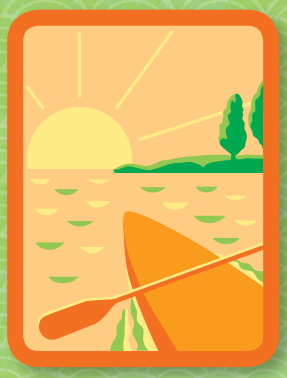
"The first river you paddle runs through the rest of your life. It bubbles up in pools and eddies to remind you who you are."

—Lynn Noel, author

Made possible by a generous grant from the Elliott Wildlife Values Project



Paddling

Paddling takes a mix of knowledge and skills, and a dash of daring. It also delivers one of the most unforgettable experiences you'll ever have on water. In this badge, there are three paddling activities to choose from: canoeing, kayaking, and stand up paddleboarding (SUP). Pick one and jump in!

Steps

1. **Explore the three paddling sports**
2. **Learn paddling safety**
3. **Practice paddling techniques**
4. **Go on a short paddling adventure**
5. **Take your paddling skills to the next level**

Purpose

When I've earned this badge, I'll have paddling skills and know how to be safe—and have fun—on the water.

Before You Start

- You must know how to swim.
- Find out where you can paddle and use a paddleboard, canoe, or kayak. You might paddle at a Girl Scout camp, recreational facility, or community center. Or you might look into taking lessons at a lake, river, or ocean.
- Always wear a personal floatation device (PFD) whenever you paddle. The recommended style is a Type III U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket.
- Check your instructor's credentials: She must be at least 18 years old, know water and rescue safety, and be certified to teach your sport. (For more information, check Girl Scout safety guidelines.)

STEP 1

Explore the three paddling sports

You may have one paddling sport in mind, but for this first step, keep your options open and explore all three. Find out as much as you can about each sport to help you choose one to focus on and build your skills.

Here's what you'll want to find out about the three paddle sports:

- **The background of each.** For example, SUP got its start in Hawaii in the 1960s but didn't take off as a sport until the early 2000s. Canoeing and kayaking have been around for centuries and are both Olympic sports.
- **What makes each a different experience.** Stand up paddlers say the experience is like walking on water. Canoeists like working with a team. Kayakers enjoy challenging themselves on the water. Find out what enthusiasts say is so great about each sport, and then decide whether you want to go solo (SUP or kayaking) or with a team (canoeing).
- **What kind of equipment you need and where you can rent or borrow it.**
- **Where you can paddle for your level.** All three sports can be done in any body of water—lake, river, or ocean—but which one works best for you? If you're new to the sport, is it better to start in calm water? If you've done it before, where can you challenge yourself? How long will it take to train before you can get out on water?

CHOICES – DO ONE:

