



## Canoe Safety

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Nothing is as serene as paddling down a glassy river or stream on a cool spring day in a canoe. And nothing is as exhilarating as whitewater wilderness paddling.

Whether you're a paddling enthusiast or a novice, the National Safety Council offers the following:

The American Canoe Association recommends that you canoe with a minimum of three people or two crafts. Recreational canoeists frequently enjoy canoeing in a single canoe with a partner or solo.

Calm waters can conceal rocky crevices, high waters or lurking dangers. Use good judgment, common sense and preventative measures to insure a safe trip. Become knowledgeable about the sport before you plunge into it. Classes are offered across the country at various skill levels. Experts teach basic safety skills—how to handle a boat properly, select the right gear, and recognize common river dangers. And/or join a local canoe club. Knowledgeable groups can introduce you to the sport and show you how to minimize risk.

Each stream or river presents different challenges and dangers. Even if you're a well-seasoned veteran, be sure you become familiar with the body of water before you embark on a journey.

Be ready for an occasional dunking when you canoe. Don't panic. Stay upstream of the boat to avoid being pinned between the boat and a rock. In calm waters, angle your way up to shore instead of paddling straight. Stay behind the boat, and hold onto it for flotation. Always wear your life jacket.

Don't attempt rivers or rapids beyond your ability. You can progress gradually from one skill level to the next. Unfamiliar waters are certainly no place to "test the waters" or to impress your friends. Whether gliding across calm waters in a local stream or whitewater paddling in remote areas, you can set the pace of the action.