

RIVER SAFETY Rocky Mountain Canoe Club

PREPARATION

- Check weather and flow conditions.
- Have maps or charts for your route; know the locations of boat launches and access points along the route.
- Have sufficient safe drinking water for your trip.
- Protect yourself from the sun – hat, sun block, and polarized sun glasses
- Log a trip/float plan with your friend, spouse, parent or guardian.
- Have a cellular phone or emergency device in a waterproof bag
- Ensure all safety equipment is in working order.
- Get proper training before you venture out.

SAFETY

- Know these river signals:

HELP- 3 blasts on a whistle. Or, hold your paddle vertically and wave it back and forth. Or, wave your helmet or life jacket over your head.

STOP - hold paddle horizontally and move it up and down. Or, hold your arms out to the side and move them up and down (as if flapping your wings).

I'M OK...ARE YOU OK? - conspicuously tap your hand on the top of your helmet. If used as a question, assume the answer is NO if you don't get an OK signal back (this is an old and useful signal but it is not officially recognized).

- Wear a properly fitted life jacket (PFD) at all times when paddling, and wear a helmet on whitewater.
- Be careful when walking or carrying a canoe over slippery or rocky areas.
- Dress appropriately for the weather and bring extra clothes in case of weather changes. Dress in layers. Wet suits or dry suits should be considered in cold weather or when swimming is possible. Use fabrics that wick water away from the body (wool, polypropylene). Have a waterproof shell that repels water.
- When approaching rapids that test the skill level of any group members, pull over to scout; if warranted, set up safety members with throw ropes and proceed by canoe in an order designed to maximize safety and rescue.
- If you capsize in whitewater...
 - get upstream of your canoe—don't get between the canoe and a rock;
 - don't stand up if water depth is above your knees—avoid foot entrapment;
 - face downriver with feet out in front—but watch for a rescue throw bag;
 - try to get yourself to shore, also your canoe and paddle if it's safe to do so......and DON'T EXPECT SOMEONE TO RESCUE YOU, they may not be able to...
...be responsible for yourself. Know and practice self-rescue procedures.

DURING INSTRUCTION

- Stay in view of the instructor at all times.
- Always stay behind the instructor on a river, and do not proceed through a difficult spot (e.g., over a drop) until given the okay.

RIGGING YOUR WHITEWATER BOAT WITH SAFETY IN MIND

- Secure your gear (if you spill, nothing should fall out or dangle along on a string), and include an extra paddle.
- Secure painters (use bungies, velcro...). Don't rely on an air bag string to hold them.
- Carry rescue and medical equipment (consult appropriate references).

RIVER ETIQUETTE

- Paddlers coming downstream have the right-of-way. For example, if you are surfing a wave, move out of the way to let downstream paddlers through.
- Don't park in an eddy that might be needed by other paddlers.
- Give a wide berth to fishermen.
- Do not disembark on private land.