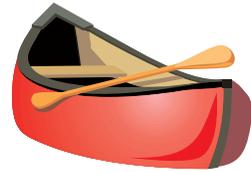




# Canoeing

A canoe is a small narrow watercraft most commonly designed for two to three people. Canoes are normally pointed at both ends although some modern canoes may have a square stern or tail end. It is longer and more slender than a normal rowboat and is excellent for navigating smaller rivers and lakes. This makes a canoe a great tool for nature excursions or as an addition to camping trips. It is also good exercise!



## What You Will Need

1. A canoe and paddles
2. Safety equipment
3. A canoeing guide

## Helpful Information

- ◆ There are many different types of canoes and these can be made from a fairly wide variety of materials. These materials include wood, wood and canvas, aluminum, fiberglass, and kevlar.
  - ★ *Wood Canoes* — These are generally the most pleasing where appearance is concerned and are quiet, but also are one of the more expensive canoe types and are not very durable.
  - ★ *Wood and Canvas Canoes* — These are made by stretching waterproofed canvas over a wooden frame. They are quiet and elegant and more durable than wooden canoes but are expensive, require regular maintenance, and are not indestructible.
  - ★ *Aluminum Canoes* — For a beginner, an aluminum canoe is a good choice as it is nearly indestructible, heavier, and should come with buoyancy chambers in the ends to help keep it afloat in case it tips. These are also flat-bottomed so as to make it harder to tip and are usually the least expensive to purchase. They are very noisy however, which will scare most wildlife away.

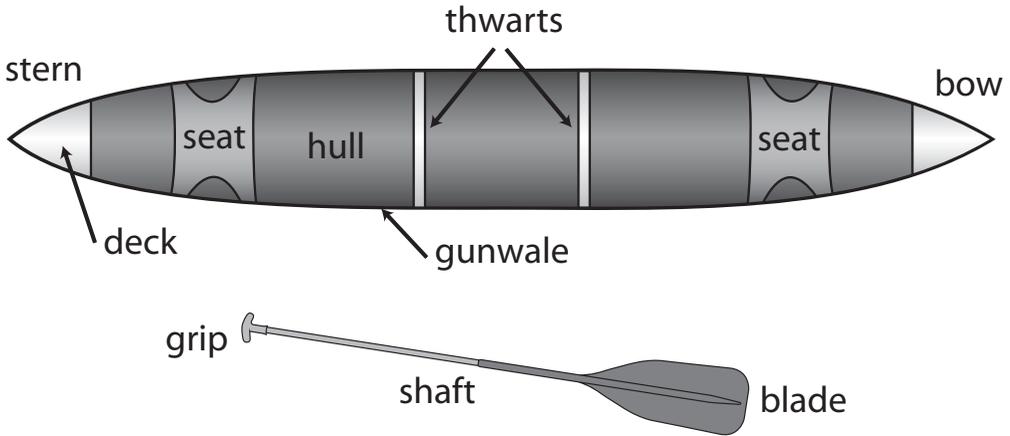
## *Outdoor Skills*

- ★ *Fiberglass Canoes* — These are also good for beginners and are fairly inexpensive and lightweight. They can crack quite easily with impact but are not very hard to repair.
- ★ *Other Synthetic Canoes* — Other composite materials used in canoe construction include Kevlar, carbon fiber, and Royalex. These are expensive but make the most durable, resilient canoes designed for strong currents and white-water canoeing.
- ◆ A canoe is propelled forward through the use of a paddle. Choosing the right paddle and sizing it to fit is important for long canoe trips. The longer the paddle, the greater the leverage to push the canoe forward but the heavier it is. You will do many thousand paddle strokes over the course of a canoe trip so the lighter the paddle is, the less effort it will take to use it. Paddles differ in shape and size but fall into two rough categories, straight shaft paddles and bent shaft paddles.
  - ★ *Straight Shaft Paddles* — This is the standard paddle type for recreational canoeing. It has a straight shaft and varying blade shapes.
  - ★ *Bent Shaft Paddles* — These are a little shorter than a straight shaft paddle and the blade at the bottom is angled so as to be more vertical to the water. These are also known as marathon or racing paddles.
- ◆ Sizing your paddle is important. A paddle that is too short will be inefficient and uncomfortable while a paddle that is too long will be overly heavy and tiring. If you stand your paddle in front of you, it should ideally reach eye level. If paddling in tandem, a bowman's paddle should be slightly shorter while a sternman's paddle should be slightly longer.
- ◆ The final equipment you will need is the necessary safety gear. A life jacket is required up to a certain age in most states and just makes sense to wear. If you are going into rough waters or white-water canoeing, a helmet should also be worn.
- ◆ Once you have chosen your canoe and paddles and have your safety gear, you are ready to begin learning how to manage your canoe. This includes learning to launch and land your canoe, enter and exit it properly, paddle it properly, and right a tipped canoe and re-enter it from the water without tipping it.

