

Outdoor Education (Canoeing)

Canoe Training And Single Day Trips Which Travel Within 2 Hours From The Arrival Of Emergency Medical Assistance. (Pools, Base Camp Canoeing, Lake Water Canoeing)

ELEMENTARY - CURRICULAR 2025

- Consult [Disability-Centred Safety](#) if your groups of students include students with disabilities.
- Consult [Risk Management](#).
- The safety standards for this activity must be presented to the activity provider prior to the activity taking place. The activity provider must meet the minimum requirements listed in the safety standards. For more information on planning trips using outside providers, consult [Outside Activity Providers](#).
- These Outdoor Education (Canoeing) safety standards as well as the safety standards of the Outside Activity Provider must be followed.
- Grades 4 to 8 only.
- White Water Canoeing and White Water Kayaking, are not appropriate activities at the elementary level.
- White Water Rafting is not an appropriate activity at the elementary level (grades 1 to 5).
- For White Water Rafting in Flatwater and Class I Rivers (grades 6 to 8 only) consult [Outdoor Education \(Paddle Rafting\)](#).

- Consult [Outdoor Education \(Canoe Tripping\)](#) for multi-day trips which travel a distance within 2 hours from the arrival of emergency medical assistance. Canoe Tripping is only an appropriate activity for Grades 7-8.
- Consult [Outdoor Education \(General Procedures\)](#).
- Consult [Outdoor Education \(Swimming - on Watercraft and Land-based Trips\)](#) if swimming is to take place in a non-designated swim area while tripping.
- Consult [Outdoor Education \(Swimming - Instructional\)](#) if the any associated activity (for example, an in-water swim assessment) is to take place at a Designated Swim Area at a waterfront.
- Consult [Outdoor Education \(Swimming - Leisure\)](#) if leisure swimming is included as an associated activity that takes place at a Designated or Non-Designated Swim area (for example, at camps or municipal swim areas) when not on a watercraft or land-based trip.
- Consult [Swimming](#) if any associated activity (for example, an in-water swim assessment) is to take place in a pool.

Equipment

- Determine that all equipment is safe (for example, no sharp corners, cracks, or splinters) and all assistive devices (e.g. a walker) are in good working condition and properly adjusted for the height and mobility needs of the student prior to participation.
- A means of hydration (for example, direct access to potable water, water filter(s), water purifier(s), chemical purification treatment) must be available, accessible, and appropriate for the activity, location and duration of the trip.
- A set of maps for canoe trip location including marked access and potential evacuation locations must be available. A GPS unit may be used as an additional navigational tool, but must not be used in place

of print maps. An identical map set should also be available to the Principal/Designate and local emergency contact (for example, park official, area police station).

- Students must wear a correctly fitting, properly secured/fastened and Canadian approved personal flotation device (PFD) or lifejacket, with whistle/signaling device attached, at all times near the water, where the depth of the water poses a risk, in and on the water.

Watercraft

- There must be two paddles per canoe, with some spare paddles taken along in case of broken or lost paddles.
- Paddles and canoes must be checked for cracks, splinters and leaks.
- The loading of a canoe with people and/or gear must not exceed the manufacturer's load capacity rating.

Safety Craft

- A safety craft is a designated craft that is rescue-capable and contains at least one Teacher, Qualified Instructor, or Trip Guide.
- The safety craft may be motorized/non-motorized. The non-motorized craft may be the watercraft that the Qualified Instructor/Trip Guide is operating.
- A motorized safety must be equipped as per [Transport Canada's Safe Boating Guide](#) requirements.
- The operator of a motorized safety craft must have a Pleasure Craft Operator Card.
- The operator of the motorized/non-motorized safety craft must have experience in navigating the craft and knowledge of the waterway in which the activity takes place (for example hazards, rocks, shoals).
- The motorized safety craft must not pose a risk to the safety of the participants (for example, maintains a safe distance from the watercraft, operates at a speed that minimizes boat wake unless

responding to an emergency).

- The safety craft must be the first craft in the water with occupants aboard, and engine running if motorized, before Students leave the beach, dock, or mooring and while Students are on the water.
- A reboarding device is required where the vertical height that a person must climb to reboard the boat from the water (freeboard) is over 0.5m (1'8").

