



## 1 Introduction

The purpose of these notes is to give guidance to club members wishing to become “signed-off” paddlers, and to coaches who have the task of assessing whether paddlers have the required level of skill and knowledge to be signed off.

## 2 What is a “Signed-Off” Paddler?

A “signed-off” paddler is a member of Manvers Waterfront Boat Club who has been assessed to be able to paddle on the lake without safety cover – for example outside of normal paddlesport sessions.

The paddler must demonstrate that they have the necessary paddling skills and knowledge to paddle safely **in normal conditions** on Manvers Lake without the need for safety cover.

You need to:

- Be aware of MWBC rules for paddlesport and where to find them
- Be aware of the risks of paddling without safety cover and how to mitigate against them
- Be aware of the possible effects of weather on paddling (wind speed/direction, water temperature, air temperature)
- Be aware of the risks of cold water shock and hypothermia and how to recognise and manage these
- Be capable of safely launching, manoeuvring, and landing their craft on sheltered water (e.g. Manvers Lake) in wind speeds not exceeding Beaufort Force 3 (12 mph). This should include paddling with, against and across the wind.
- Be capable of safely dealing with a capsized (or falling in from a SUP) and be able to self-rescue (either re-enter their craft or swim safely to shore with their equipment)

“Signed-Off” status is awarded for a specific type of craft. If you want to be signed-off for more than one type of craft (e.g. paddleboard and kayak, canoe and kayak) you will need to meet the required level of competence in each type.

## 3 Environmental Conditions

Manvers Lake is classed as an inland Sheltered Water environment under the current British Canoeing Environmental Definitions:

<https://www.britishcanoeingawarding.org.uk/download/331/>

In terms of Manvers Lake:

*Areas of open water (e.g. lakes and lochs) where the paddlers are no more than 200 metres offshore and the wind strength does not exceed Beaufort force 3, avoiding the group being swept/blown out of the safe working area.*

**Paddlers need to be aware of that the above definition applies to “normal conditions”. They should also understand how different weather and water conditions can increase the difficulty and the level of risk involved in paddling.**



Some things you should consider:

**Wind Speed & Direction** can both have a major effect on paddling activities. Strong winds (Force 4 and upwards) will generally make paddling more difficult. These effects are craft dependent – e.g. open canoes are affected more by wind than kayaks. Paddling in windy conditions requires a greater level of skill and knowledge and is physically more demanding. The following should be considered:

- Increased difficulty in maintaining desired speed and direction
- Increased risk of capsize (either direct or effect of the wind or increased wave height)
- Wind chill can contribute to hypothermia
- Is the wind blowing you towards safety or away from it?
- On shore - difficulty in safely carrying boats and boards, unloading and loading from vehicles

**Low Water Temperature** significantly increase the dangers associated with capsize or falling into the water. In particular:

- Cold water shock – panic, increased risk of drowning
- Even short-term immersion in cold water can lead to hypothermia

*Interesting factoid - the human body loses heat 25 faster in cold water than in air of the same temperature!*

How quickly can you get yourself out of the water and back into your boat or onto your board if you fall in? How long it would take to swim to shore if you capsized in the middle of the lake. Think about what sort of clothing is required to keep you warm and safe under these conditions.

**Low Air Temperature** need not be a problem if you remain dry. However, following a capsize or swim your body will continue to lose heat if the air is cold which can contribute to the onset of hyperthermia. Think about what sort of clothing you need to wear in cold weather.

**Precipitation** - apart from making you feel miserable rain, hail, sleet & snow can all contribute to a lowering of your body temperature and hypothermia. Think about what sort of clothing you need to wear.

**Thunder & Lightning** – being in the middle of a lake in a thunderstorm is dangerous! You must not launch if there is thunder and lightning in the area. **If thunder & lightning begin while you are on the water, you must leave the water as quickly as possible and seek shelter!**

**Water Quality** – the water quality in Manvers Lake is normally very good but can deteriorate if the lake has flooded following heavy rain. You should be aware of the risks of illness from contact with polluted flood water and take the necessary hygiene precautions.

<https://britishcanoeing.org.uk/uploads/commonUploads/British-Canoeing-Water-borne-infectious-diseases-v1-Jul-2015-with-copyright.pdf>



## 4 Paddling Ability

We are not looking for you to be an “expert” paddler! We do require that you can adequately control your craft on the water so that you are not a hazard to yourself and other lake users.

You need to demonstrate:

### 4.1 Launching & Landing

Safe strategies for launching and landing your craft without putting yourself or other people at risk. This should include both launching/landing in shallow water and against a vertical bank (e.g. pontoon)

### 4.2 Paddle in A Straight Line

Paddling in a straight line over a reasonable distance while making good forward progress. Some correction strokes are allowed but this should not result in large deviations from the desired course or a complete loss of momentum. You should also be able to demonstrate or explain strategies for paddling into a headwind.