- ◆ *Launching a canoe* — Push the canoe out into the water. Go to the middle of the canoe (the most stable part) hold the canoe steady with a hand on either gunwale as you step into it, one leg at a time, centering yourself between the gunwales as soon as possible.
- ◆ *Landing a canoe* — Again, place one hand on each gunwale and step out of the canoe, one foot at a time, while keeping your weight centered over the canoe as long as possible. Pull the bow of the canoe onto the shore.
- ◆ *Reentering a capsized canoe* — Go to the middle of the canoe as it is the most stable part. Hold onto the closest gunwale and kick your legs up to a horizontal position in the water. Press down on the near gunwale and reach for the far one. Keep your elbow up, and kick yourself across the canoe. Roll and let your hips drop inside. Kneel down and paddle with your hand if you need to retrieve your paddle.

### Terms to Know

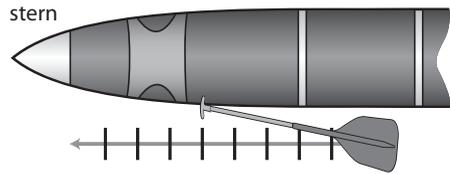
- ◆ *Bow* — The front of the canoe
- ◆ *Stern* — The back of the canoe
- ◆ *Hull* — The body of the canoe
- ◆ *Gunwale* — The top edge of the canoe
- ◆ *Thwart* — The crosswise supports between the gunwales
- ◆ *Keel* — The spine of the canoe running along the bottom center from bow to stern
- ◆ *Rocker* — The curvature of the hull that rises up at the bow and stern
- ◆ *Painter* — Rope attached to bow and stern
- ◆ *Beam* — The point where the canoe has the greatest width
- ◆ *Tandem* — Two people paddling a canoe together
- ◆ *Blade* — The large flat portion of a paddle
- ◆ *Grip* — The handle of the paddle
- ◆ *Shaft* — The long part of the paddle between the grip and the blade
- ◆ *Grip Hand* — The upper hand holding the paddle grip
- ◆ *Shaft Hand* — The lower hand holding the shaft of the paddle



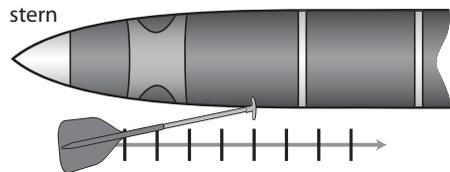
### Padding Strokes

There are quite a few different strokes to use when canoeing and each has its purpose. Mastering these will allow you to become an expert at handling a canoe. We will cover the basic strokes here as performed in the stern of the canoe with the paddle on the right hand side.

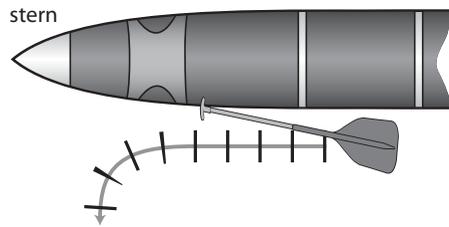
- ◆ *Cruising or Forward Stroke* — This is the basic stroke for propelling the canoe forward. Reach forward with the shaft hand while holding the grip hand up high. Place the blade into the water and pull back with the shaft hand keeping the paddle parallel to the canoe. Push forward and down with the grip hand as you pull back with the shaft hand.



