer and be prepared to Swim                                                                                                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Carry a "River" Knife                                                                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> File A Float Plan - Tell friends where you are going and when you will return.                                                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Have A Bilge Pump And/or Bailer                                                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wear Your Lifejacket - Always                                                                                                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-Rescue Devices (Paddle Float, Sling, Tow Rope)                                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assess Your Boat's Flotation Needs- You, your companions, your gear and your craft need to stay afloat in water conditions you plan to travel. | <input type="checkbox"/> Sun Protection - UV Eye Protection and Sun Screen                                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Carry A Spare Paddle                                                                                                                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Drinking Water & Snacks                                                                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Always Dress For The Unexpected Flip. Dress for the water temperature, not the air temperature.                                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Light / Signal (for low light conditions)                                                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wear a Hat or Helmet                                                                                                                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Wear Proper Footwear                                                                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Carry A Compass and Chart or Map                                                                                                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Dry bag with extra clothing                                                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Carry a Whistle or Sound Signaling Device                                                                                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Wear Appropriate Clothing                                                                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Carry Throw Bags And Other Rescue Gear                                                                                                         | <input type="checkbox"/> First Aid Kit with Matches                                                                       |
|                                                                                                                                                                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Small Repair kit with Duct Tape                                                                  |
|                                                                                                                                                                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Communications Plan - Have a VHS Radio and GPS Locator – or a cell phone in waterproof container |

## PADDLER SAFETY TIPS

### Pre-Trip Planning

- Know the waters. River guide booklets and topography maps are valuable references. Plan an alternate route.
- Set-up locations for put-ins and take-outs along with possible lunch break stops. Consider time and distance. Arrange for the shuttle.
- **Equipment**—what you take with you is all that you have to survive and rescue yourself. This includes water, food, maps and charts, rescue equipment and extra clothes.
- File a Float Plan with someone who will notify others if you don't return on time.
- Paddle within your own and your group's limits.

## On-Water Behavior and Etiquette

- Be a competent swimmer with ability to handle underwater, moving water, surf or current.
- Have a properly fitted lifejacket (Personal Flotation Device—PFD), and Wear It!
- Keep the craft under control. Do not enter a rapid unless reasonably sure you can navigate it or swim the entire rapid in case you capsize.
- Keep a lookout for hazards and avoid them. Watch for fog, especially on coastal waters.
- Know your emotional and physical limitations.
- Group members need to constantly assess the behavior of others in their group.
- Respect the rights of anglers and land owners.

## Know the Conditions – Flat Water:

- Remember to watch for water and weather changes—beware of fog.
- Keep an eye out for other boat traffic.
- Pay attention to all safety warnings.
- Be sure you are visible

## Know the Conditions – Whitewater:

- Stay on the inside of bends - Beware of strainers! Strainers are fallen trees, bridge pilings, undercut rocks or anything that allows the current to flow through it while holding you. Strainers are deadly.
- Walk around low-head dams.
- Watch for hydraulics—looking downstream, if a hole is “smiling” it is probably friendly. If it’s “frowning,” it is probably unfriendly.
- If in doubt, get out and scout!

## For Coastal Areas

- Stay close to shore. As you travel away from shelter, make sure you have the necessary skills to travel back.
- Watch conditions for winds and fog. Understand wave height, wind speed (Beaufort Scale), fetch and how it will impact your travel.
- Stay aware of all boats and traffic patterns.
- Learn re-entry techniques BEFORE you need them, know how to re-enter your boat and how to assist others back into their craft.
- Stay apprised of tidal currents and their affects on you and your boat.
- Watch for landing in surf or passing through the surf zone to shore.

The Paddler’s Safety Tips and Checklist are provided by the American Canoe Association.

For more paddling information visit: [www.americancanoe.org](http://www.americancanoe.org)



Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission - Boating Programs  
1111 Israel Road SW | PO Box 42654 | Olympia, WA 98504-2654  
Phone 360-902-8836 | E-mail [Boating@parks.wa.gov](mailto:Boating@parks.wa.gov)

