

## PROJECT IDEA STARTER

# Paddle Water Sports

By Ashley Hughey, Portage County Educator, 4-H Youth Development and American Canoe Association Instructor; Reviewed by Andrew Hudak, Executive Director, Camp Whitewood



Paddle water sports have increased in popularity over the years. While canoeing is what started the paddle sports industry, kayaking and stand-up paddleboarding have grown in popularity recently. Paddling is an enjoyable sport for all ages and a wonderful way to experience the outdoors. To stay safe on the water, study some basics about water safety, equipment, and techniques. Before you know it, you will be planning and enjoying your own paddling adventure!

Safety is the #1 priority. Paddling can be dangerous, but having the proper gear can save a life! Wearing a life jacket (also known as a personal flotation device or PFD) is the single most important way to protect yourself. In Ohio, it is required by law to have a PFD for each person on the boat, including paddle craft. More than 430 drownings occurred nationwide in 2019. Individuals not wearing a life jacket accounted for more than 80% of these deaths. Be sure to always wear your life jacket when on the water.

Learn how to choose the right life jacket for you by reading “How to Choose the Right Life Jacket” at [uscgboating.org/images/](http://uscgboating.org/images/)



A life jacket is essential for any boating trip. Finding the right fit is crucial to saving your life.

[howtochoosetherightlifejacket\\_brochure.pdf](#) and watching this brief video, “Choosing the Best Life Jacket” at [youtube.com/watch?v=6tLZIsCB5aA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6tLZIsCB5aA).

The next step to being safe is selecting appropriate clothing. Dressing for the weather and the water temperature is extremely important, especially in early spring or late fall when temperatures are lower. Layers are the best defense. Picking the correct layers is easy if you follow the 3 W's. Start with a **wicking** layer, the one closest to the skin, made of polyester or polypropylene. On top of the wicking layer is the **warmth** layer, which should include fabrics like wool or synthetic fleece. The last layer, called the **weather** layer, goes on the outside and should be waterproof. A good rule of thumb is to wear a wet suit and the proper layering if the combined air and water temperatures are below 120 degrees. In colder temperatures, cotton is rotten! Cotton clothing does not hold your body heat and can lead to hypothermia. The final safety check is to make sure weather conditions are safe for paddling using your favorite

## PLAN YOUR PROJECT

Use this idea starter AND publication 4-H 365 *Self-Determined Project Guide* as the starting place for your 4-H self-determined project. The *Self-Determined Project Guide* is available from your county OSU Extension office or on the Web at [ohio4h.org/selfdetermined](http://ohio4h.org/selfdetermined). You may choose to do a little or a lot depending on your level of interest. Be sure to register your project with your county OSU Extension office.

### Know the water!

Beginners and first-time paddlers should always practice first on flat inland lakes or ponds. Rivers sometimes have strainers, fast moving waters, and low-head dams, and can be very dangerous. Higher rain levels can make rivers even more hazardous.



Low-head dams look deceptively calm. The water under this small waterfall turns in a strong, circular motion, making it very difficult for someone to escape.

weather app. Even if the weather is warm and sunny, a windy day can be a challenge on the water. Various weather conditions can create or affect waves on a pond or lake. Wind and waves make you more susceptible to tipping your boat over and falling in the water. Anyone planning on paddling should assess the weather, wind, and water before venturing out. After you know about paddling safety, practice your paddling skills. Paddling can be overwhelming, so no matter what type of paddle you will be using, practice these skills on land first. Each technique is different, but you can use your paddling skills on canoes, kayaks, and stand-

up paddleboards (sometimes abbreviated SUP).

Taking this project can get you started on your paddling adventures. We also encourage you to take a course with trained instructors who teach these skills and can supervise your practice. This allows you to learn advanced skills, including how to perform a self-rescue if your boat capsizes (flips over).

Ohio has many waterways to paddle. And, lots of parks have access to boating equipment, if you need it. Check out your local or state parks for more information and start paddling to explore the outdoors on the water!

### AREAS OF INTEREST AND THINGS TO DO

Every self-determined 4-H project has various areas of interest. Each area offers specific things members can address during their project adventures. Using the 4-H 365 *Self-Determined Project Guide*, identify at least three areas of interest with at least three activities per area to explore. Take your ideas from the list below or make up your own.