Refer to the [***First Aid***](#) section for first aid equipment requirements.

Clothing/Footwear/Jewellery

- Students must be provided with a clothing and equipment list prior to the activity.
- A process must be established to check student clothing and equipment prior to the trip.
- Determine that all necessary clothing and footwear are included prior to departing on the excursion.
- Clothing (in layers where appropriate) and footwear (that is, closed-toed shoes that provide traction when on land) appropriate for the activity, location and environmental conditions must be worn.
- Dry change of clothing kept in a watertight bag/container.
- Rain gear is encouraged.
- Articles (for example, jewellery and clothing) that could become tangled, caught or cause injury or restrict the student in the event of an emergency must not be worn.
- When long hair poses a safety risk it must be secured. Devices (for example, hair pins, elastics and barrettes) used to tie back long hair must not present a safety concern.
- Students must not participate when the length of fingernails poses a safety risk to themselves or others.

Facilities

- Determine that all facilities are safe and accessible for the students participating. Students must be encouraged to report facility problems to the teacher.
- Only established canoe trip routes must be used.
- The canoe route and water conditions must be appropriate to age/skill level of students.
- The Trip guide must be familiar with the route (for example, length of route, terrain).
- Check with local authorities for current information regarding route safety.
- Appropriate environmental and sanitary practices (for example, washroom routines) must be taught.

Environmental Considerations

- When environmental conditions may pose a risk to student safety (for example, thunderstorms [lightning] or student(s) with asthma, triggered by air quality), Teachers must take into consideration their school board/school's protocols and procedures related to:
 - environmental conditions (consult [Weather](#)); and
 - insects (for example, mosquitoes and ticks [consult the school/school board's protocols and/or regional Public Health Department's website]).
- Students must receive instruction on safety procedures related to environmental conditions and be made aware of ways to protect themselves (for example, sun burn, heat stroke, poisonous plants).
- At all times the school board's weather and insect procedures are the minimum standards. In situations where a higher standard of care is presented (for example, outside activity providers, facility/program coordinators), the higher standard of care must be followed.
- The Teacher and the Qualified Instructor/Trip Guide must:

- be aware of and respond to changing weather and water conditions prior to and during training and the trip; and
- cancel, postpone or alter the excursion if conditions put students' safety at an elevated level of risk (for example, wind, temperature, lightning storms, fog).
- If hazardous weather suddenly approaches, leave the water immediately.
- Daylight paddling only except under emergency situations.
- Navigation lights (for example, waterproof flashlight) are required if operating at night or in restricted visibility.
- Students must receive instruction on safety procedures related to environmental conditions and be made aware of ways to protect themselves (for example, sunburn, heat stroke, poisonous plants).
- Students must receive instruction on wildlife behavior, strategies to avoid encounters, and ways to respond appropriately in the case of an encounter.

Special Rules/Instructions

- Students must be informed that the use of equipment and the gymnasium are prohibited without supervision. In addition to verbal communication, the doors must be locked or signs must be posted indicating that students are not allowed to use the gym unless appropriately supervised.
- Students that aren't required to take a swim test or students that have not passed the swim test without a personal flotation device (PFD) must not enter the water.

Teacher Awareness/Preparation

- Activities must be modified according to the age, ability level, language, and experience of students, number of participants, and the facility available.

- Previous training, fitness level, and the length of time and intensity of physical activity must be taken into consideration.
- Activities must be based on skills that are taught.
- Skills must be taught in proper progression.
- A warm-up and cool-down must be included.
- Teachers and all individuals who assist the Teacher with the activity must be aware of the possibility of pressuring Students. Students must be informed not to coerce a reluctant student into participating in any component of the activity with which they display or vocalize reluctance.
- When a student displays or vocalizes reluctance about participation, at any time, before or during any component of the activity, they must be provided with alternative ways to participate in the activity (for example, permit Students to select a role within the activity, remain at or return to a different component of the activity, break down new experiences/ components into smaller steps, be introduced to a new component with which they are comfortable).
- Adequate liquid replacement (personal water bottles, water fountains) must be accessible for students before, during, and after physical activity to prevent dehydration.
- Prior to participation all Teachers and all individuals who assist with the watercraft activity (e.g. Qualified Instructors/ Trip Guides) must be aware of all Students' swimming ability, comfort and experience in water, and the water environment in which the activity takes place (for example, lakes, ponds, rivers) (Refer to **Sample Swim Ability and Swim Comfort Assessment Questionnaire Form**).
- Teachers and all individuals who assist with the watercraft activity (e.g. Qualified Instructors/Trip Guides) must be aware of Students who have none or limited swim ability/experience in the environment the activity takes place (Refer to **Sample Swim Ability and Swim Comfort Assessment Questionnaire Form**) and/or display or express hesitancy in the watercraft. The Teacher/Qualified Instructor must include additional program modifications (for example, consider the placement of Students based on their experience and comfort level, placing student with or near the Teacher/Qualified Instructor/Steersperson, and/ or outfitting the student in a PFD or lifejacket with

