



Useful Contacts;

Maritime and Coastguard Agency MCA
dft.gov.uk/mca

Met Office
www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/marine/guide/
beaufortscale.html

Royal National Lifeboat Institution RNLI
0845 122 6999

rnli.org.uk/seasafety

Home Nation Associations

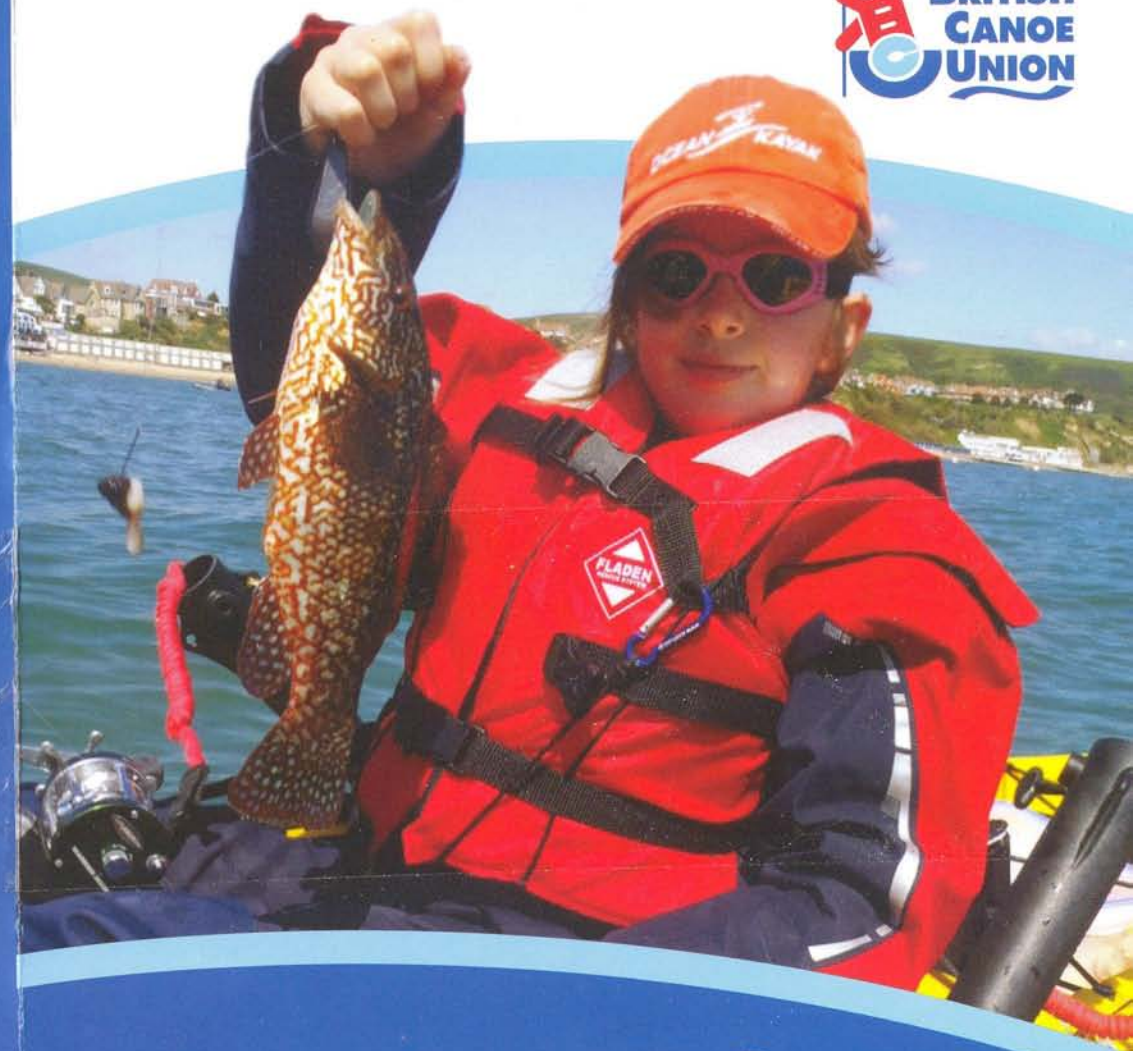
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SAFE CANOE & KAYAK FISHING

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The kayak/canoe is an environmentally friendly craft, it leaves no trace of it's passing and as such, is an ideal craft from which to fish. Canoes and kayaks have long been a means of transportation to access fishing spots, none more so than today. Canoe and kayak fishing has gained popularity as the sit on top (SOT) kayak has been developed. Indeed many fishermen keen to widen their fishing grounds have bought a canoe or kayak and found they have got 'hooked' on the sport.

While many canoe and kayak anglers undertake plenty of training and ensure they carry all the relevant safety equipment, there has also been a significant increase in more casual users taking up the sport. People that don't have any previous experience on the water are trying out the sport for the first time.

