

# Outdoor Education (Paddle Rafting)

## Pools, Lakes, Rivers

### 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 (Paddle Rafting) safety standards as well as the safety standards of the Outside Activity Provider must be followed.
- For grades 6 to 8 only
- The Outdoor Education (Paddle Rafting) safety standards outlines the safety requirements for paddle rafting activities that involve moving water. Participation is restricted to Class I rivers only, as defined by the [International Scale of River Difficulty](#):
  - Class I: Fast moving water with riffles and small waves. Few obstructions, all obvious and easily missed with little training. Risk to swimmers is slight; self-rescue is easy.
- White Water Canoeing, White Water Kayaking, White Water Rafting and Canoeing-Moving Water are not appropriate activities at the Elementary level.
- Consult [Swimming \(Instructional\)](#) if the swimming assessment is to take place in a pool.

- Consult [Outdoor Education \(Swimming - Instructional\)](#) for a definition of Instructional time, and safety standards for instructional swimming in a lake, pond, or river, which can only occur at designated swim areas.
- 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 [Outdoor Education \(General Procedures\)](#).
- 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 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 \(Swimming - on Watercraft and Land-based Trips\)](#) if swimming is to take place in a non-designated swim area while tripping.
- Consult [Swimming](#) if any associated activity (for example, an in-water swim assessment) is to take place in a pool.

## Equipment

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- Determine that all equipment is safe (for example, no sharp corners, cracks, or splinters) and all assistive devices (for example, a walker) are in good working condition and properly adjusted for the height and mobility needs of the student prior to participation.
- 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.

- Teachers and all individuals who assist with the watercraft activity (for example, Qualified Instructors, Trip Guides) are required to wear a correctly fitting, properly secured/fastened and Canadian approved 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

- Rafts must be provided by the facility. Personal rafts must not be used.
- Comply with the Minimum Safety Equipment Requirements as specified in the [Transport Canada Safe Boating Guide](#).
- The loading of a raft 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, taking into consideration necessary factors (for example, distance from shore, weather, water, wind conditions), and contains at least one Teacher, Qualified Instructor, or Trip Guide who meets the first aid certification.
- The safety craft may be motorized/non-motorized. The non-motorized safety craft can be the watercraft that the Qualified Instructor/Trip Guide is operating.
- A motorized safety craft 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 the 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

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- Determine that all necessary clothing and footwear are included prior to departing on the excursion. Clothing (in layers where appropriate) and footwear appropriate to the activity, location and environmental conditions must be worn. Rain gear and/or a dry change of clothing kept in a watertight bag/container must be accessible.
- 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

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- Flatwater or Class I River Classifications only.
- Check with local authorities for current information regarding route safety.
- Water conditions must be appropriate for the skill level of the group.

- Determine that all facilities are safe and accessible for the students participating. Students must be encouraged to report facility problems to the teacher.

## Environmental Considerations

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- 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 Qualified Instructor and Teacher must:
  - be aware of and respond to changing weather and water conditions prior to and during 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 paddle rafting only except under emergency situations.

- Navigation lights (for example, waterproof flashlight) are required if operating at night or in restricted visibility.

## Special Rules/Instructions

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- Be aware of students whose medical condition (for example, asthma, anaphylaxis, casts, previous concussion, orthopaedic device) may affect participation. Consult [Medical Conditions](#).
- Be aware of students whose medical condition (for example, asthma, anaphylaxis, casts, previous concussion, orthopaedic device) may affect participation. Consult [Medical Conditions](#).
- Parents/guardians must be informed that all students will wear a correctly fitting and Canadian-approved PFD/lifejacket, with whistle attached, when near, in or on the water.
- When a student displays hesitation (verbally or non-verbally) with participating, the Teacher must determine the reason(s) for doubt. If the Teacher believes that a potential hesitancy during the skill could put the student at risk, the student must be directed toward a more basic skill, or be permitted to select a role within the activity at their comfort level, including the choice to not participate.
- Prior to participation, the Teacher must reference and apply their school board's policy on equity and inclusion as it affects student participation and makes appropriate accommodations/modifications to provide a safe learning environment. Consult the Intent subsection within the [About section](#).
- Students must not participate in the activity until they receive information on concussion prevention specific to the activity, inherent risks of the activity (for example, outline possible risks and ways to minimize the risks), and procedures and rules for safe play. Students must receive instruction on the importance of reporting symptoms related to a suspected concussion.
- Refer to school board policies and procedures (i.e., transportation, excursion/field trip) for parent/guardian communication and permission (for example, the location of an off-site activity, description of the activity and physical environment, means of transportation, inherent risks of the activity, supervision).