increased buoyancy).

Swim Ability and Swim Comfort Assessment Questionnaire

- Prior to the activity, the Swim Ability and Swim Comfort Assessment Questionnaire Form must be completed (Refer to [Sample Swim Ability and Swim Comfort Assessment Questionnaire Form](#)).
- The Swim Ability and Swim Comfort Assessment Questionnaire Form must be completed within the school year in which the activity is taking place.
- Results of the Swim Ability and Swim Comfort Assessment Questionnaire Form must be documented and communicated as per school board policy (for example, to the student, Teacher, Principal, Parents/Guardians, Trip Guide(s), Volunteers, Lifeguards, and Outside Provider [as applicable]).
- The Swim Ability and Swim Comfort Assessment Questionnaire Form must be completed and submitted, or the student must not participate in the activity.

Canoeing Skills

- Skills for the safe maneuvering of a canoe must be taught in proper progression.
- Canoe training, practice of skills, and demonstration of proficiency must occur in a pool, shallow water, or sheltered bay.
- Before setting out on a day trip, skill knowledge and demonstration of proficiency must occur, either prior to the day of the trip or on the day of a trip, as follows:
 - Select properly fit and properly secure personal protective equipment (P.F.D)
 - Lift, transport and lower the canoe (for short or great distances depending on the trip requirements)
 - Launch and remove the canoe to and from the water

- Enter and exit the canoe
- Position themselves (as well as gear when necessary) in the canoe
- Hold and use a paddle
- Be part of a rescue, and assist others, in the case of an overturned canoe
- Propel the canoe in a desired line forward and in reverse
- Bring the canoe to a controlled stop
- Turn the canoe in either direction
- Displace the canoe sideward in both directions
- Safely land the canoe (shore and/or dock)

Safety Rules and Emergency Procedures

- All Teachers/Qualified Instructors must be knowledgeable of the established safety rules and emergency procedures (for example, capsize/swamp procedures).
- Prior to participation, Students must be familiar with safety rules and emergency procedures specific to the watercraft activity in which they will participate (for example, PFD/lifejacket requirements, buddy responsibilities, capsize/ swamp procedures, staying with the boat to use it as a life raft).
- After initial instruction, Students must demonstrate the ability to select a PFD/lifejacket that fits correctly and to properly secure/fasten it.
- Students must be informed of the location of available safety equipment and how to use it.

- Before the start of each session, a Teacher/Qualified Instructor/Trip Guide must inform appropriate personnel (for example, facility's staff member) of the beginning and ending time on water.
- Each day a lead boat and sweep boat must be assigned. A signal system must be in place (for example, whistle calls) for communication between boats.
- A Principal/designate in the school, and each Teacher (and Trip Guide [where appropriate]) on the excursion must have: a map of route and an excursion itinerary including an emergency action plan (for example, Supervisory chain of command, emergency evacuation plan, emergency access points, local emergency contact phone numbers).
- Teachers must be aware of the site's Emergency Action Plan (EAP), including the Site Specific Rescue Plan, and share with all Qualified Instructors/Trip Guides and Students.
- In case of emergency, procedures must be in place to ensure accountability for all boats, Teachers, Qualified Instructors, Trip Guides, monitors and Students on the water.
- In case of an emergency, a predetermined return route must be established.
- A vehicle for emergency purposes must be available.
- An individual must be designated (for example, Teacher or Parent) to transport an injured student to the hospital. This must not be the Teacher/Trip Guide responsible for the excursion.

