

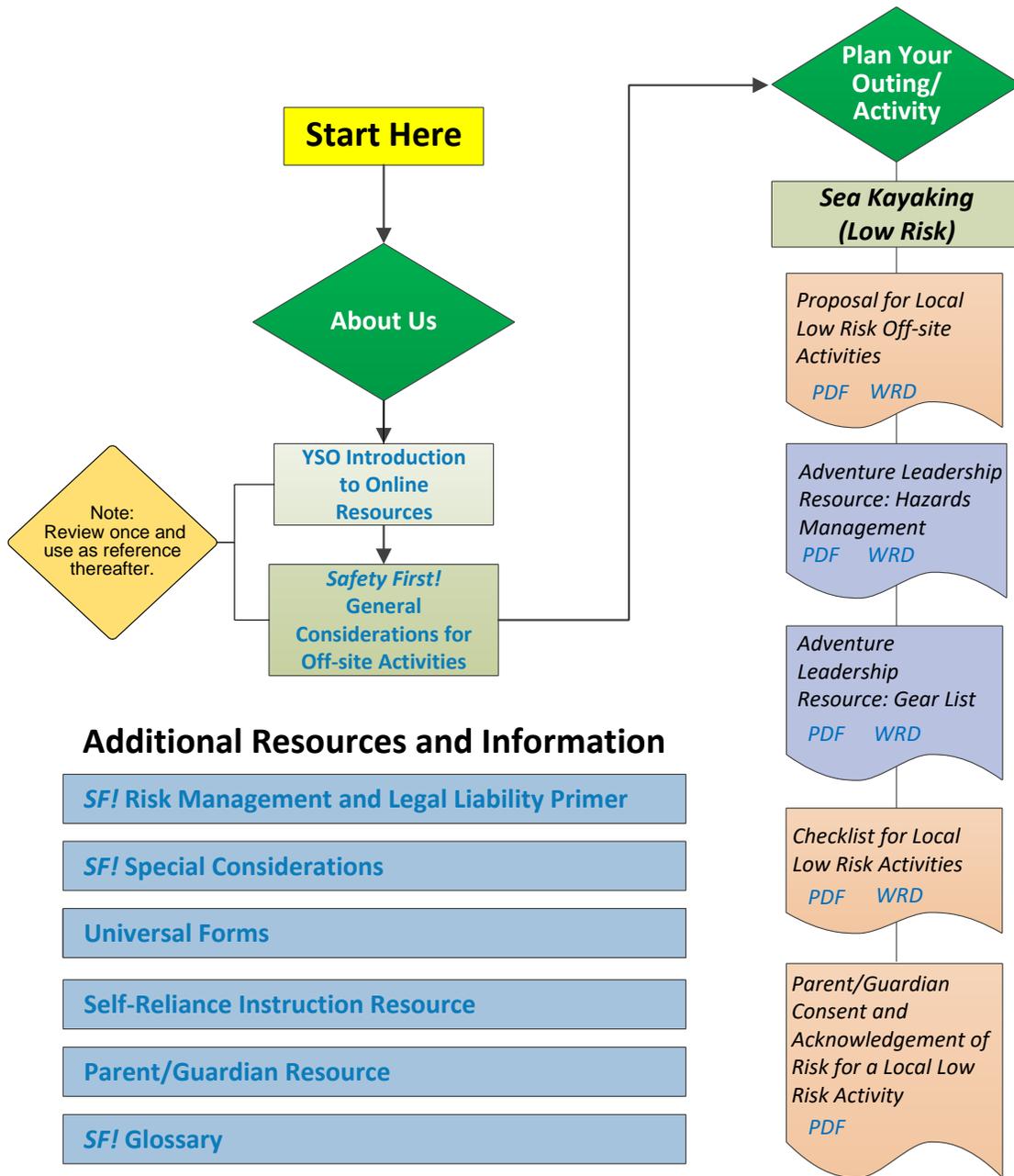
Sea Kayaking (Normal Risk)

On-site Instruction Grade 6+
Day Tripping Grade 7+

Flow Chart, Steps to Success, and Safety Guidelines

Click on the hyperlink at the bottom of the column that best describes the context of the activity that you are planning .

