

Suggested Kayaking Gear List—Jennifer Bine and Rob Pearlman

No matter what kind of boat you paddle or what type of water conditions you prefer, you are responsible for having the right gear and knowing how to use it. Choose equipment that works for you and your paddling style. The following checklist will help you get started.

- Learn to use your kayak and gear and practice your skills in realistic conditions with a buddy.
- Learn about the environments in which you want to paddle.

Carrying Gear is NOT Enough!

The Basics for Every Time You Paddle

Short trips on calm, sheltered water close to shore. Starred items are required for all CPA sponsored trip rated “Beginner” and beyond.

- ✓ *Paddle & Boat
- ✓ *Personal Flotation Device (PFD) *see reverse*
- ✓ * Whistle
- ✓ * Spray Skirt* - neoprene, nylon, or hybrid
- ✓ * Pump – to remove water from the boat
- ✓ * Paddle Float
- ✓ Water and Snack
- ✓ Waterproof watch

– Examples: Burke Lake; Triadelphia Reservoir, C&O Canal

- ✓ Sunglasses
- ✓ Waterproof Sunscreen – reapply often
- ✓ Stirrup – aid for boat re-entry
- ✓ Sponge
- ✓ Cell phone / water proof bag
- ✓ Dry Bags – for clothes, keys, food, personal stuff (keys, wallet, medications etc.)

On Semi-Protected Water

Longer trips, group paddling and/or areas where boat traffic is prevalent. Additional gear may be needed under less-ideal weather conditions.

– Examples: Tidal Potomac i.e. Mason Neck or Westmoreland, West River, Severn River, Wye Island

Everything listed above *plus*:

- ✓ Kayak with bow and stern floatation – bulk heads and/or float bags
- ✓ Spare paddle – in case one breaks or gets lost
- ✓ Towing System
- ✓ Knife
- ✓ Waterproof Flashlight & spare batteries
- ✓ Deck-Mounted Marine Compass and handheld hikers compass, GPS if desired.
- ✓ Float Plan
- ✓ Nautical Chart & Chart Case
- ✓ Tide Chart (if appropriate)
- ✓ Weather Radio

On Open and Rough Water

Advanced gear for longer trips, rough weather/ water, and open water. This equipment may also be appropriate for foul weather in semi-protected locations

– Examples: Open Chesapeake Bay such as Thomas Point light, or crossings, Atlantic Ocean including Assateague and Cape Henlopen.

Everything listed above *plus*:

- ✓ Signal kit – to be used in an emergency. May include flares, mirror, smoke signals etc.
- ✓ VHF Radio – to contact other boaters and Coast Guard as necessary
- ✓ EPIRB or locating beacon – for the major emergencies sends rescuers your position
- ✓ Repair Kit – to fix common boat problems, duct tape is your friend!
- ✓ Paddle leash

PERSONAL FLOTATION DEVICE (PFD)

Your PFD is your most important piece of safety equipment and you should wear it securely fastened whenever you are paddling. Invest in a good PFD that fits well and is comfortable. You'll soon find putting it on is as automatic as picking up your paddle.

Requirements

- All recreational boats must carry must carry a wearable PFD for each person aboard. Look for a "Type III" PFD, designed with paddlers in mind
- Your PFD should have a tag inside that indicates that it is Coast Guard approved
- It should be in good serviceable condition
- It should fit your size and weight.

Styles

- PFDs come in pullover, side zip, center zip or buckle designs. The most important thing is that it fits you well, you like it, and will wear it whenever you paddle.
- There are women-specific PFDs, but many uni-sex designs have enough adjustment points to be quite comfortable.

FIT

- Loosen all the straps and then tighten from the bottom up. Once tight, have a friend or the sales person pull up on the shoulder straps; the PFD should not ride up on you once the straps are firmly but comfortably cinched.
- Sit in a shop kayak, one that is similar to yours if you own one. Mimic paddling and make sure you have a good range of motion, that the jacket doesn't move uncomfortably, and that no part of your anatomy is chafing on the PFD.
- Not comfortable? Try a different PFD.

Features

- What color is the PFD? Bright colors help other boaters and searchers to find us.
- How much ventilation does it provide?
- Will you be paddling at night? Look for reflective tape and lash points for lights.
- How many pockets and lash points do you need? If you're a fisherman, you may want lots of big pockets. (Word of caution: beware of over-filling your PFD, especially if you have limited upper-body strength. Bulging pockets can make certain self and assisted rescues challenging.)
- Some high-end PFDs have built-in hydration systems and tow rigs for rescues.

PIMP YOUR PFD

Your PFD will likely have pockets, lashing points, etc. We recommend you fill them with the following items so that you know you have them with you every time you paddle:

- Whistle – This is a Coast Guard mandatory audible signaling device. Choose a plastic whistle without a bead that might jam in an emergency
- Lights – These lights should be waterproof, and are used to attract the attention of oncoming traffic. These should be visible from fore or aft. Do not use a strobe, as this is a distress signal. Test your lights before each use and carry spare batteries just in case.
- Snacks
- Sunscreen
- Cell phone in a dry bag
- Flares

LASH IT OR LOSE IT

Whatever you carry try to find a way to lash it to your PFD or boat. Rogue waves, capsizes, and simple carelessness need not result in the loss of expensive equipment.