Supervision

- All activities must be supervised.
- The type of supervision must be commensurate with the inherent risk of the activity. The level of risk is related to the number of participants, the skill level of the participants, the type of equipment used, and environmental conditions.

- On-Site Supervision is required during the safety and initial skill instruction.
- On-Site Supervision is required by the Teacher when a Qualified Instructor(s) is providing safety and initial skill instruction, and monitoring.
- On-Site Supervision is required for the duration of all other components of the activity (e.g., equipment setup and take down, warm-ups/cool downs, application of the skills and games).
- A Volunteer, under the direction of a Teacher, can monitor students during physical education activities. Refer to your school board's policy on Volunteers assisting with students' physical activities.
- Responsibilities must be clearly outlined for additional Teachers and Volunteers who are monitoring the activity.
- Where a Qualified Instructor is used and the Teacher is not directly with the Qualified Instructor, the Qualified Instructor must provide safety and initial skill instruction, and monitoring for the safe application of skills and student behaviour for the duration of the activity.

Supervision/Monitoring Ratios

- One (1) Qualified Instructor and one (1) Water Safety Supervisor per 14 boats (max 30 students)

Canoeing Training

- There must be a minimum of two (2) adults supervising/monitoring the activity. If the Qualified Instructor is also the Water Safety Supervisor, a second individual with the knowledge and skills is required to assist the Qualified Instructor. This role could be fulfilled by a Teacher, a Volunteer or an Outside Provider, and must be approved by the school/school board.

Canoeing Single Day Trips

- When the activity involves paddling away from a sheltered bay or base camp, and/or involves a day trip, there must be a minimum of three (3) adults supervising/monitoring the activity. If the Qualified Instructor is also the Water Safety Supervisor, two (2) other individuals with the knowledge and skills are required to assist the Qualified Instructor. These roles could be fulfilled by a Teacher, a Volunteer or an Outside Provider, and must be approved by the school/school board.

Qualifications

Instructor Qualifications

- For an Ontario Camping Association (OCA) member waterfront setting (for example, local pond or lake in a sheltered, confined spot), Qualified Instructors must have one (1) of the following certifications, or a certification of an equivalent or higher level:
 - ORCKA Camp Canoeing Instruction
 - Paddle Canada Waterfront Canoe Instructor
- For all situations beyond the training of the Camp Canoeing Instructor, non-OCA member sites and for flatwater canoeing in a non-wilderness environment, there must be one Qualified Instructor with a minimum of one of the following current qualifications:
 - ORCKA
 - Basic Canoeing Instructor
 - Canadian Style Paddling Instructor
 - Day Trip Leader
 - Moving Water Instructor
 - River Running Instructor
 - Canoe Tripping Level 3 (Trip Leader)
 - Paddle Canada
 - Intermediate Tandem Lake Canoeing (Skills)

- Intermediate Tandem Moving Water Canoeing (Skills)
- Introduction to Tandem or Solo Lake Canoeing Instructor
- Introduction to Tandem Moving Water Canoeing Instructor

Water Safety Supervisor

- At least one (1) Trip Guide, Assistant Trip Guide, Teacher, or Monitor with one (1) of the following current certifications must fill the role of Water Safety Supervisor for the Trip Group:
 - Bronze Cross
 - Wilderness Water Safety
 - Whitewater Rescue Technician
 - Swiftwater Rescue Technician
 - Equivalent to any of the certifications listed
- A student may not act as the Water Safety Supervisor if they are participating in the activity.

First Aid

- A fully stocked first aid kit must be readily accessible. (Consult [Outdoor Education Sample Kit Contents](#))
- A working communication device (for example, satellite or cell phone, or satellite GPS messenger) suitable for the activities/locations must be available. This device must be maintained, waterproofed, protected and dedicated for emergency communications only. The phone number for the device, and phone numbers for emergency services and school contact people (for example, the principal) must be

included with the phone.