Sea Kayaking (Low Risk)	Sea Kayaking (Higher Care)
<p>Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local, confined venue (e.g., pond, small lake or confined bay) • Generally of short duration (less than 3 hours) • Low inherent risk in the activity • Clear boundaries for activity • Near support services: e.g., buildings or vehicles accessible; • Close to emergency services: less than 20 minutes from EMS arrival on-site; • Teachers/leaders do not need significant specialized training to implement the guidelines • Minimal preparation of students required; less than an hour 	<p>Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substantial body of water (e.g., open ocean) • Semi-remote to remote location: out of the community • Higher inherent risk in the activity; • Lack of clear boundaries for activity • Potentially far from support services: buildings and/or vehicles not immediately accessible • Not close to emergency services: more than 20 minutes from EMS arrival on-site • Teachers/leaders need specific training in the activity to conduct it safely • Students need significant preparation; more than an hour



Additional Resources and Information

- [SF! Risk Management and Legal Liability Primer](#)
- [SF! Special Considerations](#)
- [Universal Forms](#)
- [Self-Reliance Instruction Resource](#)
- [Parent/Guardian Resource](#)
- [SF! Glossary](#)

Safety Guidelines

Kayaking Normal Risk

British Columbia is in quite a unique position in Western Canada to expose students to sea kayaking. While travel on the open ocean comes with risks that require a high level of preparation, the activity can be introduced as a day activity in local, well-sheltered areas that keep the activity accessible to many schools.

Known Potential Risks

- Injuries related to motor vehicle incidents en route to and from activity area;
- Becoming lost or separated from the group or the group becoming split up;
- Injuries related to slips, trips, and falls in the program area or en-route to/from it;
- Injuries related to capsizing of craft or falling out of craft;
- Injuries related to collisions with movable (e.g., other boats or paddles) or immovable (e.g., rock) objects;
- Injuries related to equipment (poor fit, improper adjustment, malfunction, or becoming tangled in apparatus; e.g., foot snag in bailer cord);
- Injuries related to lifting, carrying, walking with, or putting down the craft and/or packs;
- Other injuries (e.g., blisters, sprains, strains; acute or overuse injuries/conditions);
- Drowning or near drowning;
- Injuries related to the physical demands of the activity and/or lack of activity skill;
- Weather changes creating adverse conditions (e.g., cold, wind, precipitation);
- Hypothermia due to remaining in cool/cold water too long or due to insufficient clothing;
- Loss of manual dexterity in hands during cold and wet weather;
- Hyperthermia (e.g., overheating) due to insufficient hydration, overdressing and/or overexertion;
- Illness related to poor personal hygiene, or failure to purify drinking water;
- Allergic reactions to natural substances (e.g., wasp or bee stings or jelly fish stings in ocean);
- Injuries related to encounters with animals and plants in the environment;
- Psychological injury due to anxiety or embarrassment (e.g., re: lack of skill, body image); and
- Other risks normally associated with participation in the activity and environment.

Common Risk Mitigation Strategies

Sea Kayaking On-site Instruction

Teacher/Leader Readiness

- The teacher/leader must be competent to organize the sea kayaking activity; to demonstrate, instruct and supervise it; and to effect rescue and emergency procedures as necessary.
- If craft are to be transported by trailer to and from the water, the individual driving the tow vehicle must have sufficient experience and skill to manage these tasks safely.
- The teacher/leader and assistant leaders must be capable swimmers, able to manage themselves confidently in the water in the selected environment, while wearing a PFD. To be counted in the supervision ratio, at a minimum, they should each be able to successfully complete a survival swim test (roll into the water, tread 1 min., swim 50 m. any style while wearing a PFD and no goggles).
- Teachers/leaders should secure training and/or certification from the Sea Kayak Guides Alliance of BC, Association of Canadian Sea Kayaking Guides, Paddle Canada and/or other appropriate sources.
- All assistant leaders must have adequate competence to support the students on the trip and to execute rescue in the anticipated water.
- If more than .5 km from the school, at least one supervisor should have first aid training, the level determined by the time and distance to Emergency Medical Services (See *First Aid* in the *General Considerations for Off-site Activities*).

Location

- Guidelines related to travel by bus or walking to/from a site are covered in *Travel to/from Off-site Destinations* in the *General Considerations for Off-site Activities*. If travelling by a means other than bus or walking see *Transportation in Special Considerations*.
- Identify a safe, allowable way to transport equipment considering the safety of the students and minimal potential for damage to the equipment. (e.g., full length kayak paddles may not be permitted in the cabin of a school bus and need to be transported in a lower luggage hold - which not all buses have). Address any such issues when booking.
- Sea kayaking can be introduced in a pool, pond, lake or ocean environment, but not in fast moving water. If on the ocean, a protected bay, inlet or other safe area (Class 1) should be used.
- Non-established waterfronts should be researched before swimming or practicing boat rescues (e.g., sufficient depth).
- When selecting an appropriate teaching site/route for a boating activity, consider:
 - the temperature of air (including wind chills) and water,
 - length of time a participant(s) may spend in the water if a boat is upset,
 - rate at which the water is moving (if a river, stream),

