

## CANOE-KAYAK-SUP-RAFT-RESCUE

The **American Canoe Association (ACA)** is a member-based nonprofit organization 501(c)(3) that promotes fun and responsible canoeing, kayaking, stand up paddleboarding, and rafting. Founded in 1880, the ACA actively advocates recreational access and stewardship of America's water trails. For more information and to become a member, visit [www.americancanoe.org](http://www.americancanoe.org).



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Making the world a better place to paddle! Since 1880.



# Rules of the Road

*What Paddlers Need to Know*



## FRIENDLY FUN

Canoeing, kayaking, and stand up paddleboarding are great fun—just ask any paddler you find on the water.

Paddling offers so much to so many; quiet leisure, intense adrenaline, or a path to exploration and adventure.

Paddling is a great way to access nature, experience reflective moments and to enjoy family and friends away from the distractions of life.

Occasionally, conflicts arise between various boating groups because of craft size, education and training of the operators, maneuverability, geographic constraints, and the sheer numbers of recreational users on the waterways.

Paddlers should be aware of a few “Rules of the Road” when sharing resources with other marine traffic. Importantly, keep a proper lookout, and remember to be courteous to other boaters and law enforcement officers. They’re there to help you to be safe and have fun.



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Part of ACA's Paddle Safe - Paddle Smart Series

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## BE AWARE

First and foremost, be aware of your surroundings. You may be the only craft on the water, or sharing the channel with a large container ship. Whatever the circumstance, your awareness of other traffic may make the sole difference in everyone's safety.

Paddlers do not travel as fast as motorized craft. If you see a powerboat, do not assume that you can pass ahead of it if traveling across its path. The safest way for paddle craft to cross the path of a powerboat is astern.

Remember to cross other boats as a group instead of straggling across the river and blocking other traffic.

In shared waterways, the more boaters watching for others, the safer everyone will be.

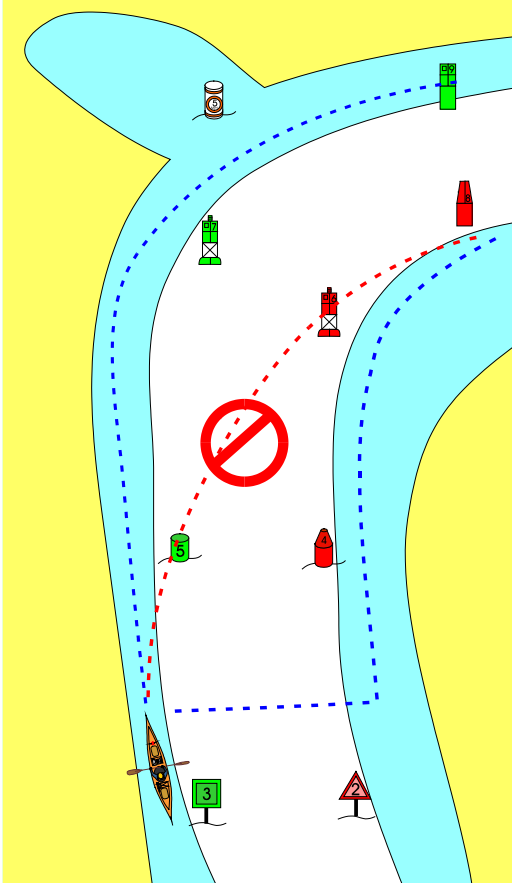
## BIG BOATS, BRIGHT LIGHTS

Some busy waterways have "lanes of travel" similar to the Interstate highway system. Know the area you plan to paddle. If you are near commercial waterways, the navigation charts change often and you need a current set.

The depth of the channel may limit deep-draft vessels. You, however, are mobile and agile. Make use of your ability to move out of the way. If you are not crossing the channel stay close to shore. Large stationary objects offer a margin of protection.

At night, a white light must be shown toward oncoming traffic. Bright colors not only help keep track of fellow paddlers, but make you far easier to see if separated from your craft.

If motorized craft are nearby, you are far less likely to capsize if you turn your bow into the wave and don't take the wake broadside.



## SEE AND BE SEEN

- *Wear bright, noticeable clothing*
- *Use reflective tape on your paddle blades*
- *Keep your whistle handy*
- *Any vessel less than 20 meters should not impede the passage of a larger ship, whether under power or not.*
- *Monitor Channels 13 & 16 on your VHF Radio*
- *At night and during low-light conditions, a white light must be shown toward oncoming traffic*

## RIGHTS OF PASSAGE

Learn the channels in your area and what the buoy markers mean. While onboard and facing downstream or leaving a harbor, green lights indicate starboard (right) and red lights indicate port (left).

When returning or heading upstream, red lights or buoys should be on your starboard side. Remember, "Red Right Returning." The markers are for the larger craft so if you stay between the light or buoy and the shore, you are out of the way of any of the larger, faster craft and less likely to encounter wake and turbulence from commercial vessels.

Since the events of September 11, 2001, recreational boating in the United States has changed. Now many harbors and waterways have security zones surrounding different resources.

In ports and harbors, there are now restrictions on crafts within 100 yards of all U.S. Navy vessels. On local lakes and rivers, there may be restricted areas around bridge abutments, large dams and some shore-based facilities, such as powerplants. Some jurisdictions also have law enforcement personnel stationed near drinking water reservoirs to protect against biological incidents.

As an American citizen, please cooperate with those individuals and understand that we all need to work together in public and private to keep our nation safe. Safeguard all the things we value, including our boating resources.

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