

# Safety on the Water article from Canoeing Ireland

Below is a guide for keeping you and your friend's safe when paddling. When you go paddling with friends have lots of fun but follow the 5 points below to stay safe:

## Planning

Plan your trip in advance by consulting with the relevant guide books and resources. Inform yourself about the area you are paddling, its length, duration, difficulty and any notable challenges, hazards or recent changes. **It is not advisable to go out alone**, you should have a minimum of 3 paddlers in your group.

## Experience

Ensure where you are paddling is a suitable match for your group's experience, equipment and fitness. Carefully learn the limits of your abilities and stay within your limits. If you are new to the sport or an inexperienced participant it is recommended that you go out with a instructor or coach and seek formal certified training in paddling skills, safety, rescue and navigation which are essential for safe paddling in Ireland in groups of peers.

## Conditions

Consult the weather forecast and the water levels in advance of your trip and only go out in favourable conditions. Be aware of the risks associated with wind speed, wind direction especially offshore winds, tides, tidal flows, temperature, rainfall and water levels and any moving water inland or Coastal. If you are inexperienced avoid windy days, spring tides and flooded rivers. A comprehensive weather forecast can be obtained from [Met Eireann](#) or a number of other [weather sites](#).

## Equipment

Always wear an approved buoyancy aid and wear a helmet on any moving water, inlands or coastal. Ensure your boat has sufficient buoyancy to stay afloat should it capsize. Wear adequate clothing and be aware that prolonged immersion in cold water can lead to hypothermia. Think ahead of how you will deal with any emergencies that might occur and bring any safety equipment you might need e.g. throw lines, tow lines, food, drink, spare clothes, first aid kit, pin kits, flares, split paddles, repair kit, form of shelter and a form of communication.

### Emergencies

You must have the skills to right a capsized boat, empty any water if necessary and get yourself or a friend back into the boat in deep water. Do not rely on being able to swim to shore.

It is advisable to leave details of your journey with a responsible adult on the bank and to carry a mobile phone or VHF radio in a waterproof case. In the unlikely event of an emergency dial 999 or 112 to contact emergency services. Use VHF Channel 16 to contact the coast guard.

### And remember Training = Safety

To paddle with East Coast Sea Kayak Club you must have taken training from an authorised provider and be certified to at least [ICU Level 2 standard](#) .

### Have fun and stay safe