

Getting on the water!

Some tips for helping participants have a safe and fun float.



First and foremost: we have to get paddlers
down the river safely, but we also want them
to enjoy the experience and hopefully
develop a love for the river!



On the ramp - Paddler Assessment

- It's best to say "If you're not a confident paddler or have never paddled on the river before, gather over here with _____ for some pointers."
- If you ask people if they can paddle, many will say YES, and it is often not a good indication of their abilities.



Padding Instruction - On the Ramp

Basics

- Make sure they know how to hold the canoe or kayak paddle
- Demonstrate the basic strokes: forward, back paddle, and rudder
- Describe the roles of the person in the BOW – front, and the STERN – rear.

BOW - paddle steadily altering sides every few strokes, scout hazards and COMMUNICATE, help brake when necessary by bracing or back paddling

STERN – paddle, steer, COMMUNICATE, match strokes with bow paddler and compensate, and brake when necessary

Getting into the boats

- Make sure the strongest, most experienced paddler is in the stern
- Use three points of contact (2 hands and a foot) and stay low, getting into the boats
- Emphasize that BOTH paddlers have to maintain a minimum pace – it's a paddle, not a float.
- Both paddlers have to focus on good control of the boat and stay pointed downstream so they can avoid hazards. Out of control boats can quickly become dangerous. Boats that get into trouble put rescuers at risk as well.

Getting underway and addressing problems

- WATCH EACH BOAT to assess who's having difficulty so you can address it quickly.
- If you identify a problem boat, at least two Kaw Guide boats should hang out with them to make sure they don't get too far behind or need more help.
- If it seems like both paddlers are weak and not improving, you might need to swap one paddler out for a stronger paddler from another boat at the next opportunity. Radio up ahead to the leader so they know what's going on.

TIPS for Helping Paddlers

- Stay calm and *use your words*.
- Introduce yourself and get their names.
- Be CLEAR.
- Anticipate potential hazards up ahead and give a “heads-up.”

NOT this:

HEY! UP FRONT, LEFT, NO, the OTHER LEFT, PADDLE HARDER OR YOU'RE GOING TO HIT THAT LOG!! NO, RIGHT! YOU IN THE BACK – STEER LEFT NOW! NOW RIGHT AGAIN...

Try THIS:

Hey folks, I need you to do everything in your power to avoid that big snag up ahead.

Haley, paddle strongly on the right a few times, until you're past it then alternate sides full steam ahead.

Justin, use a strong rudder on the left until you clear that log and then resume paddling straight ahead.

Good job!

- Once you're on the water and paddlers are competently on their way, suggest tweaks like body rotation for efficient and strong strokes, or better steering, etc.
- Remember, we need them to stay safe and in control but they should go home feeling happy and wanting to get back on the river again.

