**ALWAYS WEAR YOUR LIFE JACKET**  

**Wear it Like a Pro**  
Navigating the waters with a life jacket is essential. Always wear your life jacket and never enter a body of water without it. 

**Make it Fit**  
Adjust your life jacket so that it’s snug and comfortable. It should not lift up when pulled by the shoulders. Modern life jackets come in all sizes, with models for children, women, and men.  

**Don’t Tempt the Odds**  
85% of fatal canoeing accidents and 60% of kayaking fatalities involve people who were not wearing a life jacket. Don’t be a statistic. Wear your life jacket.  

**Know Your Limits**  
Be Honest With Yourself  
Good paddlers know their limits. If you don’t feel comfortable in a given set of conditions, return to shore.  

**The Right Boat for the Conditions**  
Most kayaks, canoes, and SUPs are designed for use on protected waters and moderate currents. Specialized boats are used for whitewater, surf, and kayaking in areas where kayakers must train additional skills. 

**Explore Your Limits Safely**  
Improving your skills is one of the joys of paddling. Practice in safe conditions with instructors or expert paddlers to expand your personal performance envelope.  

**Communications**  
A handheld VHF radio allows you to communicate with the Coast Guard and commercial boat traffic. Use Channel 16 for emergencies.  

**Impairment = Accidents**  
Do not go paddling if you shouldn’t be driving. Drinks and drugs are even more hazardous on the water. Coast Guard and state BUI laws apply to all vessels, which includes recreational canoes, kayaks, and SUPs.  

**Safety**  
- **Emergencies:** Have a plan to safely and securely leave the water if necessary.  
- **Drownings:** Learn how to swim.  
- **Medical Emergencies:** Learn to give CPR and basic first aid.  
- **Fire:** Know how to use a fire extinguisher.  

**For canoeists and kayakers, air temperature is less important than wind speed and direction. Avoid static conditions, as lightning is more likely when the wind is calm or the cloud layer is thick.**

**For more on fitting life jackets, go to:**  

[Safe Boating Campaign](https://safeboatingcampaign.com/life-jackets)
Dress For Visibility
Choose a brightly colored life jacket and paddling clothing that will make it easier for others to see you on the water.

Carry a light, especially if there’s a chance you’ll be on the water early or late in the day. High visibility strobes and running lights are available at your local paddling shop.

Practice Defensive Paddling
Never assume that power boaters can see you. Avoid high-traffic areas whenever possible, and proceed with caution when you can’t avoid them.

Be aware of factors like fog and glare that make you more difficult to spot. If you’re between a powerboat and the sun when it’s low on the horizon, the operator almost certainly won’t see you.

Know the Rules of the Road
Learn the ‘Rules of the Road’ that govern all boat traffic, from kayaks to container ships. Knowing these simple rules will help you anticipate where other boats will go, and allow you to stay out of trouble.

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