

Paddler's Checklist

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Division of Parks and Trails



Preparation for a paddling trip should include planning for worst-case scenarios. What safety items you choose to bring will vary from trip to trip. Below are some items to consider, but this list is by no means complete.

Basic Trips

- Appropriate clothing – always dress for the weather and know what to expect. Temperature changes can occur rapidly. Layers of clothing insulate in cool weather better than a single garment. Cotton is not a good insulator, especially when wet
- Lots of drinking water
- Life vests (personal floatation devices, PFD's)
- Proper footwear – closed toe sandals or shoes are best
- Maps and river guides
- Sunscreen
- UV eye protection – choose a good pair of sunglasses and a strap to keep them on
- Wide-brimmed hat - for sun protection
- First aid kit with matches
- Dry bag – to keep extra clothing, electronics, sleeping bag and other items dry during your trip
- Rope and/or bungee cords - to keep items such as tackle boxes and coolers attached to the canoe or kayak

Overnight trips

- Cooking and dining utensils – plates, forks, knives, cook stove and fuel, etc.
- Extra matches
- Fire starter
- Food – amount depending on length of the trip and amount of people.
- Necessary toiletries – toilet paper, shampoo, soap, toothpaste and toothbrush, etc.
- Sleeping bag
- Sleeping pad
- Tent

More advanced trips

(Longer trips/ trips with rapids and hazards)

- Helmet – a helmet is important in whitewater where upsets are likely or when spray skirts or thigh restraints are in use
- A whistle or sound signaling device
- Bilge pump, sponge and/or bailer – important for those in open water, always carry some device that can get water OUT of the boat
- Compass and/or GPS and a good map of the river – know where you are and how to get out in an emergency
- Duct tape/small repair kit
- Waterproof tarp
- Light/signal
- River knife – when there are ropes and rigging to get tangled in, a knife may be needed
- Self-Rescue devices – paddle float, slings, tow ropes, throw bags and throw ropes
- Spare paddle
- VHS radio – for emergencies and monitoring the weather
- Water bucket or folding jug
- Water purification tablets or filter
- Two “painter lines” - 30' long, 1/4” thick nylon ropes to attach to the bow and stern of your boat.