- Parents/guardians must be informed that all students must wear a correctly fitting, properly secured/fastened and Canadian approved personal flotation device (P.F.D.) 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.

## 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.
- 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.

## 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 must inform appropriate personnel (for example, facility's staff member) of the beginning and ending time on water.
- Proper exit techniques must always be followed. No diving or jumping off rafts.
- Establish appropriate start and stop procedures (for example, whistle system).
- 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

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- 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.
- In-the-Area Supervision is required when trained students are launching and removing rafts from the water while being monitored by a Qualified Instructor(s).
- In-the-Area Supervision is required when trained students are lifting and moving watercraft(s).
- On-Site Supervision is required for the duration of all other components of the activity.
- 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

- 1 Teacher/Monitor per 8 students.

Refer to the definition of **Instructional Time**.

## Qualifications

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### Steersperson Qualifications

- Paddle Rafting steersperson must possess one of the following qualifications:
  - Attendance at a clinic or workshop within the last three years provided by an instructor who is knowledgeable of the activity (for example, appropriate skills and progressions) and where safety is addressed as outlined in the Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education.
  - Past experience within the last three years as a Steersperson in paddle rafting, having knowledge of the activity (for example, appropriate skills and progressions) and where safety is addressed as outlined in the Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education.

### Instructor Qualifications

- For an OCA member waterfront setting (for example, local pond or lake in a sheltered, confined spot), the minimum ORCKA qualification is Camp Canoeing Instructor.
- Situations beyond the training of the Camp Canoeing Instructor or outside of an OCA member setting will require a Qualified Instructor to have one of the following current certifications:
  - ORCKA Basic Canoeing Instructor
  - ORCKA Canadian Style Paddling Instructor
  - ORCKA Canoe Tripping Instructor 2
  - ORCKA Moving Water Instructor 2

- ORCKA River Running Instructor 2
  
  - ORCKA Canoe Tripping Level 3
  
  - Paddle Canada equivalent.
- For non-OCA member sites, and for flatwater paddle rafting in a non-wilderness environment, there must be one Qualified Instructor with a minimum of one of the following qualifications:
    - ORCKA Basic Canoeing Instructor
  
    - ORCKA Canadian Style Paddling Instructor
  
    - ORCKA Canoe Tripping Instructor 2
  
    - ORCKA Moving Water Instructor 2
  
    - ORCKA River Running Instructor 2
  
    - ORCKA Canoe Tripping Level 3
  
    - Paddle Canada Waterfront Canoe Instructor
  
    - Paddle Canada Intermediate Lake Skills
  
    - Paddle Canada Introductory Lake Skills
  
    - Paddle Canada Advanced Lake Skills – Solo
  
    - Paddle Canada Advanced Tripping Skills
  
    - Paddle Canada Advanced Moving Water (both tandem & solo)

- Paddle Canada Advanced Tripping Skills + Wilderness Advanced First Aid + CPR + 1000 km experience
- Paddle Canada Advanced Tripping Skills + Wilderness First Aid + CPR + 500 km experience
- Paddle Canada Waterfront Canoe Instructor

## Water Safety Supervisor

- At least one (1) Trip Guide, Assistant Trip Guide, Teacher, Volunteer, or Qualified Instructor with one (1) of the following current certifications must fill the role of Water Safety Supervisor for the Trip Group:
  - \* 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

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- 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.☒

## Definitions

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- **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.

- **Class I:**

- Easy. Fast moving water with riffles and small waves. There are few obstructions and all are obvious and easily missed with some training.

- **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.
- **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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