Membership of the British Canoe Union (BCU) through its associated federal bodies can provide significant benefits for people taking part in canoe and kayak fishing and gives access to an extensive network of qualified coaches, affiliated clubs and centres.

Specific training for different environments:

- Safe Canoe and Kayak Fishing module
- Star and Paddlepower awards
- Foundation Safety and Rescue training
- White Water Safety and Rescue training
- Coastal Navigation and Tidal Planning
- Bespoke training opportunities through clubs and with qualified coaches
- Introduction to Sea
- Introduction to Moving Water
- Introduction to Surf

Other benefits of membership include:

- License to canoe on 5,000km of Britain's waterways
- Civil liability insurance (up to £10 million)
- Canoe Focus magazine delivered every two months
- Great rates on boat insurance
- 10% discount at selected canoe and kayak retailers
- 15% discount on all Cotswold Outdoor products

Canoeing and Kayaking in sheltered waters e.g. small lakes, canals, slow moving rivers (be aware of weirs) and sheltered harbours where there is little chance of being blown out to sea, is a great way to gain experience but it's easy to underestimate the potential hazards.

To ensure you, your family and friends stay safe while enjoying your paddling experience here are some basic top tips and equipment recommendations.

Always:

- Undertake suitable training in how to use all of your equipment (see contact details on reverse)
- Learn and practise techniques to get back onboard your canoe/kayak should you capsize
- Ensure you are a confident swimmer and can swim a minimum of 50m in open water
- Ensure your kayak and equipment are well maintained and ready for the water
- Check your craft has integral buoyancy fitted, the hatches and drain plugs are secure and watertight, the paddle is in good condition, seat is firmly attached and all gear is secured safely
- Wear a suitable approved buoyancy aid/personal flotation device (PFD)
- Ensure your PFD fits correctly and all the straps are done up securely; use crotch straps if fitted
- Wear suitable clothing for the season and conditions, such as a suitable wetsuit/drysuit and layered clothing; wear a hat and gloves in cold conditions
- On a sit-on-top kayak the paddle should be leashed to your kayak
- Carry a suitable means of calling for help
- Take a drink and snack with you (energy bars, dried fruit, nuts, chocolate)
- Paddle in a group
- Tell someone back on land where you are going and what time you will be back.

When canoe/kayak fishing:

- Do not overload your boat with fishing kit – it is harder than you think to right a boat with lots of kit on deck
- Keep the re-entry zone clear of equipment and have a plan for re-entry
- Make sure you have a knife accessible to clear tangled lines
- Leash anything you aren't prepared to lose to your boat
- Anchoring is the most hazardous part of canoe/kayak fishing; you should undertake training in the equipment used, including a suitable anchor trolley and quick release system, and the procedures for safe anchoring. Paddlers should only anchor within environments they are comfortable with
- When securing to pot buoys use a quick release system
- At night ensure you have appropriate lights and that your boat can be seen in the dark e.g. reflective tape. Always carry a light on your PFD, most night rescues don't start in the hours of darkness
- Especially when fly fishing wear glasses and a hat
- Be aware of insurance, local codes of practice and Bio-security
- Take home all unwanted tackle and rubbish.

If you are fishing anywhere beyond sheltered waters, know your limitations:

- Check the weather, water levels and tides (if applicable) before you depart, be aware of wind strength, especially offshore winds (where the wind is blowing out to sea)
- Advise the local Coastguard of your planned journey
- Sign up to HM Coastguard's Voluntary Safety Identification Scheme (CG66).

The following recommended safety equipment should also be carried:

- A selection of flares including a day/night flare in to the PFD
- A VHF radio (waterproof and charged)
- A fully charged mobile phone in a suitable dry bag (for back-up to the VHF)
- A paddle with a leash (attached to kayak)
- A split/spare paddle
- A pump/hand bailer/sponge
- A waterproof torch with working batteries
- A waterproof GPS
- A waterproof compass
- A waterproof watch
- A tow rope (be aware of its uses, ensure it is functional and keep within easy reach onboard)
- An emergency knife attached to PFD
- A basic first aid kit
- Sunscreen/sunglasses/sun hat
- Spare clothes
- An exposure bag.

When launching and landing through surf:

- Rods and other equipment should be stowed in surf due to the risk that they may get lost or cause injury
- Consider wearing a helmet
- Stay in control, uncontrolled boats can be harmful in the surf environment as they are heavy
- Keep away from other water users, especially swimmers
- Use beach zones where they are set up – look out for black and white chequered flags that indicate the area for hard surfcraft.

If you get in trouble:

- Call for help using your phone/VHF radio, flares or both
- Never attempt to swim to shore, always stay with your kayak; by staying with the kayak you make a larger target for the search and rescue groups to see
- If you can only get your body partially out of the water you will significantly increase your survival time.