

Outdoor Education (Paddle Rafting)

Lakes, Rivers

SECONDARY - CURRICULAR 2024

- Consult [Disability-Centred Safety](#) if your groups of students include students with disabilities.
- Consult [Risk Management](#).
- The safety standards for this activity must be presented to the activity provider prior to the activity taking place. The activity provider must meet the minimum requirements listed in the safety standards. For more information on planning trips using outside providers, consult [Outside Activity Providers](#).
- These Outdoor Education (Paddle Rafting) safety standards as well as the safety standards of the Outside Activity Provider must be followed.
- The Outdoor Education (Paddle Rafting) safety standards outlines the safety requirements for paddle rafting activities that involve moving water. Participation is restricted to Class I and Class II rivers only, as defined by the [International Scale of River Difficulty](#):
 - * Class I: Fast moving water with riffles and small waves. Few obstructions, all of which are easy to negotiate.
 - * Class II: Straightforward rapids with wide, clear channels which are evident with a little advance study.
- Canoeing Moving Water and White Water Rafting above Class II, White Water Kayaking, as well as White Water or Surf SUP, are not appropriate activities at the secondary level. For Class I and Class II Rivers Consult:
 - * [Outdoor Education (Canoeing Moving Water)](<https://safety.ophea.net/secondary/>)

- Also consult [Outdoor Education \(General Procedures\)](#).
- Consult [Outdoor Education \(Swimming - Leisure\)](#) if leisure swimming is included as an associated activity that takes place at a Designated or Non-Designated Swim area (for example, at camps or municipal swim areas) when not on a watercraft or land-based trip
- Consult [Outdoor Education \(Swimming - Instructional\)](#) if the any associated activity (for example, a swim test) is to take place at a Designated Swim Area at a waterfront.
- Consult [Outdoor Education \(Swimming - on Watercraft and Land-based Trips\)](#) if swimming is to take place in a non-designated swim area while tripping.
- Consult [Swimming](#) if any associated activity (for example, a swim test) is to take place in a pool.

Equipment

- Determine that all equipment is safe for use (for example, no sharp corners, cracks, or splinters). Students must be encouraged to report equipment problems to the Teacher.
- Rafts must be provided by the facility. Personal rafts must not be used.
- Comply with the Minimum Safety Equipment Requirements as specified in the [Transport Canada Safe Boating Guide](#).
- Correctly fitting and Canadian-approved personal flotation device (P.F.D.)/lifejackets, with whistle attached, must be worn and properly secured at all times by all students when near the water, on docks and in rafts.

Refer to the [First Aid](#) section for first aid equipment requirements.

Clothing/Footwear/Jewellery

- Determine that all necessary clothing and footwear are included prior to departing on the excursion. Clothing (in layers where appropriate) and footwear appropriate to the activity, location and environmental conditions must be worn. Rain gear and/or a dry change of clothing kept in a watertight bag/container must be accessible.
- When long hair poses a safety risk it must be secured. Devices (for example, hair pins, elastics and barrettes) used to tie back long hair must not present a safety concern.
- Students must not participate when the length of fingernails poses a safety risk to themselves or others.

Facilities

- Check with local authorities for current information regarding route safety.
- Water conditions must be appropriate for the skill level of the group.
- The Qualified Instructor/Trip Guide must be familiar with site including potential hazards and emergency exit points.
- Determine that all facilities are safe for use. Students must be encouraged to report facility problems to the Teacher.

Environmental Considerations

- When environmental conditions may pose a risk to student safety (for example, thunderstorms [lightning] or student(s) with asthma, triggered by air quality), Teachers must take into consideration their school board/school's protocols and procedures related to:
 - environmental conditions (consult [Weather](#)); and
 - insects (for example, mosquitoes and ticks [consult the school/school board's protocols and/or regional Public Health Department's website]).

- Students must receive instruction on safety procedures related to environmental conditions and be made aware of ways to protect themselves (for example, sun burn, heat stroke).
- At all times the school board's weather and insect procedures are the minimum standards. In situations where a higher standard of care is presented (for example, outside activity providers, facility/program coordinators), the higher standard of care must be followed.
- The Qualified Instructor and Teacher must:
 - be aware of and respond to changing weather and water conditions prior to and during the trip; and
 - cancel, postpone or alter the excursion if conditions put students' safety at an elevated level of risk. (for example, wind, temperature, lightning storms, fog).
- If hazardous weather suddenly approaches, leave the water immediately.
- Daylight paddle rafting only except under emergency situations.
- Navigation lights (for example, waterproof flashlight) are required if operating at night or in restricted visibility.

Special Rules/Instructions

- Be aware of students whose medical condition (for example, asthma, anaphylaxis, casts, previous concussion, orthopaedic device) may affect participation. Consult [Medical Conditions](#).
- Students must not participate in the activity until they receive information on concussion prevention specific to the activity, inherent risks of the activity (for example, outline possible risks and ways to minimize the risks), and procedures and rules for safe play. Students must receive instruction on the importance of reporting symptoms related to a suspected concussion.

