

Paddle Sports

John Collins US Coast Guard Auxiliary, Sector Boston ADSO-PE

Depending upon where you plan to paddle, the required skill sets may be minimal or they can be highly technical in nature. If you are new to paddle sports you will benefit from taking a paddle sports safety course and the knowledge gained will increase your enjoyment on the water. An example of a free online course is located at: <https://www.paddlesmart.org/online-safety-course>. Training is also available from the [American Canoe Association](http://americancanoe.org) (ACA) [Paddlesports Online Course - ACA](http://americancanoe.org/paddlesports) (americancanoe.org) and the [United States Coast Guard Auxiliary. AUXPAD Operator Training](http://uscgaux.info) (uscgaux.info) Additionally, the following best practices should be considered every time before you go out on the water:

- Always wear a Coast Guard approved life jacket
- Make yourself be seen (bright / contrasting clothing)
- Carry a sound producing device such as a whistle
- Carry a DCS-VHF radio
- Know your paddling limits
- Know the area where you will be operating
- Avoid paddling in main channels of busy waterways and, when possible, cross at right angles.
- Dress appropriately for the water temperature and forecasted weather
- Don't paddle alone
- Tell a friend where you are going and when you will return
- If you are out after dark, you are required to exhibit an all-round light or have a flashlight readily available