- ease of access to/egress from site or watercourse, and
- the skill/experience level of the students.
- Water temperature is a critical factor in risk level calculation. It is important that all leaders and students are sufficiently prepared and skilled to get out of the water quickly if it is cold (e.g. within 10 minutes). Cold water is debilitating. Most individuals have difficulty rescuing themselves out of frigid waters, let alone another person(s), and children are incapacitated far more quickly. The ocean is cold, even in summer.
- If paddling at a waterfront, kayakers should be given boundaries (e.g., a buoyed-off area or clear landmarks) in which to stay.
- A rescue craft should be on shore or in the water at a waterfront site while students are out on the water, or there must be sufficient craft and leaders on the water to provide rescue.
- Postpone or cancel paddling if there are indications of dangerous weather (e.g., lightning, storm activity, high wave conditions, or a strong off-shore or very gusty wind - particularly on shallow lakes, wide rivers or the sea).

Equipment

- Sea (touring) kayaks are assumed for this activity.
- Sea kayaks come in singles (one seat) and doubles (two seats).
- At a minimum, each craft should be outfitted with a paddle, a sprayskirt, a paddle float, and a PFD and whistle (per paddler) as well as a buoyant heaving line of 15 meters, and a bailer or water pump/craft. There should be a spare paddle per three craft.
- While somewhat redundant with the previous point, the following equipment suggestions meet or exceed the Transport Canada, Office of Boating Safety minimum standards and recommendations. Standards and regulations change periodically and it is the responsibility of vessel operators to comply with current standards. It would be prudent to consult the office or website for current information before planning any boating activities. Go to www.boatingsafety.ca
 - Craft should be checked for leaks, broken seats, etc. and paddles for cracks and splinters.
 - If transporting boats to and from usage site, ensure that they are properly secured on a trailer (with safety chain in place and functioning lights) or well-lashed on a secure rooftop carrier.
 - Do not exceed the weight load or capacity for the craft used.
 - Correct fitting, Transport Canada/Canadian Coast Guard/Fisheries and Oceans Canada (or any combination of the above) approved PFDs must be worn properly and done up at all times by all group members while on/in the water.
 - Students under 36.3 kg (80 lbs.) should wear PFDs that include a large collar for head support, buckled waist belt or elastic gathering, a buckled crotch strap that prevents the PFD from slipping over the student's head, and reflective tape.

- PFDs should be checked to ensure they are in appropriate condition (e.g., buoyant, straps/buckles/zippers work, straps well-attached).
- Be aware that inflatable PFDs are not approved for anyone under 16 years of age or under 36.3 kg (80 lbs.), on a personal watercraft or for whitewater paddling activities.
- A sound-signalling device is required equipment onboard each craft. Attaching a pea-less whistle to each participant's PFD will meet this requirement. Alternatively, each craft would need to be outfitted with a compressed gas horn or electric horn.
- There should be a sponge in each kayak to use to help remove water.
- Wetsuits, dry suits or other appropriate clothing should be considered for cold water instruction. The students will be getting wet if practising rescues and may be in the water for a period of time.
- Footwear must be light-weight (considering ways to ensure feet are kept warm) and securely fastened. Running shoes or water shoes with strong soles are good. Rubber boots or other bulky footwear should be avoided in closed boats.
- Glasses should be strapped/tied on or have a small float attached.

Instruction

Water Safety and Rescue Skills

- Students should be comfortable in the water. Because they are wearing PFDs/life jackets, it is not essential that they can all swim, but it may be physically and/or psychologically beneficial (e.g., reducing fear of falling in) to introduce them to/review survival swimming as relevant to their anticipated paddling situation (e.g., reorienting themselves after rolling in, treading 1 min. and swimming 50 meters, all while wearing a PFD and no goggles).
- Non or weak swimmers should each be buddied in a boat with a competent swimmer;
- If students will be using sprayskirts, instruct them first in wet exits without their skirts, and then with them and have them practise doing so. Ensure that when putting the skirt on the boat, they keep the pull toggle accessible.
- Students may be taught appropriate self-rescue (e.g., paddle float roll, kayak roll) and assisted rescue skills (e.g., towing rescue, T-rescue, stirrup re-entry, pulling up off another boat's bow) for the type of craft and water to be paddled. Novices shouldn't be expected to master these techniques and be able to apply them in even a day trip situation; secondary back-up rescue systems must be in place.
- Where paddlers are in tandem kayaks, they should learn and practise wet exits as a pair to avoid collisions with each other.
- Students must be taught general procedures if their craft upsets. For example:
 - call or blow whistle for help,
 - attempt to hang onto paddle and craft (unless doing so places them in danger; e.g., being blown away from shore by off-shore wind), and
 - watch for a rescue craft.