- At least one individual must have a minimum of a current (three years from the date of issue) first aid certificate (minimum 15 hour course) including CPR C issued by one of the following agencies: St. John Ambulance; Canadian Red Cross; Lifesaving Society; Canadian Ski Patrol; or an organization whose certificate is deemed equivalent by the medical officer of health in the local health unit. This individual must be present for the duration of the activity.
- Follow the school's first aid emergency response ((consult [First Aid Plan and First Aid Emergency Response](#)) and the school board's concussion protocol (consult [Concussions](#))).
- An emergency action plan and response to deal with evacuations and lockdowns, including specific direction for participants with accessibility needs, must be followed and communicated to all students.☒

Information for Students

- Prior to the trip, students must receive explicit instruction by a Trip Guide or Teacher on the following:
 - Suitable clothing systems (for example, fabrics, recommend layering principles, avoiding cotton, appropriate items) and packing
 - Canoeing equipment
 - Environmental concerns (for example, wildlife, weather, low impact camping, poison ivy/oak)
 - The trip itinerary (route, distances, evacuation points)
 - An adequate supply of safe water for one day (the group must have a water purification method and must be made aware of water sources prior to embarking on trip)
 - Water safety for canoeing and swimming (if there will be swimming on the trip)

- Safety procedures related to:
 - severe weather conditions (for example, wind, lightning [consult Weather]); and
 - ways to protect themselves from environmental conditions (for example use of hats, sunscreen, sunglasses, personal water bottles, insect repellent, appropriate clothing).

Definitions

- **Assistant Trip Guide:**

- An individual who has the required certifications, knowledge, and skills to assist the Trip Guide during a trip. The Assistant Trip Guide may be responsible to lead and monitor a sub-group during parts of the trip. This role could be fulfilled by a teacher, volunteer, or an Outside Activity Provider and must be approved by the school/school board.

- **In-charge Person:**

- Some activities refer to an “In-Charge” person. While the teacher is in-charge and responsible for the overall safety and well-being of students under their care, sometimes there are other personnel who must be identified as “In-Charge” related to specific situations (for example, a pool lifeguard). In activities where an “In-Charge” person is designated, that person, in consultation with the teacher, must make final decisions regarding safety of the students

- **Instructional Time:**

- Time during which there is formal instruction and/or instructor led activities. Examples of instructional time are lessons, events, practice, and games.

- **Lifeguard, Assistant Lifeguard and Aquatic Instructor:**

- Refer to the Qualification section.

- **Lifejacket:**

- Canadian-approved lifejackets are designed to turn an unconscious or incapacitated person face-up in the water. Lifejackets are available with varying amounts of flotation and turning ability. Canadian approved Lifejackets are stamped or labelled indicating that they are approved by Transport Canada, the Canadian Coast Guard or the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

- **Monitor:**

- An individual who assists the Teacher with a group of students, (e.g., Volunteer, Qualified Instructor) and has a responsibility to monitor student behaviors for the duration of the activity.

- **Monitoring:**

- The role of monitoring is to observe, identify, act, and report:
 - Observe: Observe with attention to detail the actions of the students.
 - Identify: Identify the student and the unsafe behaviour.
 - Act: Take appropriate actions to safeguard students and others (e.g., stop the activity).
 - Report: Provide the name of the student and the unsafe behaviour to the teacher for management and direction.

- **Outside Activity Provider:**

- A commercial company, volunteer organization, or individual, not associated with the school board, who possess the required qualifications to provide safety and initial skill instruction, and monitoring for the duration of an activity.

- **Personal Flotation Device (P.F.D.):**

- Canadian-approved P.F.D.'s are designed for use in recreational boating and are generally smaller, less bulky and more comfortable than lifejackets. They may have less flotation than lifejackets and may have no or little self-turning ability (the ability to turn an unconscious or incapacitated person face-up in the water). Canadian approved P.F.D.'s are stamped or labelled indicating that they are approved by Transport Canada, the Canadian Coast Guard or the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

- **Qualified Instructor:**

- An individual who provides safety and skill instruction, and monitoring for an activity, and possesses the required qualifications (e.g., experience, certifications). This role could be fulfilled by a teacher, volunteer, or an employee of an outside provider. An instructor does not have the authority to supervise.

- **Supervision:**

- The vigilant overseeing of an activity for management or direction. Activities, facilities, and equipment have inherent risks, but the more effectively they are supervised, the safer they become.
- The Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education includes three Types of supervision, Direct Supervision, On-Site Supervision, and In-the-Area Supervision. These types of supervision take into consideration the level of risk, which is related to the number of participants, the skill level of the participants, the type of equipment used, the environmental conditions, the age, and developmental stage.
- The three types of supervision described are not hierarchical but represent the type of supervision that activities require and the type of supervision that is inherently possible.
- Some activities in OPASSE transition from one type of supervision to another type of supervision (e.g., Direct Supervision to On-Site Supervision OR On-Site Supervision to In-the-Area Supervision).

