

# GUIDELINES IN PLANNING A FLOAT TRIP

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The recreational sport of canoeing, particularly on rivers and streams, is undergoing a tremendous growth in popularity. The canoe, rich in history and tradition, is a versatile craft that can be decidedly less than stable when handled or loaded improperly.

Successful paddling, particularly on moving water, requires a delicate balance of coordination and dexterity. No written words can properly prepare an individual to undertake the sport; *it requires the acquisition of skills that can only be obtained through practice.*

There is specific planning which must be taken seriously by paddlers in preparing for a float trip. The suggested guidelines that follow should give the paddler an insight into what specifically is to be considered before attempting a cruise on the river.

## Leader's Preparedness and Responsibility

1. Know the river or stream to be paddled. River guide booklets and topography maps are valuable references in trip planning. Have knowledge of the difficult parts of the trip and the location of any low head dams. Be aware of possible changes in the river's level. One may want to plan alternatives in case the stream is too high or too low.

2. Set-up locations for put-in and take-out along with a possible lunch break stop. Consider time and distance. Arrange for shuttle.

3. Participants. Limit the size of the group to a number one can comfortably control. Designated group leaders should be experienced paddlers. Decisions on the participation of inexperienced boaters should be based on total group strength. Remember the welfare of the group is the major responsibility, and a balance of experienced paddlers with the less experienced will make for a more enjoyable trip.

4. Equipment. Plan so that all necessary group equipment is present on the trip. (see equipment preparedness)

5. Float Plan. If trip is into a wilderness area, or for an extended period, plans should be filed with appropriate authorities (Pennsylvania Fish Commission), or left with someone who will contact them after a certain time. The establishment of a late return phone number can save time and worry for everyone involved.

## Participant's Preparedness and Responsibility

1. Be a competent swimmer with the ability to handle oneself underwater and in moving water.

2. Be certain to have a properly fitting Personal Flotation Device (PFD), and WEAR IT.

3. Be suitably equipped (see equipment preparedness).

4. Keep craft under control. Control must be good enough at all times to stop or reach shore before reaching any danger. Know one's boating ability. Do not enter a rapid unless reasonably sure one can safely navigate it or swim the entire rapid in event of a capsizing

5. Be sure to keep an appropriate distance between canoes (distance will vary depending on water conditions; a good general rule of thumb is keep the canoe behind in view). Never get ahead of the assigned lead canoe or behind the assigned sweep canoe. Both lead and sweep positions should be held by experienced paddlers with knowledge of the water being traveled.

6. Keep a lookout for river hazards and avoid them.

7. Respect the rights of landowners.

## Equipment Preparedness

1. Personal Flotation Devices. One for each person. They must be worn at all times when on the water.

2. The proper craft. Be sure the boat is in good repair before starting a trip. It may be wise to carry appropriate repair materials: gray duct tape, rubber hammer, sharp knife, etc. Respect the craft's capacity and know how this capacity is effected in moving water situations.

3. Adequately sized paddles. Carry spares.

4. At least 60 feet of rescue line. Throw-line rescue bags are ideal.

5. Bailer and sponge for removing excess water in the craft.

6. Well-equipped first aid kit in a water-proof floating container (check an appropriate source for a list of first aid supplies).

7. Whistle or other hailing device.

8. Proper clothing (sneakers, outer garments according to weather.)

## Other Equipment

Depending on personal needs, time of the year, length of trip, and expected weather conditions.

Wet suit (if applicable)

Spray skirt (decked boats)

Float bags (decked boats)

15-foot painter lines (canoes)

Glasses strap

Extra glasses

Sunglasses

Sunscreen

Knee pads

Helmet (for class 3 water or above)

Sun hat or wool stocking cap

Block and tackle (optional)

Matches or other fire starting

devices in a waterproof container

Waterproof watch

Canteen of water or water purifier

Camera and film (in waterproof container)

Change of clothing in a heavy-duty waterproof bag

Insect repellent

Garbage bag

Flashlight (extra batteries)

Ice chest with food

Fishing equipment (optional)