- Students must be taught general procedures if another craft upsets (e.g., signalling rest of group, rescuing people first, then craft and/or other gear).
- Practise rescue of self and others in a safe environment (e.g., pool, pond, calm waterfront) prior to an outing.
- Where paddlers are in tandem kayaks, they should learn and practise wet exits as a pair to avoid collisions with each other.
- Tandem paddling students should be taught how to communicate with each other and practise this.

Sea Kayaking Skills

- As a pre-requisite for open water kayaking, students should be taught and demonstrate basic skills that are appropriate to safe participation in the particular sea kayaking activity planned. These skills may include:
 - proper adjustment of foot braces for good fit in boat,
 - lifting, carrying and launching kayak,
 - emptying the kayak (beach and dock)
 - getting in and out,
 - body position and balance,
 - basic braces, strokes, steering, maneuvers, and
 - taking off and landing in waves or surf.

Supervision

- On-site supervision.
- Recognize risk of novice kayakers panicking when they tip over and failing to properly extricate themselves from their boat. The instructors must know they can assist every student very quickly in the event several have this problem at once.
- Generally, consider a ratio of one capable adult paddler to 4–5 students if in solo boats, 1: 6–8 if in double kayaks, except in the most protected of bays.
- Students new to this activity should be instructed in a well-confined area where they will not drift away with the wind or a moving tide or other current.

Sea Kayaking Day Trip (Low Risk): all of the above, plus:

Teacher/Leader Readiness

- The teacher/leader must be comfortable and capable on and near the sea, including, if/as relevant to the particular sea kayaking environment and activity:
 - understanding waves, tides, river outflows, rip currents and sandbanks, beach hazards, and how these affect ocean travel,
 - sea traffic hazards (e.g., shipping lanes, ferries, float planes),
 - reading tide/current tables and nautical charts,
 - reading local winds, coastal weather and making accurate short term forecasts,

- navigating on and along coastal areas,
 - taking off and landing in manageable surf,
 - reading warning signs and flags, and dealing with ships and wakes,
 - understanding relevant ocean flora and fauna and how to minimize negative interactions with such, and
 - executing rescues of self and others.
- The leader should be familiar with Transport Canada regulations for the vessel(s) in use with regard to operator certification. Such certifications depend upon whether the craft in use is designated a commercial or pleasure craft. Refer to www.boatingsafety.ca
 - All assistant leaders must be capable paddlers, able to manage their own craft and render assistance to others who may require support
 - The teacher/leader or a designated other must be able to provide first aid, the level of training dependent on time and distance to Emergency Medical Services (See *First Aid in General Considerations for Off-site Activities*).
 - A teacher/leader must have and be able to effectively use the external communications system to secure weather information, make distress calls and/or engage in other important communications.

Location

- Be particularly cautious in open areas with off-shore winds and/or subject to the effects of incoming or outgoing tides. Secure district approval and informed parental/guardian consent for all paddling in Class 2 ocean environments. In all cases, high energy coastline/minimal refuge travel (Class 3) should be avoided with school groups.
- Consider potential implications if a watercourse is subject to sudden and/or significant tidal currents, rivers entering and/or other currents.
- At the end of each trip, and upon changing watercourses, wash any mud, algae or plant fragments from boats, paddles and feet to avoid transmitting any plant or animal pest species to previously uninfected places.

Equipment

- A school group may be best operated with everyone in doubles boats. A mixed fleet, with some in each craft, is challenging because doubles boats can go faster (two paddlers vs. one), so can get more space opening up between the boats. That said, if there is an odd number, someone will end up in a single; this should be a relatively strong, fit person.
- If on the ocean and/or paddling anywhere at dawn or dusk, a watertight flashlight or navigation lights are strongly recommended and required in a craft over 6 m long.
- Wetsuits/drysuits should be considered except on very short trips in very sheltered areas.
- Have a thermos of hot, sweet fluid available.

Instruction

Water Safety and Rescue Skills

- Students must be informed about the potential hazards likely to be encountered on the route and safety procedures to minimize the risks.
- Students should be instructed on how to handle anticipatable wind, wave and current conditions if paddling anything not completely protected.
- Students should be taught about hazards associated with ocean flora and fauna and how to minimize the impact of these.
- Students should be warned not to drink water from watercourses; e.g., streams flowing into the ocean.

Supervision

- Have a plan and practice strategies for keeping the group together in deteriorating conditions (e.g., lead-sweep, buddy system, counting off).

Notes

1. If, when reviewing the guidelines above, terms and concepts presented are unfamiliar, this is a strong indicator that additional personal leadership preparation (e.g., a training course, reading) or contracting a qualified service provider is advisable.
2. This document is not intended as an instructional guide. The teacher will need to use other references to learn how to teach students the skills (e.g., how to brake when inline skating, how to do a diagonal stride when cross-country skiing).