



Canoe Safety Protocols

The Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership's goal is to lead educational on-river experiences with safety as a priority.

Water Conditions

- Estuary Partnership staff will evaluate water conditions before each canoe trip. Unsafe weather due to high wind, lightning, torrential rain, whitecaps, or any other condition deemed unsafe by Estuary Partnership staff, will result in trip cancellation.
- Whenever possible, notice of trip cancellation will be the day prior to the trip or when conditions are first determined unsafe.

Canoe Inspection

- Exterior and interior of each canoe will be inspected for safety prior to each trip. A first aid kit, cellular phone, person over-board flag, tow rope and bailer will be on each canoe.

Personal Flotation Device

- Estuary Partnership staff will ensure boaters are properly outfitted in a Personal Flotation Device (PFD) before approaching the water or boarding the canoe.

On-Water Rules

- Canoeing rules will be discussed with all boaters regardless of experience.

Canoeing Rules

- Always wear a PFD while in the canoe or near water
- Listen and respect directions from Estuary Partnership staff
- Stay seated unless directed otherwise
- Speak at a conversational volume
- Paddle as instructed
- Paddles that fall in the water will be rescued by Estuary Partnership staff
- Be respectful of other paddlers in the canoe, no put-downs
- Wear plenty of sunscreen and drink water
- Pack-out all trash

Loading the Canoes

- Estuary Partnership staff will determine seating assignments based on height, weight, experience, and others factors to ensure a safe and evenly loaded boat. Estuary Partnership staff will orchestrate loading and unloading of the canoe and will occupy the stern and bow positions.

Paddling

- Estuary Partnership staff at the bow position will look for hazards. Canoe passengers will receive instructions regarding strokes and simple maneuvers. Canoes travel easier with passengers paddling in sync, but in an emergency can be maneuvered with two or three people.

Person Overboard

- It is very unlikely a person will fall overboard. If a person does end up in the water, Estuary Partnership staff will instruct someone to hold the person overboard flag. Staff in the stern position will check for hazards and direct paddlers to maneuver the canoe along side the person or throw a tow rope. Estuary Partnership staff will help assist the person back into the boat. The student's medical status will be inspected, a space blanket will be provided, and the canoe will return to shore as soon as possible.