- [ ] **Go to a sporting goods store and talk to an expert.**

OR

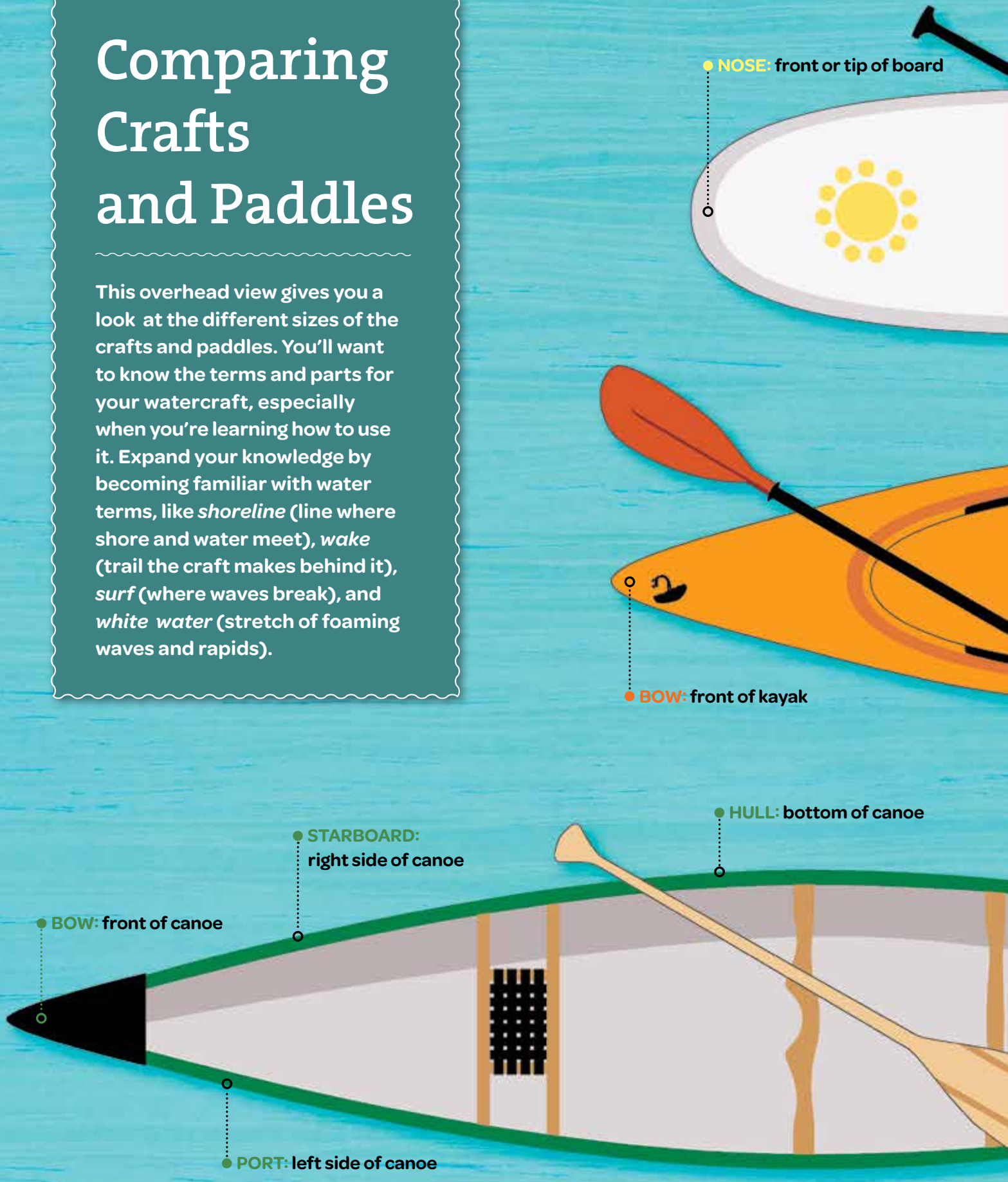
- [ ] **Talk to a paddling expert at a Girl Scout camp or to an older girl who has experience with all three sports.**

OR

- [ ] **Talk to a paddling expert at a community center or recreational facility.**

Comparing Crafts and Paddles

This overhead view gives you a look at the different sizes of the crafts and paddles. You'll want to know the terms and parts for your watercraft, especially when you're learning how to use it. Expand your knowledge by becoming familiar with water terms, like *shoreline* (line where shore and water meet), *wake* (trail the craft makes behind it), *surf* (where waves break), and *white water* (stretch of foaming waves and rapids).



RAILS: sides or edges of board

TAIL: rear of board

LEASH: attached to rider's ankle to make sure board stays with her

FIN: on bottom tail of board to help keep it stable

DECK: top part, where you stand

STAND UP PADDLEBOARD

- Boards are usually thicker and longer than a standard surfboard.
- Designed for one person.
- The paddler propels the board using one long paddle.

ROCKER: amount of curve kayak has

STERN: rear of kayak

HULL: bottom of kayak

KAYAK

- Smaller than canoes.
- Designed for one or two people.
- The paddler sits with legs out in front and uses a double-bladed paddle.

STERN: rear of canoe

CANOE

- Larger than kayaks.
- Designed for more than one person.
- The paddler sits on a seat or kneels on the bottom of the canoe and uses a one-bladed paddle.

Get Your Game Plan On

Whether you're planning to paddle for an hour or an extended trip, it's a good idea to create a float plan which should include a description of your boat, the people on board, what safety equipment you have, your destination, and your expected time of departure and return. Give it to a friend, family member, or someone at the marina or recreational facility so that people know where you are.

STEP 2 Learn paddling safety

What happens if you fall in the water? What if the water or weather conditions are bad? Being a strong swimmer helps, but so does being aware of what can happen and how to handle it if it does. Learn paddling safety, and let the good times roll!