- Risks involved with the activities must be communicated to parents/guardians with a signed response form from the parents/guardians, giving permission for student to participate.
- Parents/guardians must be informed that all students will wear a correctly fitting and Canadian-approved PFD/lifejacket, with whistle attached, when near, in or on the water.
- Refer to school board policies and procedures (i.e., transportation, excursion/field trip) for communication with parents/guardians, the location of an off-site activity, means of transportation, supervision ratios, and parent/guardian permission.
- Activities must be modified according to the age, ability level, language, and experience of students, number of participants, and the facility available.
- Previous training, fitness level, and the length of time and intensity of physical activity must be taken into consideration.
- Activities must be based on skills that are taught.
- Skills must be taught in proper progression.
- A proper warm-up and cool-down must be included.
- When a student displays hesitation (verbally or non-verbally) with participating, the Teacher must determine the reason(s) for doubt. If the Teacher believes that a potential hesitancy during the skill could put the student at risk, the student must be directed toward a more basic skill, or be permitted to select a role within the activity at their comfort level, including the choice to not participate.
- Prior to participation, the Teacher must reference and apply their school board's policy on equity and inclusion as it affects student participation and makes appropriate accommodations/modifications to provide a safe learning environment. Consult the Intent subsection within the [About section](#).
- Adequate liquid replacement (personal water bottles, water fountains) must be accessible for students before, during, and after physical activity to prevent dehydration.
- Students must be informed that the use of equipment and the gymnasium are prohibited without supervision. In addition to verbal communication, the doors must be locked or signs must be posted indicating that students are not allowed to use the gym unless appropriately supervised.

- Proper exit techniques must always be followed. No diving or jumping off rafts.
- Establish appropriate start and stop procedures (for example, whistle system).
- All Trip Guides must be knowledgeable of the established emergency and safety procedures for their site. Trip Guides must outline emergency and safety procedures to all participants and other Teachers/Monitors.

Paddle Rafting Skills

- Prior paddle rafting, a prerequisite test must occur in a pool, shallow water, or sheltered bay for which students must demonstrate to the Qualified Instructor competence in paddle rafting skills, as follow:
 - Launching
 - Positioning of paddlers
 - Proper entry/exit

Steersperson

- Every craft requires a qualified steersperson.
- Steersperson may sit or stand while steering.
- Steersperson is the in-charge person outranking all persons in the boat.
- Steersperson for each boat must demonstrate the following knowledge and skills:
 - Read and understand [Transports Canada's Safe Boating Guide](#)
 - Be able to manage the team and exercise authority over team members
 - Load the boat

- Balance the boat
- Maintain a straight course
- Steer a figure eight course around two buoys at normal speed with a full crew, in both directions, or in the absence of buoys, steer a set course which includes both left- and right-angled turns
- Execute sideways maneuvers without going forwards
- Turn the boat through 360 degrees in both directions without the use of paddlers
- Guide the craft forward in a straight line without the use of paddlers
- Execute an emergency stop
- Execute safe approaches to a jetty/pontoon/dock in still and windy conditions
- Manage the unloading of the team members
- Secure the boat and determine that gear is put away correctly

Supervision

- All activities must be supervised.
- The type of supervision must be commensurate with the inherent risk of the activity. The level of risk is related to the number of participants, the skill level of the participants, the type of equipment used, and environmental conditions.
- On-Site Supervision is required during the safety and initial skill instruction.
- On-Site Supervision is required by the Teacher when a Qualified Instructor(s) is providing safety and initial skill instruction, and monitoring.

- In-the-Area Supervision is required when trained students are launching and removing rafts from the water while being monitored by a Qualified Instructor(s).
- In-the-Area Supervision is required when trained students are lifting and moving watercraft(s).
- On-Site Supervision is required for the duration of all other components of the activity.
- A Volunteer, under the direction of a Teacher, can monitor students during physical education activities. Refer to your school board's policy on Volunteers assisting with students' physical activities.
- Responsibilities must be clearly outlined for additional Teachers and Volunteers who are monitoring the activity.
- Where a Qualified Instructor is used and the Teacher is not directly with the Qualified Instructor, the Qualified Instructor must provide safety and initial skill instruction, and monitoring for the safe application of skills and student behaviour for the duration of the activity.

Refer to the [Swim Test](#) section for the swim test supervision ratios.

Supervision Ratios/Monitoring

- 1 Teacher/Monitor per 15 students

Qualifications

Refer to the [Swim Test](#) section for the swim test aquatic instructor qualification requirements.

Steersperson Qualifications

- Paddle Rafting steersperson must possess one of the following qualifications:
 - Attendance at a clinic or workshop within the last three years provided by an instructor who is knowledgeable of the activity (for example, appropriate skills and progressions) and where safety is addressed as outlined in the Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education.

- Past experience within the last three years as a steersperson in paddle rafting, having knowledge of the activity (for example, appropriate skills and progressions) and where safety is addressed as outlined in the Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education.

