

# Kayaking Safety Tips

## On the water

- Monitor the weather. Check the forecast before leaving, and prepare for rain even if you don't think it will.
- Dress appropriately for the weather. Wear quick-drying clothing (not cotton!) made of material that retains heat even when wet, to help you stay warm and dry.
- Wear bright colors or a high-visibility life jacket. The law requires a boat to carry one life jacket per person aboard, but people die each year because they weren't *wearing* their life jacket. Buckle and zip up that life jacket!
- **Don't paddle if you are under the influence of drugs or alcohol.**
- Use extra caution when paddling in cold water. Boating accidents are five times more likely to be fatal if the water is colder than 60 degrees.
- Never strap a person or lifejacket to a canoe or kayak.
- Paddling in a group is safer than paddling alone. If you are in a group, stay within visual or verbal contact if possible.
- In areas of high traffic, stay near the shore, and approach waves head-on or at a slight angle to avoid capsizing.
- If you do fall out or capsize, keep your feet pointed downstream and keep them off the bottom to avoid getting snagged or stuck. Stay upstream of your boat to avoid getting pinned between it and a rock or log.

## Reading the water

- Scan ahead for hazards like overhanging trees, rocks, low bridges or rapids.
- If a section of river appears too challenging for you and your group, don't be afraid to portage around it. This is a much better option than paddling in rapids, or quick currents that you aren't used to. "When in doubt, get out and scout!"
- Riffles in the water mean that rocks are dangerously close to the surface. Follow the smooth water shaped like a "V" pointing downstream.