To be safe on water, here's what you need to know:

- **How to get in and out of your craft or on your paddleboard.**
  - For SUP, you may be on a beach and need to get your board past the break line.
  - In a canoe or kayak, are you embarking from a dock or from the water?
- **How to practice safety maneuvers.**
  - Learn how to roll back a kayak or flip over a canoe when your craft capsizes.
  - Learn how to get back on your paddleboard in case you fall off.
- **What to do if your paddleboard or craft springs a leak or becomes punctured.**
  - Find out how to patch cracks, dents, and dings.
- **Safety requirements for your sport.**
  - Learn how to signal for help in an emergency.
  - Find out what kind of safety equipment you should have.
- **Rules for waterway safety.**
  - Find out what buoys are used for.
  - Learn the navigation rules for different bodies of water, including rivers, lakes, and oceans.

The Earth is 71% water—paddle it!

- **How to wear a personal floatation device.**
  - Make sure it fits according to your weight and height.
  - Inspect it to make sure it's in good condition.
- **What you should wear for your sport.**
  - Keep in mind you'll probably end up in the water, so find out what to wear—a swimsuit? Quick-dry clothing?
  - Find out about appropriate footwear.

CHOICES – DO ONE:

☐ **Take a paddling water safety course at your community center or recreational facility.**

OR

☐ **Practice paddling water safety at Girl Scout camp.**

OR

☐ **Practice paddling water safety with a certified paddling instructor.**

STEP 3 Practice paddling techniques

Your goal is to paddle your craft or board in the direction you want and at the speed you desire. To do this, find out how to paddle efficiently and with the least amount of strain on your body.

To learn paddling techniques, here's what you need to know:

- **What kind of paddle you need.** For example, you'll use a single-blade paddle for canoeing and a double-blade paddle for kayaking. For SUP, you need a long single-blade paddle. The paddle size may vary depending on your height.
- **How to properly hold a paddle.** Gripping a paddle the right way keeps you from getting tired or strained.
- **How to stroke with a paddle.**
  - What are the techniques for your sport? For example, for canoeing and kayaking, you're sitting down; for paddleboarding, you're standing up. What effect does this have on the stroke?
  - What types of strokes are there? How do you turn? Slow down? Should you stroke deep in the water, or on the surface? What stroke uses less muscle but gets you where you want to go?
  - How does paddling change when you're on calm water? Waves?
  - How should your body be positioned?

CHOICES – DO ONE:

☐ **Practice paddling with a local outdoor group or community center.**

OR

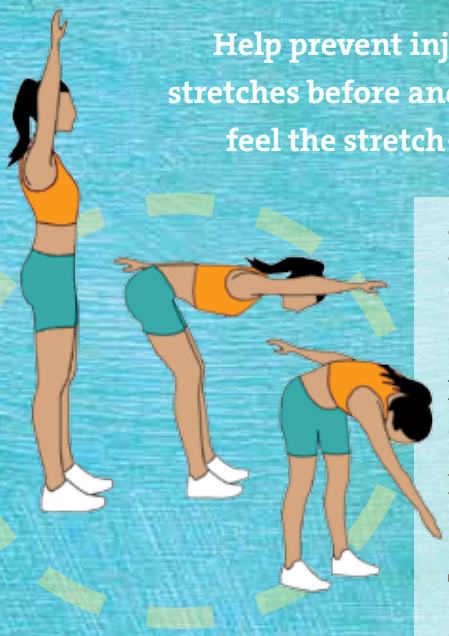
☐ **Practice paddling at a Girl Scout camp.**

OR

☐ **Practice paddling with a certified instructor.**

Paddle Stretches

Help prevent injuries and soreness by warming up and cooling down with stretches before and after you paddle. For all these stretches, push only until you feel the stretch—stretching should never be painful. Here are four ideas:



BACK

Stand straight with your legs shoulder-width apart.

Stretch your right arm above your head.

Bend low at your waist so you feel the stretch in your back.

Stretch right arm to left side.

Repeat with left arm. | Do 10 repetitions.

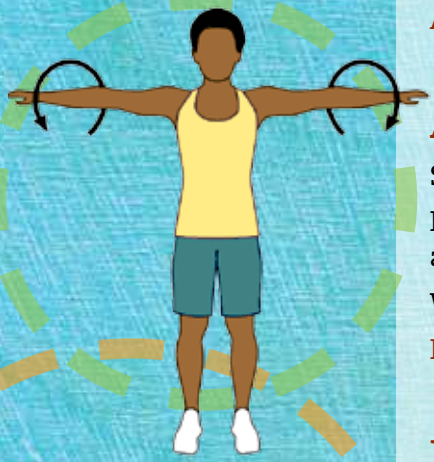
TORSO

Stand up straight.