### 4.3 Turning & Steering

**Controlled** turns to both left and right. This should include turning on the move – e.g. paddle in a straight line, turn on to a new heading and carry on paddling without losing momentum.

### 4.4 Stopping

Stopping your craft quickly while travelling forwards at a reasonable speed (e.g. using reverse strokes).

### 4.5 Preventing a Capsize or Falling-In

Strategies for preventing an unwanted swim!

## 5 Safety & Rescue

As a signed-off paddler you are expected to be self-sufficient when paddling at Manvers Lake.

### 5.1 Planning

Safe paddling starts before you get on the water. You should ask yourself the following questions:

- What are the conditions like now? What is the weather forecast?
- How could the conditions affect me? (consider both cold and hot weather)
- Am I comfortable that I can paddle safely in the conditions?
- Are my paddling skills adequate?
- What could go wrong? Are my rescue skills good enough?
- Have I got the right equipment? Have I forgotten something?
- What clothing do I need to wear? Will they keep me warm if I end up in the water?
- Are there any “new” hazards I need to consider? Other lake users?
- **Do I need to modify my plans or even cancel them altogether? The lake will still be there tomorrow!**



Once you have got on the water you should stay alert for any change in conditions or circumstances, and if necessary, revisit the above questions. The fancy name for this is “Dynamic Risk Assessment” and it is a cornerstone of safe paddling.

## 5.2 Personal Floatation Devices (“Buoyancy Aids”)

**All paddlers** on Manvers Lake are required to wear a properly fitted personal flotation device (PFD or “buoyancy aid”) whenever they are on the water. The current standard for these is EN393 or ISO12402. It is vital that this fits properly and securely – e.g. the PFD does not ride up over your head in the event of a swim. PFD’s made specifically for canoeing and kayaking are best and these need not cost a lot of money. Good brands to look out for – Palm Equipment, Peak UK, Yak, Nookie, Astral. If in doubt, ask for advice!

We do not allow gas operated floatation devices (e.g. Palm Glide, Red Paddle Co Airbelt).

**Remember your PFD could save your life so do not be tempted to buy an “Ebay special”!**

## 5.3 Dealing with a Swim!

Like it or not, unexpected swims are part of paddlesport! You need to be able deal with this eventuality and “Self-Rescue” – i.e. get yourself out of the water. For obvious reasons this becomes increasingly important as the air and water temperature gets colder.

If you end up in the water, you should immediately get hold of you craft – this will act as floatation aid and it also means you can try a self-rescue. Try and keep hold of your paddle as well (they cost money and will soon drift away from you if allowed).

There are two basic types of self-rescue:

- Get back into or onto you craft and continue paddling (you may need to right an upturned boat or board)
- Swim to shore with your craft and paddle

You should practice both in safe conditions!

## 5.4 Craft Specific Safety

### 5.4.1 Stand-Up Paddleboard (SUP)

Falling off a paddleboard in shallow water can be dangerous and result in injury. Kneel down until you are in deeper water where a fall would be less painful. A particular risk is when approaching the shore – the fins can catch on the bottom and cause a fall).

**You must always wear a leash when paddleboarding at Manvers.** This can be secured to your ankle or via a waist belt. Wearing a leash means your board can not blow away if you fall in – you can then “self-rescue” by getting back on to the board.

### 5.4.2 Sit-On Top (SOT) & Open Cockpit Craft

SOT and open cockpit kayaks are relatively safe in the event of a capsize – there is little risk of entrapment like there is with “closed cockpit kayaks and canoes.



#### 5.4.3 Closed Cockpit Craft (e.g. whitewater kayaks, slalom boats, sea kayaks)

With closed cockpit craft there is an increased risk of **entrapment** in the event of a capsize – i.e. the paddler being trapped in the overturned boat. You must be able to get out of your boat following a capsize – this requires you to stay calm and not panic and takes practice! The use of spraydecks adds an extra level of risk – if you wear a spraydeck you must be able to demonstrate that you can release it from the boat in an emergency when you are upside down and under water.

#### 5.4.4 Open Canoes (e.g. “traditional” canoes & OC1 whitewater canoes)

Capsizing in an open canoe carries two risks – **entrapment** and **entanglement**.

**Entrapment** generally occurs if you are using a kneeling thwart (or using a seat as a kneeling thwart) where your feet can become stuck between the thwart/seat and hull of the canoe. You must be able to get your feet free in the event of a capsize.

**Entanglement** means becoming tangled up with ropes such as painters. The way to reduce this risk is to practice good “rope hygiene” – i.e. make sure that all ropes are neatly stowed away so they cannot become an entanglement hazard following a capsize. All ropes used on canoes should be of a type that floats on the surface of the water – this considerably reduces the risks of entanglement.