

When it comes to safe kayaking we can break all of the things we need to know/learn into 4 categories. Each category becomes a safety “buffer zone” between us and us in serious trouble. As we break through each buffer zone we find ourselves in a situation with fewer safe alternatives and situations that are more and more difficult for us to recover from. So although all of the information and skills are valuable, it stands to reason that the more time and attention we devote to the first and second categories the safer paddlers we will become.

1 – Seamanship – Knowledge, Preparation & Judgment

This is the stuff that will help us avoid getting into conditions beyond our skill.

Weather / Water Conditions

Tides / Currents

Equipment

Route Plans

Float Plans

2 – Paddle Skills – Ability to maneuver kayak and stay upright

This is the stuff that will keep us upright in our kayak and get us home safely should we encounter rough conditions.

Paddle Strokes – forward, reverse, sweeps, draws, rudders

Edging / Leaning / Balance

Bracing

Fitness

3 – Recoveries – Ability to “Rescue” yourself

This is the stuff that will get you back into you boat. Keep in mind you will be getting back up into the same conditions that put you in the water in the first place, repeated recoveries will only get more difficult as you fatigue.

Assisted – T-rescue, scoop, parallel rescue, etc.

Solo – paddle float, scramble, cowboy, etc.

Aids – paddle float, stirrup, etc.

Eskimo Roll

4 – Rescues – Outside Help

Although this may be others doing most of the work, it is still up to you to know “who” and “how” to contact Help and to keep yourself alive until they get there. Keep in mind all of the things in this category that are in your control are done in category 1 – Seamanship.

Non-Emergency Help – water taxi, locations for emergency haul outs

Emergency Help (Coast Guard)

Thermal Protection – dry suit, wet suit

Flares / Radio / Cel. phone