



**Jigsaw Lesson Materials- Icons** [http://www.kansasriver.org/content/teens\\_teacher\\_icons](http://www.kansasriver.org/content/teens_teacher_icons)

## 1. Importance of PFD's

The U.S. Coast Guard's 2002 statistics confirmed the importance of PFD use; 85% of the fatalities that drowned in recreational boating accidents in 2002 could have survived if they had taken the simple step of wearing a lifejacket.

People will be more likely to wear a PFD if they are aware of the risks and benefits. Because of the nature of the canoe, the paddler is more likely to end up in the water than other types of boaters. A responsible paddler should always assume that he or she is likely to get wet. A vital part of enjoying canoeing in a safe manner is the awareness that water can be cold and deadly. A serious obstacle to this idea is that many potential victims don't consider themselves as 'paddlers' and don't seek out instruction, and often ignore paddler-specific safety education. The idea "I'm not a paddler, I don't need instruction" is at the heart of boating accidents. If a paddler is not aware of the danger that cold water and hypothermia present, that paddler is less likely to dress appropriately. In fact, 71% of boating fatalities were in water less than 65 degrees. It should be of serious concern to all boaters.

Other obstacles face paddlers as well. Low-head dams, strainers, bridge abutments, sieves, undercut rocks, and powerful hydraulics are only a few of the most common dangerous conditions of which paddlers need to be aware. Distance from shore, as well as distance from aid, is also a factor for paddlers who like to explore places most powerboats cannot. These are all examples of conditions that require education. Through this education it will become clear that there is a need to wear a PFD. PFD use is important for the safety all paddlers.

## Frequently Asked Questions About PFDs



What's the "Best" PFD?

In terms of risk of drowning, the safest Personal Flotation Device (PFD) is the one you're willing to wear!

"I only need a PFD in case I'm unconscious or incapacitated, right?"

Wrong. You need your PFD before you're unconscious, otherwise, how would you put it on? Obviously, the best PFD is the one that saves your life every time it's needed. To accomplish that task, a PFD must be available for proper use at the time of an accident, must be designed to perform well enough to keep your head out of the water, and must be reliable enough to provide its design performance when needed. It is the combination of these three characteristics that define the life-saving potential, or safety, of your PFD. If a PFD fails to do any one of these three essential tasks, it can't save your life.

Accident data clearly shows that Type III PFDs have very significant reduced fatalities overall, as well as those fatalities in which a PFD was somehow used.

It can't save you if you don't use it. Research and boating accident statistics have shown that the most frequent failure resulting in drowning is not having a PFD available when needed. About 423 people drowned in 2006, apparently because they didn't have a PFD that they were willing to wear.

### Sources

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