

Safety

Canoeing is a risk activity but accidents can be avoided by a combination of training, based on the accepted code of technique and safety; and experience gathered over a number of years, where techniques are acquired and practiced under the shadow of a leader.

Accidents can be placed in three broad categories:

Lack of Knowledge – in correct usage of equipment, to lacking knowledge from which a balanced judgement can be made.

Over-estimation of Ability – inevitable with young, inexperienced canoeists.

Carelessness – may affect both novice and expert. Ensure you have sound knowledge of the skills, techniques and equipment you are using by undertaking adequate training.

Some Golden Rules

- Be able to swim at least 50m. You do not need to be able to swim vast distances but the ability to remain confident in and under the water, without panicking, is vital.
- Use a buoyancy aid. This should be worn whenever you get into your boat
- Stay with the boat. In the unfortunate event that you do capsize stay with the upturned canoe. A canoe is easier to spot than a swimmers head and its in-built buoyancy will help you to remain afloat.
- Never paddle alone. If anything does go wrong it is vital to have someone else along, it's also friendlier!
- Make sure you are properly equipped for the water and weather conditions you will expect to encounter.
- Attend a qualified first aid course and get qualified. Of course there are other things to be taken into consideration but common sense and reading the relevant sections of the 'Canoe and Kayak Handbook' published by the British Canoe Union will give you much more help with maintaining personal safety whilst canoeing.