

# PADDLING SAFETY



Paddle sports require skill and come with risks. Participants should take a boating course and know their paddling skill limitations. Of the paddling courses available in Canada, two to note are available through [AdventureSmart](#) and [Paddle Canada](#).

To paddle a canoe or kayak on rivers the size of the Thames, the minimum safety gear is: one PFD per person, one 15m buoyant heaving line, one manual bilge pump or bailing bucket, one sound-signaling device such as a whistle or air horn, and if traveling on the water between sunset and sunrise (not recommended due to rocks and rapids), a waterproof flashlight. [Click here](#) for details on Canadian Boating Laws.

Bring a map and extra clothes in waterproof bags, a spare paddle, drinking water\*, snacks or meals appropriate for the duration of your trip and sun-block. \*Even after boiling or chemically treating, water from the Thames River is not suitable for human consumption. Bring 1L of water per person for every hour on the water.

Wear your PFD at all times. Watch for rocks, logs, trees, sandbars, rapids (to Class 2) and other hazards. Paddle with groups of two or more.

Leave a trip plan with a contact person with: trip date and time, start and finish locations, number of people, colour and type of watercraft and cell phone numbers. There should be an emergency time, at which, if your contact person has not heard from you and cannot reach you, they call 911.

AdventureSmart's website has a helpful [Trip Plan blank template](#).

Check weather forecasts and radar scans prior to setting out. The [Exeter Radar Station](#) covers the Thames River watershed and Southwest Ontario.