#### Know About Safety—Required

- ☐ Go online to learn the importance of having a float plan and paddling in groups. Explain what you found to your club or group and why you should always make a float plan.
- ☐ Find out why float plans are important and then make a form to use whenever you go paddling. For some ideas, go to [ohiodnr.gov](http://ohiodnr.gov) and search for "File a Float Plan."
- ☐ Explain the importance of the 120 degrees rule and what clothing you should wear



Practicing your paddling skills on land first builds confidence.



based on the weather and water temperatures. Go to **ohiodnr.gov** and search for "120 degrees." Write down a situation of when you would need to use this rule. Include the water and air temperatures and other weather conditions. Talk through your mock situation with your project helper.

- ❑ Ask an experienced paddler or look online to learn the importance of checking the wind, weather, and water before getting on the water. Share what you learn with your project helper.
- ❑ Make a list of all the safety equipment you should have when paddling and how to use each item.
- ❑ Do a demonstration for your club or group about selecting a properly fitted life jacket. Review the two resources on page 1. Explain why it is important to wear a life jacket at all times while on the water.



### Your Boat and Equipment

- ❑ Research online to find the differences between a canoe, a kayak, and a stand-up paddleboard. Make a chart showing the differences. Include the hull, rocker(s), length, and any other important features.
- ❑ Draw a picture of your boat or find a picture of it online. Label its parts.

- ❑ Learn about the advantages and disadvantages of different boat materials such as plastic, wood, fiberglass, aluminum, carbon fiber, and others. Make a list a list of pros and cons for each boat material you research.
- ❑ Go online to help you make a list of supplies and equipment needed for a paddling outing. A life jacket should be at the top of your list! Don't forget other basics.

### Paddles and Strokes

- ❑ Research online to find three different types of paddles for water sports boats. Make a list of tips about how to pick the correct size of each one for yourself. Share what you learned with your club or group.
- ❑ Ask an experienced paddler or look online to learn how to perform and when to use these strokes and skills:
  - Forward
  - Reverse
  - Forward sweep
  - Reverse sweep
  - Draw strokes (in-water and out-of-water recovery)
  - Rudder
  - "J" or "L" stroke, for canoe only
  - How to stop while paddling using a variety of these combined strokes
- ❑ Interview family members or friends who are experienced paddlers. Can they share tips? Even better, paddle with them to practice the strokes and skills listed above.



The Ohio State University

Kayaks come in different varieties such as sit-on-top, touring, recreational, sea, and whitewater kayaks.

- ❑ Register and attend an American Canoe Association’s “Introduction to Paddling” course in your area. This course will give you the practice and skills needed, including self-rescues.

### Prepare for Your Trip

- ❑ Go online and find some basic stretches you should do before you start paddling. Show your project helper what you learned.
- ❑ Work with an adult who has experience in transporting and hauling a boat, and learn the steps, equipment, and straps needed to haul safely.
- ❑ Practice self-rescues using ACA standards with a family member or friend.  
Canoe: [youtube.com/watch?v=mg7T8nyV17Y&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mg7T8nyV17Y&feature=youtu.be)  
Sit-on-top kayak: [youtube.com/watch?v=0MKR\\_\\_0X4jk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0MKR__0X4jk)  
Sit-in kayak: [youtube.com/watch?v=O\\_-a5ngnRew](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O_-a5ngnRew)  
SUP: [youtube.com/watch?v=PiQIJwb73dc&list=PL1whape9Gts06-RsZxUG1S6NwzSs807sl&index=1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PiQIJwb73dc&list=PL1whape9Gts06-RsZxUG1S6NwzSs807sl&index=1)
- ❑ Find an online map of the water you plan to paddle and print a few copies. Bring them with your other supplies. Review and share your copies with those who are paddling with you.



### RESOURCES

American Canoe Association, [americancanoe.org](https://www.americancanoe.org)

Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Ohio State Parks and Watercraft Boat Operating Laws, [ohiodnr.gov/wps/portal/gov/odnr/rules-and-regulations/rules-and-regulations-by-division/state-parks-and-watercraft/boating-rules/ohio-operating-laws](https://www.ohiodnr.gov/wps/portal/gov/odnr/rules-and-regulations/rules-and-regulations-by-division/state-parks-and-watercraft/boating-rules/ohio-operating-laws)

Statistics for Outdoor Recreation, [outdoorindustry.org/resource/2019-outdoor-participation-report](https://www.outdoorindustry.org/resource/2019-outdoor-participation-report)

Unless otherwise noted, all images are from iStockphoto.com by Getty Images.

[ohio4h.org/selfdetermined](https://ohio4h.org/selfdetermined)