- **Teacher:**

- A person with a current certification from the Ontario College of Teachers and under contract by the school/school board (i.e., teacher, vice-principal, principal). This person is legally responsible for the students and has the authority and responsibility to supervise.

- **Trip Guide:**

- An individual who has the required certifications and/or knowledge/skills of the route and activity. This role could be fulfilled by a Teacher, a Volunteer, or an employee of an Outside

Activity Provider and must be approved by the school/school board. Trip Guides have been instructed on their monitoring responsibilities.

- **Types of Supervision:**

- **Direct Supervision:**

- Direct Supervision requires that the Teacher is physically present at the activity, providing visual and verbal oversight for management and direction of both, the activity and student safety.

- **Provisos:**

- No other activity can occur when part of the activity or the entire activity is under Direct Supervision when there is only one Teacher supervising.
- The Supervision section of the relevant activity safety standards page in the Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education describes when parts of an activity are under Direct Supervision.
- Where a Qualified Instructor(s) is providing the safety and initial skill instruction and monitoring for one activity and requires the Teacher to be present at that activity for management and direction.

- An activity may be under Direct Supervision:

- During the entire duration of the activity;
- During the set up and take down of equipment; .
- During the safety and initial skill instruction;
- During the performance/practice of the activity skill; and
- When the activities transition from Direct Supervision to On-Site Supervision.

- **In-the-Area Supervision:**

- The Teacher is located in proximity to a combination of locations where the student activities take place, is circulating, and is accessible for providing management and direction of the physical activity and student safety.
 - Provisos:
 - The Teacher is circulating between the activities occurring at separate locations, and is readily accessible, or the location of the Teacher is communicated to the student.
 - Where a Qualified Instructor(s) is providing the safety and skill and instruction and is monitoring at a combination of locations, the Teacher is located in proximity to where the student activities take place, is circulating between the activity locations, and is accessible for management and direction.
 - Students may be out of sight for periods of time.
 - An activity or a component of the activity is under In-the-Area Supervision:
 - Where the same activity is located in separate locations (e.g., Fitness activities);
 - Where two or more activities under In-the-Area Supervision occur in separate locations (e.g., Badminton, Table Tennis, Handball (Wall));
 - Where the skill application of the activity takes place at a separate location from the teacher (e.g., Cross Country Running, Skiing (Alpine), Cycling, hiking on trails);
 - When the activities occur in double or triple gymnasiums; and
 - Where more than one Qualified Instructor is providing activities at a combination of locations.

- **On-Site Supervision:**

- The Teacher is present at one location where the student activity takes place (e.g., gymnasium, sports field, climbing wall at an Outside Activity Provider’s facility, campsite) and is accessible for providing management and direction of the physical activity and student safety.
 - Provisos:
 - Where more than one activity occurs in one location, the Teacher is circulating between the activities and is accessible for management and direction.
 - Momentary presence in adjoining rooms (e.g., equipment room, outdoor storage shed, boathouse, staff tent) is considered to be On-Site Supervision.
 - Where a Qualified Instructor(s) is providing the safety and initial skill instruction and monitoring for an activity or a combination of activities at one location and the Teacher is present and is circulating and accessible for management and direction.
 - An activity may be under On-Site Supervision:
 - During the entire duration of the activity;
 - During the safety and initial skill instruction;
 - With activities using multiple stations while the Teacher is circulating;
 - When combining two or more activities at one location while the Teacher is circulating; and
 - When activities transition from On-Site Supervision to In-the-Area Supervision.

- **Volunteer:**

- A responsible adult (e.g., Educational Assistants, Retired Teachers, Co-op Students, Parents/Guardians, Teacher Candidates) approved by the Principal/Designate who is under the direction of a Teacher and has been instructed on their monitoring responsibilities. Refer to your school board’s policy on volunteers assisting with student’s physical activities.

- **Water Safety Supervisor:**

- Refer to the Qualifications section.

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