



## CANOE AND KAYAK SAFETY



Recreational boating can be a relaxing way to get exercise and enjoy the outdoors on hot summer days. Canoeing and kayaking are popular forms of recreational boating that Sailors and Marines participate in during the summer months. However, as with any boating activity, safety must come first.

*U.S. Navy photo by Mass  
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In the U.S. during 2013 alone, there were 4,062 recreational boating accidents that resulted in 560 deaths, 2,620 injuries, and approximately \$39 million dollars of property damage.<sup>1</sup> A safe, secure, and enjoyable canoeing or kayaking experience comes from implementing tips and techniques that will help minimize the risk of personal injury, property damage, or even loss of life.

### Prevention Tips

To ensure safety comes first when canoeing or kayaking, follow the tips below:

- ▶ Always wear a life jacket! Ensure it fits properly and that straps and clips are fastened tightly.<sup>2</sup>
- ▶ When possible, go canoeing or kayaking with a partner. This will be helpful in case unexpected troubles arise, but also will help with loading, launching, and docking the boat(s).<sup>3</sup>
- ▶ Choose a body of water (ocean, lake, or river) that is appropriate for your experience level and ensure that you have the necessary skills to navigate the course.<sup>4</sup>
- ▶ Check weather conditions in the area before heading out.<sup>4</sup>
- ▶ If you are not an experienced canoer or kayaker, avoid whitewater rapids, dams, and falls.<sup>3</sup>
- ▶ Learn the Universal River Signals and use them when needed. The signals include "Stop," "Help/Emergency," and "All Clear." [Learn more.](#)<sup>4</sup>
- ▶ Layer your clothes if you are canoeing or kayaking in cold water. Cold water can be extremely dangerous and you should be prepared to stay warm in the case of an accident.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 2013 Recreational Boating Statistics. U.S. Department of Homeland Security, United States Coast Guard. <http://www.uscgboating.org/library/accident-statistics/2013ReportRevised.pdf>. Published May 2014. Accessed March 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Top 10 Safety Tips. American Canoe Association. [http://www.americancanoe.org/?page=Top\\_10](http://www.americancanoe.org/?page=Top_10). Accessed March 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Canoeing/Kayaking Activity Card. BAM! Body and Mind. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). <http://www.cdc.gov/bam/activity/cards/canoeing.html>. Updated 22 January 2013. Accessed March 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Know Your Limits. U.S. Coast Guard, American Canoe Association. [http://www.americancanoe.org/resource/resmgr/sei-educational\\_resources/know\\_your\\_limits-aca.pdf](http://www.americancanoe.org/resource/resmgr/sei-educational_resources/know_your_limits-aca.pdf). Accessed March 2015.

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