

Taking a Course on Taking a Bearing

By Paula Hubbard

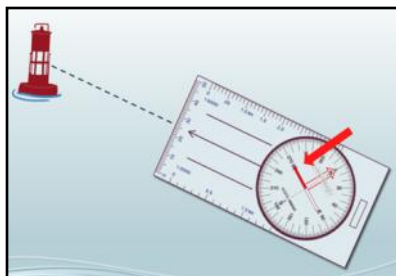
Most of the time when we paddle in the Chesapeake Bay we depend on visual landmarks, but there are times when distance or weather conditions might make it harder to recognize landmarks. Our shoreline tends to be flat and while a chart shows multiple bays, inlets, and landmarks, it's hard to get the same perspective while on the water. Here are some tips to help navigate.

1. Know where you want to go.

Your planned **Course** is the direction towards your destination. You can get this off of a chart, or you can look for a visible land mark when you start out and take a bearing towards that object.

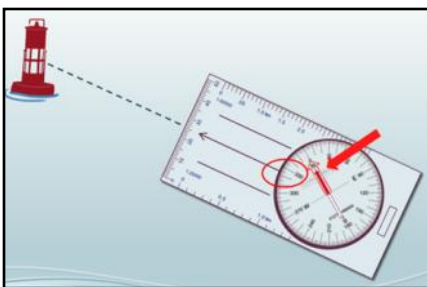
A **Bearing** is the direction towards another object

Your **Heading** is the direction that your boat is pointing. Your heading may not always be directly towards your destination. Sometimes you need to compensate for wind and current.



Know how to take a bearing. Identify an object to use for your bearing. Point your compass at that object. Identify the needle that points to magnetic north.

Rotate the dial on the compass to align the arrow indicating North with the compass needle that points north. This aligns the scale of the compass with the real world.



To remember this, think about putting 'Red in the Shed'.

Once the scale is aligned, read the direction toward the object in degrees magnetic.

A hand held compass works well when you are taking bearings from land, for example to determine your course before you get

on the water. You can also carry one in a pocket or tethered to your deck to use while paddling.

Another way to take a bearing while paddling is to use the deck mounted compass on your kayak. Point the bow of your boat toward the object and take your reading.

Practice reading charts and comparing them to your view from the water. Practice taking bearings. By comparing the chart to your environment, you will learn to transfer the information provided to what you see in the real world.

Like what you see in this article? Maybe you should take the **Navigation Class – February 4th**—The navigation class will be held on February 4th at Cult Classic Brewery, 1169 Shopping Center Road, Stevensville, MD. This is an overview of basics of navigation including charts, compass use, planning a trip, effects of tides and currents, and wind and waves. Even if you know a little about navigation, the class is a great review for all levels. We focus on planning a trip, identifying potential hazards, and discuss what conditions we might expect to find while paddling. Anyone who likes to know where they are, and where they are going on trips. Trip leaders in particular will benefit from this class.

Sign up for this event is available on the [CPA Meetup](#).

Share your paddling adventures!

Do you enjoy reading about the paddling adventures, local and distant, of other members? Do you like getting new ideas for paddling trips?

Are you advocating for paddling access or amenities in your area?

Have you pondered questions relating to kayak gear? Variety is the spice of life, and of newsletters.

Please write an article reflecting your thoughts, experiences, and discoveries to share with our paddling community.

We all become a bit wiser and excited to be on the water again. We need your input to make *The Chesapeake Paddler* the best it can be.

Submit stories or ideas to news_editor@cpakayaker.com. We look forward to sharing your story.

