

Friends of the Kaw



Jigsaw Lesson Materials- Icons http://www.kansasriver.org/content/teens_teacher_icons

3. Canoe Safety

The canoe is one of the oldest means of water travel. These boats have remained virtually unchanged in design for thousands of years. But don't let a canoe's simplicity fool you. As easy as it may seem to leisurely paddle a canoe, a journey can quickly become dangerous if appropriate safety guidelines are overlooked.

You can minimize your risk of danger by being smart about where and when you canoe. Choose a lake or river that is appropriate for your skill level. Try to avoid high water (it makes a river run faster), high winds, and storms. And don't go out alone -- there's safety in numbers. It is recommended that you canoe with a minimum of three people or two crafts.

Before you even step into your canoe, make sure your craft is in good condition and that you take along the following items:

- At least two paddles, plus an extra in case you drop or break one.
- Extra ropes or lines.
- A bail bucket.
- A first-aid kit.
- A dry change of clothes in cooler weather.
- Plenty of water and food.
- A light if you will be out in low-light conditions.
- A personal floatation device (life vest), with a whistle attached, for each passenger.
- Sun protection – hats, sunscreen, long sleeves and pants.
- Map – be sure you know where you are so you do not get lost!
- Do not litter – carry out everything you bring in.

PFDs are an absolute must, particularly considering the how unstable a canoe is and the risk of drowning and hypothermia.

Tie all equipment to your canoe – put your equipment into a waterproof bag to keep it dry and tie it to one of the center beams in the canoe so that you don't lose everything.

To get into your canoe, have someone hold it steady. As you step in, bend your knees and grab the sides of the canoe for balance. Walk to your seat along the center of the boat. Remember to remain on your seat; don't stand or side on the sides of a canoe. The slightest shift of weight can make a canoe tip. It is important to keep your load balanced. Avoid sudden movements or rocking from side to side. You can see photographs of safe canoeing techniques online at http://www.kansasriver.org/content/photo_gallery

Once you are paddling:

- Keep an eye out for other boat traffic and keep appropriate distance.
- Heed all safety warnings.
- Be aware of water currents and try to keep your canoe at right angles to big waves.
- Look out for water hazards such as low branches, fallen trees, rocks and debris.
- Keep your shoes on to avoid slipping or stepping on sharp objects near shore.
- Be aware of the currents in the water – you don't want to end up floating farther downstream than you planned.
- Always sit on the seats or in the center of the canoe – sitting on the side of a canoe will cause it to tip over.
- Stay away from low hanging trees and branches near the shore.
- Do not canoe in bad weather.
- Avoid letting big waves hit the side of your canoe – always try to keep your canoe at a right angle to the waves.

If your canoe does tip over, don't panic. Stay with your canoe and paddle or push it toward the shore. When you get to shallow water, flip the canoe with the help of another person and carefully climb back in. Your canoe will float even if it's full of water until you can get to shore to empty it.

Sources

<http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/Org/caer/ce/eeek/nature/camp/canoeSafety.htm>

http://www.uscgboating.org/SAFETY/fedreqs/equ_pfd.htm

<http://wilson.ces.ncsu.edu/index.php?page=news&ci=HOME+6>

<http://www.nts.gov/>

<http://www.nfpa.org/itemDetail.asp?categoryID=1762&itemID=42141&URL=Safety%20Information/For%20public%20educators/Education%20programs/Risk%20Watch%AE/Risk%20Watch%20Lesson%20plans/Grades%207-8&cookie%5Ftest=1>



For more information contact:

Friends of the Kaw, PO Box 1612, Lawrence, KS 66044

Phone: Kansas City (913) 963-3460, Lawrence (785) 312-7200

Email: riverkeeper@kansasriver.org website: <http://kansasriver.org>