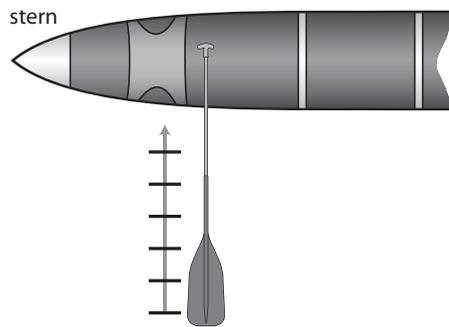
- ◆ *Back Stroke* — This is basically the opposite of the forward stroke and is intended to move the canoe backward.



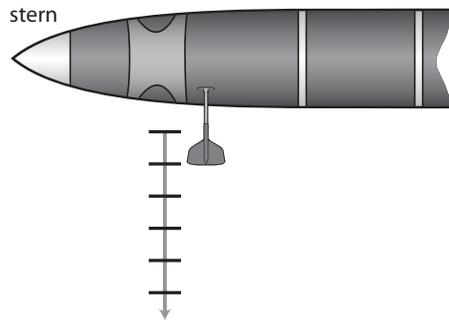
- ◆ *J-stroke* — This stroke is used to keep a straight course when paddling alone without having to continually switch the paddle to the other side of the canoe. It can also be used to offset a tandem paddler's turning strokes. Start this stroke off just like a forward stroke. As the paddle comes parallel to your body, start rotating the paddle with the grip hand turning it in a counter-clockwise direction. At the same time, begin to push away with the shaft hand. As you finish, the paddle blade should be parallel to the canoe.



- ◆ *Draw Stroke* — Use this stroke when you wish to change the direction of the canoe. To begin this stroke drop your grip hand so that the paddle is close to parallel with the water. Reach out with the shaft hand and drop the blade into the water. Now pull with the shaft hand toward you while pushing with the grip hand away from you at the same time.

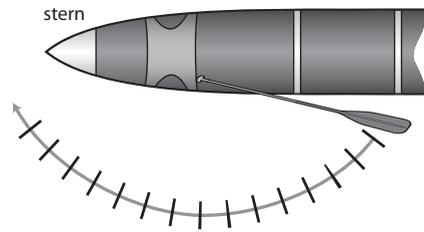


- ◆ *Push Stroke* — This is the opposite of the draw stroke. Insert the blade into the water right next to the canoe with the flat part of the blade parallel to the canoe. With the grip hand pull back toward your body and push away with the shaft hand.

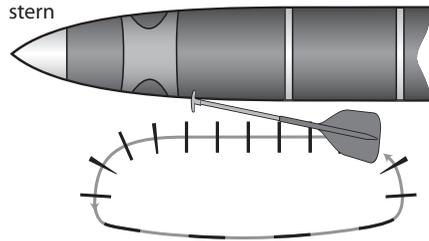


## Outdoor Skills

- ◆ *Sweep Stroke* — This stroke is also used to change direction. Reach forward and out from the canoe with the shaft hand. Dip the blade in the water at an angle. Pull back with the shaft hand in a large arcing motion by mostly rotating the upper body.



- ◆ *Indian Stroke* — This stroke is also used to keep the canoeing moving forward in a straight direction without switching sides. Begin the stroke like the j-stroke. When the j-stroke finishes, instead of pulling the paddle from the water, slice the blade of the paddle back forward with the flat part of the blade parallel to the canoe. After returning the blade forward, spin the handle with the grip hand again so that the blade is now perpendicular to the canoe once more. Begin a new j-stroke. The paddle blade should never leave the water with this stroke and can be completely silent when done with care, which makes it a good choice to get close to wildlife.



### Things to Learn

1.  Identify six major parts of a canoe.
2.  Identify the three major parts of a paddle.
3.  Demonstrate how to properly hold a paddle
4.  Demonstrate how to launch a canoe.
5.  Demonstrate how to land a canoe.
6.  Demonstrate the kneeling and sitting positions in a canoe.
7. Demonstrate at least three different paddling strokes.
8.  Demonstrate how to reenter a canoe after it has been capsized.

✓ Date Completed \_\_\_\_\_