Bend your elbows and tuck your arms at your sides.

Twist your torso keeping your chest and shoulders straight.

Alternate from side to side 20 times.



ARMS

Strand up straight.

Lift both arms out straight at shoulder height, like an airplane's wings.

With open hands, make circles about the size of a dinner plate.

Reverse direction. | Repeat 10 times in each direction.

HAMSTRINGS

Sit down on the floor (or ground).

Straighten your right leg out in front of your body.

Bend your left leg.

Place the bottom of your left foot against your inner right thigh.

Lean forward over your right leg, keeping your back straight.

Hold for 30 seconds, then switch legs.

STEP 4 Go on a short paddling adventure

It's a thrilling moment when you first pull away from land and set out on the water. With paddling, you can enjoy nature, spend time with friends, have an adventure—and most of all, have fun! Start with a short trip, for an hour or less.

CHOICES – DO ONE:

- ☐ **Go paddling with a local outdoor group or community center.**

  OR

- ☐ **Go paddling at a Girl Scout camp.**

  OR

- ☐ **Go paddling with a certified instructor.**

Paddling checklist

Before you head out ...

- ☐ Check weather and water conditions.
- ☐ Inspect your gear and equipment.

When you return ...

- ☐ Clean your craft and paddles. After you paddle, know how to wipe everything down to prevent wear and damage.
- ☐ Find out about storage. Do you need a cover? If you're transporting your equipment, find out what you need to protect it.

STEP 5

Take your paddling skills to the next level

From overnight trips to relay races, there are lots of ways to step up your paddling skills and have new adventures. Once you're comfortable on the water, find a new way to challenge yourself!

CHOICES – DO ONE:

- ☐ **Paddle someplace new.** Go to a place you've never been. Paddle to a new shoreline or a marina. Paddle across a river, lake, or pier to pier.

OR

- ☐ **Take an overnight paddling trip.** Wherever your paddling takes you, camp out for the night!

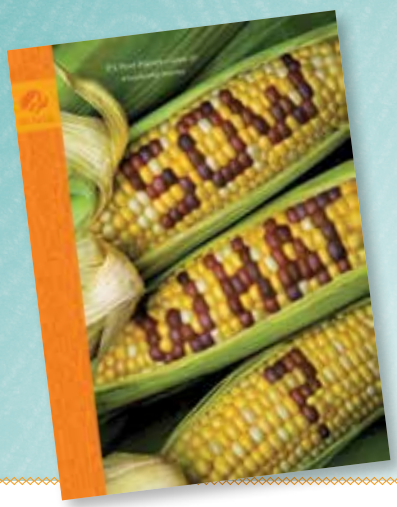
OR

- ☐ **Join or organize a paddling race.** This could be with girls at camp, or you could sign up for an event. There are many different types of races and competitions.

International Scale of River Difficulty

White-water rapids and rivers are part of a rating system that compares river difficulty throughout the world. In Girl Scouting, girls can go as high as Class 2 (Novice).

- **Class 1: Easy**
  Fast-moving water with small waves. Rocks and other obstacles are easy to see.
- **Class 2: Novice**
  Straightforward rapids with medium-sized waves. Some rocks are harder to spot.
- **Class 3: Intermediate**
  Rapids with irregular waves and fast current. For this class, you need to know good boat control and have strong swimming skills.
- **Class 4: Advanced**
  Intense, powerful rapids with turbulent water.
- **Class 5: Expert**
  Long, obstructed violent rapids, with drops, holes, steep chutes, and complex routes.
- **Class 6: Extreme and Exploratory Rapids**
  Unpredictable and treacherous runs that are almost never attempted.



Add the Badge to Your Journey

As you paddle, you'll be immersed in nature and inspired to think about how important water is to our food network. When you come up with a Harvest Plan award project, think about how important water is to animals, people, and our planet. Water ties in intricately with our food sources; it's what keeps every living thing alive. What can you do to protect water that will affect our food sources for generations to come?

Now that I've earned this badge, I can give service by:

- Doing a presentation to Brownies about water safety.
- Assisting a paddling instructor who's teaching younger girls.
- Finding out about ways to help keep waterways clean and clear for wildlife and paddlers.

I'm inspired to:

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First published in 2011 by Girl Scouts of the USA
420 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10018-2798
www.girlscouts.org

Printed in the United States

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