



Rebecca Giddens, 2004 Olympic Silver Medalist for whitewater kayaking

# Paddle Safe! Have Fun!

# 10 Ways to Paddle Safely

## ONE. ALWAYS WEAR YOUR LIFE JACKET

Wear a properly fitting U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket at all times on the water.

## TWO. DON'T DRINK WHILE PADDLING

Avoid alcohol, which impairs the coordination and balance you need to control a canoe, kayak, or raft.

## THREE. STAY LOW

Learn how to enter and exit your boat safely and stay low in your boat when possible. Most paddlesport-related drownings are the result of capsizing.

## FOUR. KEEP YOUR BALANCE

Don't overload your boat. Distribute passengers, secure gear evenly and low, and leave your dog on land.

## FIVE. PRACTICE THE WET EXIT

Learn how to get out of, hang on to, right, and re-enter your capsized boat.

## SIX. DON'T GET LEFT IN THE COLD

Dress for the weather conditions and be prepared for cold-water immersion. Hypothermia is a danger any time of year.

## SEVEN. PLAN AHEAD

Know the water you're paddling, plan your day of paddling, and file a "float plan" so that someone knows where to find you and when you plan to return.

## EIGHT. NEVER PADDLE ALONE

Companions can come to your aid if you get in trouble. New paddlers should paddle with someone more experienced—it's a great way to learn and remain safe if there's a mishap.

## NINE. BE IN COMMAND

Know how to move your boat forward, back, and sideways, and how to stop using paddle strokes. Watch ahead for hazards like undercut rocks, bridge pilings, large branches and trees, big drop-offs, or other boats.

## TEN. LEARN ABOUT YOUR BOAT

Consider taking a canoe or kayak safety class. Call 1-800-929-5162 or visit [www.acanet.org](http://www.acanet.org) to learn about classes offered by the American Canoe Association.

[www.uscgboating.org](http://www.uscgboating.org)

**YOU'RE IN COMMAND**  
BOAT RESPONSIBLY

