



Lifeboats

# PADDLING: GUIDANCE FROM THE RNLI

[RNLI.org/paddling](https://www.rnli.org/paddling)



PREVENTING DROWNING TOGETHER

# BEFORE YOU PADDLE AWAY, MAKE SURE YOU:



**ALWAYS CARRY A MEANS OF CALLING FOR HELP AND KEEP IT ON YOUR PERSON**



**CHECK THE WEATHER AND TIDES**



**GET SOME TRAINING AND PADDLE WITHIN YOUR LIMITS**



**WEAR APPROPRIATE CLOTHING FOR THE CONDITIONS AND YOUR TRIP**



**WEAR YOUR BUOYANCY AID**



**TELL SOMEONE ELSE WHERE YOU'RE GOING AND WHEN YOU'LL BE BACK**



## COMMUNICATION

WHAT CAN I USE TO CALL FOR HELP IN AN EMERGENCY?

Always carry a means of calling for help and keep it on your person. If you can't reach it in an emergency it's no help.



### MOBILE PHONE

- Keep your mobile in a waterproof pouch, on your person.
- Smartphones can provide a location, but emergency calls should be made by voice – call 999 or 112 and ask for the Coastguard.
- If you're struggling to make an emergency call, try holding the phone on the other side of your head, as this may be enough to block the signal.
- You can also try sending a text to 999 or 112 (if preregistered) if the phone signal is weak as a text may get through.
- Download and use the RYA or ISA SafeTrx app to log, track and send alerts about your trip. This free app monitors your journeys and alerts emergency contacts if you fail to return home on time.



### PERSONAL LOCATOR BEACON (PLB)

- Keep it on your person.
- A recognised emergency signal, it's manually activated only and should be registered with the Coastguard.
- Not all PLBs inherently float and the unit needs to be held out of water to transmit.
- It can also be used on land in areas where no phone signal is available and it transmits for 24+ hours.



### WATERPROOF HANDHELD DSC VHF

- Keep it on your person.
- If possible, buy a DSC-equipped radio. This transmits a recognised emergency signal, and your location.
- Requires an operator's licence and a ship's (craft's) radio licence (free online in the UK).



## BUOYANCY

AM I WEARING A BUOYANCY AID?

- Wearing a well-fitted, well-maintained and suitable buoyancy aid could save your life.
- When choosing a buoyancy aid, check product labelling for weight and size guidance, fit by adjusting the straps, then lift from the shoulders. It should not be possible to move the buoyancy aid. If it slides up, try a different style or tighter fit.
- Choose a brightly coloured one that can be easily spotted. Make sure it has enough pockets to store your calling for help device and any other equipment. Attach a whistle on a lanyard, and at night attach a small strobe light.
- If paddleboarding there are a number of waist belt personal flotation devices available on the market. These can be an alternative to wearing a buoyancy aid. Remember to always wear your leash.

For more tips go to:  
[RNLI.org/ChooseltWearIt](https://www.rnli.org/ChooseltWearIt)



## WEATHER AND TIDES

HAVE I CHECKED THE WEATHER AND TIDES TODAY AND PLANNED MY TRIP ACCORDINGLY?

- Check the weather and the tides before you set out – try UKHO Easytide. Be aware of wind strength, especially offshore winds (where the wind is blowing out to sea).
- Always try to paddle from a lifeguarded beach, marked with black and white flags.
- If venturing away from the beach, seek local expert knowledge, such as from the Harbourmaster or lifeguards.



## EQUIPMENT

IS MY CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT SUITABLE FOR TODAY'S CONDITIONS?

- Wear the right clothing for the season and conditions, such as a suitable wetsuit/drysuit and layered clothing.
- When paddling in open water:
  - have a means of calling for help on your person.
  - if using a SUP always wear a leash.
  - consider wearing a cap and sunscreen.



## TRAINING

DO I HAVE APPROPRIATE TRAINING AND/OR EXPERIENCE?

- Develop your skills. Look for training at your local canoe or water sports club and via accredited training centres. Contact your local paddling club and look for coaching sessions/paddling awards run by British Canoeing or Canoeing Ireland coaches.



## PLANNING

DOES SOMEBODY KNOW WHERE I'M GOING AND WHEN I'LL BE BACK?

- Tell someone on land where you are going and what time you'll be back.
- Paddle in a group, where possible.



## BE SEEN

### IS MY CRAFT VISIBLE?

Whenever you're on the water, your visibility is important. But during a rescue, it can be a lifesaver. Increase your visibility by sticking SOLAS-approved reflective tape to your craft and paddle and displaying appropriate lights if out at dusk or night time.

### WHY ADD ID TO MY CRAFT?

- If you lose your gear whilst you're out paddling, please tell the Coastguard. That way they will know that you're safe and won't launch a search for you.
- Consider marking your craft with an ID and emergency contact details. Remember to use a permanent marker. Having your information will save time – and potentially your life – in a rescue situation. It allows others to raise the alarm and track you down if they find your craft unattended.



## IN AN EMERGENCY!

**If you can't reach a means of calling for help, help can't reach you.**

If you need help, here's what to do.

### USING A VHF RADIO:

1. Press Channel 16 button.
2. Activate DSC alert if fitted.
3. Press and hold transmit button and say:  
**Mayday, mayday, mayday.**  
**This is ... [your name 3 times].**  
**Call sign ... MMSI ...**  
**Mayday, [your name].**  
**Call sign ... MMSI ...**
4. **My position is ...** [describe position and give GPS location if possible].
5. **We are ...** [describe the nature of distress, the assistance required, number of people and craft followed by any further information].
6. Say **over** and wait for a response.
7. If no response – repeat procedure.

### USING A MOBILE PHONE:

Call 999 or 112 and ask for the Coastguard.

While you are waiting for help, stay with your craft – you make a larger target for search and rescue teams.

If you can get your body even partially out of the water, it'll significantly increase your survival time.

## KNOW WHAT TO DO

VISIT

[RNLI.org/paddling](https://www.RNLI.org/paddling)

### The RNLI is the charity that saves lives at sea

Royal National Lifeboat Institution, a charity registered in England and Wales (209603), Scotland (SC037736), the Republic of Ireland (20003326), the Bailiwick of Jersey (14), the Isle of Man, the Bailiwick of Guernsey and Alderney

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