

Things to Remember: Tips & Safety

When going out to paddle in a canoe, kayak, or paddleboard, remember the following safety information:

REQUIREMENTS

All five Gulf States require that each person has a personal floatation device (such as a life jacket or life preserver) onboard that is easy to access. While adults are not required to wear a life jacket, we highly encourage it.

Children are required to wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved wearable personal floatation device while underway on the water in or on vessels under 26 feet. See the table below for age requirements in each Gulf State.

State	Age when children MUST wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved wearable personal floatation device in or on vessels under 26 feet
Texas	Under 13 years of age
Louisiana	Under 16 years of age
Mississippi	Under 12 years of age
Alabama	Under 8 years of age
Florida	Under 6 years of age

SAFETY CHECKLIST

- Never paddle alone
- Check weather forecasts
- Plan your trip so that your paddling skills are equal to the water conditions
- Always file a "float plan" - tell someone where you are going and when you are expected to return
- Wear protective footgear and a hat
- Use sunscreen and insect repellent
- For one-way paddles, make sure you have a plan for returning to your vehicle

SUPPLY CHECKLIST

- Personal floatation device for each person
- Map of the stream or chart of the bay so you can find your location at any time
- Fully-charged cell phone or a handheld VHF radio in coastal areas
- Plenty of drinking water and food
- Sunscreen and insect repellent
- Hat
- First aid kit
- Waterproof bag, or bring along some plastic food storage bags to protect any electronics and food from getting wet
- Hand-held Global Positioning System unit so you can determine where you are, how to get back to a launch site, and—in the event of an emergency—allow you to pinpoint your position for rescuers
- Loud whistle or other sound-signaling device
- White light source visible from 360 degrees if paddling in reduced visibility or from sunset to sunrise

