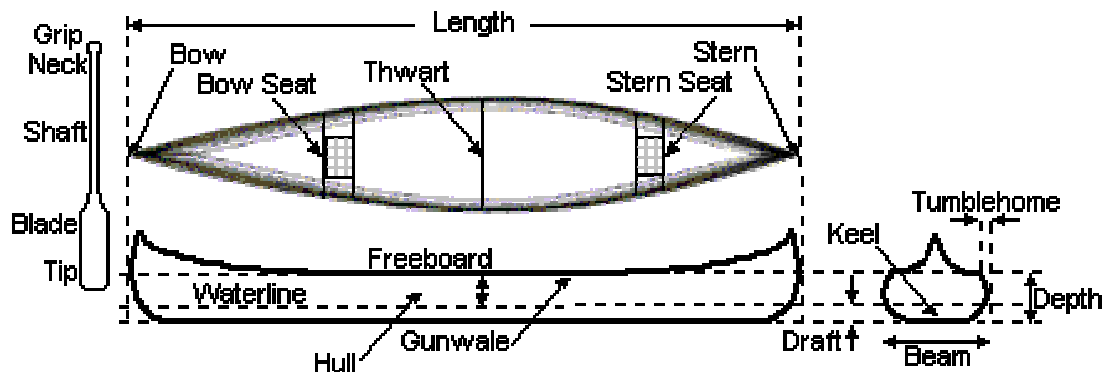




# Step Outdoors

## Parts of a Canoe



## ACTIVITY

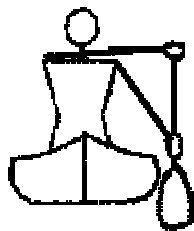
### Basic Canoeing Skills

Take the participants out on a small body of water where they can practice being in a canoe and paddling. It is recommended that an adult with canoeing experience be with every two groups and that your day of instruction be in the warmth of summer in case a canoe tips. Explain the different canoe strokes that are used and what they are used for. Cover how to get in and out of a canoe, how to load a canoe, and what to do if you flip etc.

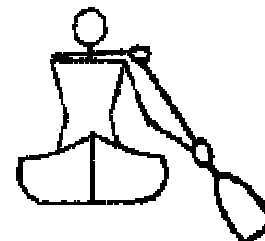
### Canoe Strokes

There are eight basic strokes: the Forward or Power stroke, the Reverse or Back stroke, the Sweep stroke, the "J" stroke, the Stern Rudder stroke, the Draw stroke, the Pry stroke and the Sculling stroke.

**Right:** This is the proper paddle position. Stroke as close to the centerline of the canoe as possible.



**Wrong:** This paddle angle will cause the canoe to turn rather than move forward.



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## 1. Forward stroke

The image below shows the start of the canoe and kayak stroke.

The important points to remember at this stage are:

- The paddle is placed gently in the water, as though it was placed through a narrow slot.
- There should be no power on and no splash.
- The lower arm should be 'straight' and the top hand well back near the ear.
- Once the paddle is fully immersed in the water it becomes fixed.
- It will slip a little but not too much.
- The power is then applied using the back muscles and pulling the canoe or kayak past the paddle blade.
- The pull is transmitted through the lower arm.
- The top arm guides and does not push.
- When the hips are level with the blade, it should be flicked out of the water and then it will be ready for the next stroke.



## 2. Reverse stroke

The starting point of the stroke is shown below.



- The paddle grip is not changed. The back of the blade is used, not the driving face. A common fault with beginners is to rotate the blade so that the drive face is used.
- The best practice initially is to sit in the kayak or canoe, put the paddle in the water just in front of the body, and gently pull and push without changing the position of the hands on the shaft. The boat will move forward, stop, then backwards.
- When paddling backwards, remember to look over your shoulder so that you can see where you are going, as shown in the previous image.

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## 3. Stopping

- To stop if you are moving forward - then do a reverse stroke. If you are going backwards then do a forward stroke. Remember not to change the position of your hands on the paddle. Practice stopping very gently at first. As your skill develops, try it at higher speeds.



## 4. Sweep stroke

- The canoes and kayaks used on placid water are flat along the keel and tend to run in a straight line. The sweep stroke is used to turn the craft and can be applied when stationary or traveling.

## 5. 'J' stroke

- Steering a kayak can be carried out by using sweep strokes on either side of the boat, for a Canadian canoe a different stroke has to be used to bring the bow round to the side on which the canoe is being paddled. This is called the 'J' stroke. With the canoe moving, it is used whenever necessary to steer without disturbing the paddling rhythm.



