

EQUIPMENT

IS MY CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT SUITABLE FOR TODAY'S CONDITIONS?

- Wear the right clothing for the season and conditions, such as a suitable wetsuit/drysuit and layered clothing.
- When sea kayaking take:
 - a means of calling for help on your person
 - tow line
 - knife attached to your buoyancy aid
 - spare split paddle, on the deck
 - pump
 - waterproof torch
 - sunhat/sunglasses/sunscreen
 - spare clothing
 - basic first aid kit
 - repair kit
 - helmet (for the surf or rock gardens)
 - food and water.

If you're fishing:

- Consider using a paddle leash.
- Beware of overloading your kayak with gear – it'll be harder to self-right than you think.
- Navigational aids, rod holder and other equipment should be stowed before surfing or landing in surf.
- Only use anchors in areas with little or no current and stow securely when not in use.

WEATHER AND TIDES

HAVE I CHECKED THE WEATHER AND TIDES TODAY AND PLANNED MY TRIP ACCORDINGLY?

- Check the weather and the tides before you set out – try UKHO Easytide. Be aware of wind strength, especially offshore winds (where the wind is blowing out to sea).
- If venturing away from the beach, seek local expert knowledge, such as from the Harbourmaster or lifeguards.

TRAINING

DO I HAVE APPROPRIATE TRAINING AND/OR EXPERIENCE FOR THIS TRIP?

- Get some training to develop your skills – contact your local canoe or kayaking club and look for coaching sessions/paddle awards run by British Canoeing or Canoeing Ireland coaches.
- Learn and practice self rescue techniques to get back onboard your kayak, in case you capsize (consider using a paddle float).

PLANNING

DOES SOMEBODY KNOW WHERE I'M GOING AND WHEN I'LL BE BACK?

- Tell someone on land where you are going and what time you'll be back.
- Paddle in a group where possible.
- The RYA or ISA SafeTrx app can be used to log, track and send alerts about your trip.



KNOW WHAT TO DO
VISIT
RNLI.org/kayaking

IN AN EMERGENCY!



If you can't reach a means of calling for help, help can't reach you.

If you need help, here's what to do.

USING A VHF RADIO:

1. Press Channel 16 button.
2. Activate DSC alert if fitted.
3. Press and hold transmit button and say:
Mayday, mayday, mayday.
This is ... [your name 3 times].
Call sign ... MMSI ...
Mayday, [your name].
Call sign ... MMSI ...
4. **My position is ...** [describe position and give GPS location if possible].
5. **We are ...** [describe the nature of distress, the assistance required, number of people and craft followed by any further information].
6. Say **over** and wait for a response.
7. If no response – repeat procedure.

USING A MOBILE PHONE:

Call 999 or 112 and ask for the Coastguard.

While you are waiting for help, stay with your kayak – you make a larger target for search and rescue teams.

If you can get your body even partially out of the water, it'll significantly increase your survival time.

Most kayaking fatalities involve people who didn't have their means of calling for help on their person and within reach.

RNLI.org/kayaking



KAYAKING SAFETY:
GUIDANCE FROM THE RNLI

RNLI.org/kayaking



HM Coastguard



Canoeing
IRELAND

PREVENTING DROWNING TOGETHER

The RNLI is the charity that saves lives at sea

Royal National Lifeboat Institution, a charity registered in England and Wales (209603), Scotland (SC037736), the Republic of Ireland (20003326), the Bailiwick of Jersey (14), the Isle of Man, the Bailiwick of Guernsey and Alderney

Photos:
RNLI/(Josh Cooper, Nigel Millard, Nathan Williams)

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BEFORE YOU PADDLE AWAY, MAKE SURE YOU:



ALWAYS CARRY A MEANS OF CALLING FOR HELP AND KEEP IT ON YOUR PERSON



WEAR YOUR BUOYANCY AID



CHECK THE WEATHER AND TIDES



TELL SOMEONE ELSE WHERE YOU'RE GOING AND WHEN YOU'LL BE BACK



WEAR APPROPRIATE CLOTHING FOR THE CONDITIONS AND YOUR TRIP



GET SOME TRAINING AND PADDLE WITHIN YOUR LIMITS



COMMUNICATION

CAN I REACH MY COMMUNICATION DEVICE IF I CAPSIZE?

Always carry a means of calling for help and keep it on your person. If you can't reach it in an emergency it's no help.



MOBILE PHONE

- Keep your mobile in a waterproof pouch, on your person.
- Smartphones can provide a location, but emergency calls should be made by voice – call 999 or 112 and ask for the Coastguard.
- If you're struggling to make an emergency call, try holding the phone on the other side of your head, as this may be enough to block the signal.
- You can also try sending a text to 999 or 112 (if preregistered) if the phone signal is weak as a text may get through.
- Download and use the RYA or ISA SafeTrx app to log, track and send alerts about your trip. This free app monitors your journeys and alerts emergency contacts if you fail to return home on time.

WATERPROOF HANDHELD DSC VHF

- Keep it on your person.
- If possible, buy a DSC-equipped radio. This transmits a recognised emergency signal, and also your location.
- Requires an operator's licence, a ship's radio licence (free online in the UK) and a Maritime Mobile Service Identity number, which comes with the ship's radio licence.

PERSONAL LOCATOR BEACON (PLB)

- Keep it on your person.
- A recognised emergency signal, it's manually activated only and should be registered with the Coastguard.
- Not all PLBs inherently float and the unit needs to be held out of water to transmit.
- It can also be used on land in areas where no phone signal is available and it transmits for 24+ hours.

For more tips go to:
[RNLI.org/ChooseltWearIt](https://www.rnli.org/ChooseltWearIt)

BUOYANCY

AM I WEARING A BUOYANCY AID?

- Wearing a well-fitted, well-maintained and suitable buoyancy aid could save your life.
- When choosing a buoyancy aid, check product labelling for weight and size guidance, fit by adjusting the straps, then lift from the shoulders. It should not be possible to move the buoyancy aid. If it slides up, try a different style or tighter fit.
- Choose a brightly coloured one that can be easily spotted. Make sure it has enough pockets to store your calling for help device and any other equipment. Attach a whistle on a lanyard, and at night attach a small strobe light.

BE SEEN

IS MY KAYAK VISIBLE?

Whenever you're on the water, your visibility is important. But during a rescue, it can be a lifesaver. Increase your visibility by sticking SOLAS-approved reflective tape to your kayak and paddle and displaying appropriate lights if out at dusk or night time.

BE IDENTIFIED

DISPLAY AN ID STICKER

This ID sticker will save time – and potentially your life – in a rescue situation. Having your basic information allows others to raise the alarm and track you down if they find your kayak unattended.

If you lose your gear whilst you're out paddling please tell the Coastguard. That way they will know that you're safe and won't launch a search for you.

HOW TO USE AND APPLY IT

We recommend placing the sticker within the hatch of your kayak, where it's dry but fairly visible. Make sure the kayak's surface is completely clean and dry. If the surface is cold to the touch, warm it slightly with a hairdryer or heat gun. Peel the backing paper off the ID sticker, position it and smooth down slowly to prevent air bubbles.

WRITE WITH A PERMANENT MARKER