- The beginning of the stroke is the same as for the forwards stroke but, as the lower arm comes level with the hip, the blade is turned by the action of the upper wrist (as shown).

- The drive face of the blade is then pushed away from the canoe, which brings the bow around.

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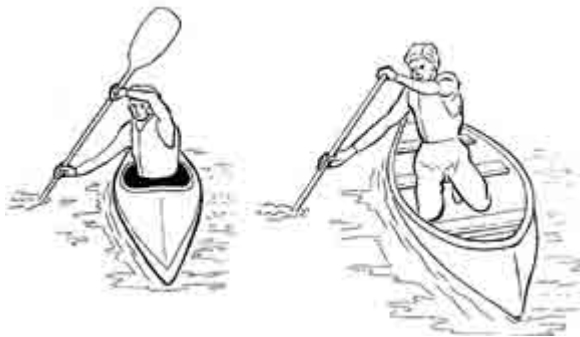
## 6. Stern Rudder

- Another steering stroke is used for both canoe and kayak while the craft is in motion. The blade is taken to the rear of the paddler and trailed in the water as shown.
- The bow will then turn towards that side.



## 7. Moving Sideways

- At times you will need to be able to move the kayak or canoe sideways. This may be when you are coming in to the landing stage or lining up for a fun race. To move sideways, we use a draw stroke. There are various types of stroke but, for this chapter, we will only describe the simple draw the start of the draw is shown in the illustration.
- You are simply stretching out to pull yourself towards the paddle.
- When the canoe or kayak reaches to within about 15cm of the paddle, the paddle is turned 90 degrees and sliced away from the canoe. It is then turned again and the boat pulled towards it, and so on.
- At first it is easier to pull the blade right out of the water, rather than turning through 90degrees, and then place it back in the position for the next stroke.



## 8. Support stroke

- This stroke is used to stop a capsizing if it is about to happen. In the stationary position, the blade is laid flat on the water and a downward push will be enough to right a capsizing canoe.
- Be careful taking the blade out of the water. Go gently and then you will not pull yourself in. When moving, the blade is also placed flat on the water, as shown, but with the leading edge raised.

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- This gives a very powerful 'lift' and can be leant on quite heavily. If the leading edge of the blade is low then the opposite effect will occur and a very powerful lever will capsize the canoe. Make sure the leading edge is raised.



## CANOE SAFETY TIPS

### A. Getting into your Canoe:

- Have someone hold the canoe steady - you don't want to tip the canoe before you even get out on the water!
- Crouch low - keep your knees bent and,
- Grab the sides of the canoe for balance as you walk to your seat
- Always walk along the center - keeping your feet on the centerline will help keep the canoe from rocking.

B. **Stay low** - do not stand up or walk in your canoe when you are away from shore.

C. **Always wear your life jacket** - you never know when you might fall out or tip over unexpectedly.

D. **Avoid sudden or jerky movements** - rocking from side to side could cause the canoe to tip over.

E. **Be aware of the currents in the water** - you don't want to end up floating farther downstream than you planned. If the current starts to pull you along faster or you see lots of rocks in the water ahead of you paddle away from them or paddle towards the shore.

F. **Always sit on the seats or in the center of the canoe** - sitting on the side of a canoe will cause it to tip over.

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## Planning a Canoe Trip

Be sure to leave a detailed map of where you will be going and time frame when you expect to be back.

Bring the proper equipment:

- Sun protection - hats, sunscreen, long sleeves and pants
- First aid kit
- Plenty of food and water
- Life vests
- Map - be sure you know where you are so you do not get lost!
- Always bring along extra clothing in a waterproof container- you want to be prepared in case your canoe tips or the weather changes.
- Tie all your equipment to the canoe - put your equipment into a waterproof bag to keep it dry and tie it to one of the center beams in the canoe so that you don't lose everything if your canoe tips over.
- Do not litter - carry out everything you bring in - the animals don't like a messy home.

## Review

Participants will demonstrate the different canoe strokes and describe safety procedures and what to do in a case of an emergency.

## EXTENSION

Plan a canoeing day trip for all participants or if the participants are interested join a canoeing club or invite a qualified instructor to further their teachings.

## REFERENCES

Manitoba Paddling Association: <http://www.mpa.mb.ca/>

Canoe History: <http://www.canoe.ca/AllAboutCanoes/home.html>

Canoe Parts: <http://www.paddling.net/guidelines/showArticle.html>  
<http://www.geocities.com/Yosemite/Gorge/1066/528canoeskills.html>