Instructor Qualifications

- For an OCA member waterfront setting (for example, local pond or lake in a sheltered, confined spot), the minimum ORCKA qualification is Camp Canoeing Instructor.
- Situations beyond the training of the Camp Canoeing Instructor or outside of an OCA member setting will require a Qualified Instructor to have one of the following current certifications:
 - ORCKA Basic Canoeing Instructor
 - ORCKA Canadian Style Paddling Instructor
 - ORCKA Canoe Tripping Instructor 2
 - ORCKA Moving Water Instructor 2
 - ORCKA River Running Instructor 2
 - ORCKA Canoe Tripping Level 3
 - Paddle Canada equivalent.
- For non-OCA member sites, and for flatwater paddle rafting in a non-wilderness environment, there must be one Qualified Instructor with a minimum of one of the following qualifications:
 - ORCKA Basic Canoeing Instructor
 - ORCKA Canadian Style Paddling Instructor

- ORCKA Canoe Tripping Instructor 2
- ORCKA Moving Water Instructor 2
- ORCKA River Running Instructor 2
- ORCKA Canoe Tripping Level 3
- Paddle Canada Waterfront Canoe Instructor
- Paddle Canada Intermediate Lake Skills
- Paddle Canada Introductory Lake Skills
- Paddle Canada Advanced Lake Skills – Solo
- Paddle Canada Advanced Tripping Skills
- Paddle Canada Advanced Moving Water (both tandem & solo)
- Paddle Canada Advanced Tripping Skills + Wilderness Advanced First Aid + CPR + 1000 km experience
- Paddle Canada Advanced Tripping Skills + Wilderness First Aid + CPR + 500 km experience
- Paddle Canada Waterfront Canoe Instructor

Water Safety Supervisor Qualifications

- At least one (1) Trip Guide, Assistant Trip Guide, Teacher, Volunteer, or Qualified Instructor with one (1) of the following current certifications must fill the role of Water Safety Supervisor for the Trip Group:

* Whitewater Rescue Technician

* Swiftwater Rescue Technician

* Equivalent to any of the certifications listed

- A student may not act as the Water Safety Supervisor if they are participating in the activity.

Refer to the [Swim Test](#) section for the swim test lifeguard qualification requirements.

First Aid

- A fully stocked first aid kit must be readily accessible. (Consult [Outdoor Education Sample Kit Contents](#))
- A working communication device (for example, satellite or cell phone, or satellite GPS messenger) suitable for the activities/locations must be available. This device must be maintained, waterproofed, protected and dedicated for emergency communications only. The phone number for the device, and phone numbers for emergency services and school contact people (for example, the principal) must be included with the phone.
- At least one individual must have a minimum of a current (three years from the date of issue) first aid certificate (minimum 15 hour course) including CPR C issued by one of the following agencies: St. John Ambulance; Canadian Red Cross; Lifesaving Society; Canadian Ski Patrol; or an organization whose certificate is deemed equivalent by the medical officer of health in the local health unit. This individual must be present for the duration of the activity.
- Follow the school's first aid emergency response (consult [First Aid Plan and First Aid Emergency Response](#)) and the school board's concussion protocol (consult [Concussions](#)).
- An emergency action plan and response to deal with evacuations and lock downs must be followed and communicated to students.

Safety Craft

- If instruction is taking place in a pool, no safety craft is required.

- A safety craft is a designated craft that is rescue-capable, taking into consideration necessary factors (for example, distance from shore, weather, water and wind conditions), and contains at least one Teacher, Trip Guide, or Monitor who meets the first aid certification.
- A safety craft must be in the water and accessible while students are paddle rafting. If the safety craft is motorized then the operator must have a Pleasure Craft Operator Card and must have experience in navigating the craft.

Swim Test

Swim Test for Watercraft

- Prior to the activity, students must successfully complete the following swim test in its entirety, without any stops, in sequence, with or without a personal flotation device (P.F.D.):
 - Rolling entry (backwards or forward) into deep water at 2.75m (9') minimum depth
 - Tread water for 1 minute
 - Swim 50m (164') continuously any stroke
- The test must be administered by a certified Aquatic Instructor or a certified Lifeguard (the test is based on the Lifesaving Society's Swim to Survive™ Standard).
- The swim test must be completed within the school year in which the activity is taking place.
- In lieu of completing the swim test, students may provide proof of Bronze Star certification or higher.
- Results of the swim test must be documented and communicated as per school board policy (for example, to the Student, Teacher, Principal, Parents/Guardians, Trip Guide(s), Lifeguards, Aquatic Instructor, and Outside Provider [if applicable]).
- All Teachers, Trip Guides, and Volunteers must be aware of the students who require a P.F.D./Lifejacket to complete the swim test.

Clothing/Footwear/Jewellery for the Swim Test

- Appropriate swimwear must be worn.

Aquatic Instructor Qualifications for the Swim Test for Watercraft

- An Aquatic Instructor must possess both an Aquatic Instructor certificate and a Lifeguard certificate that are dated not more than two years prior to the date on which they are required to instruct and lifeguard. If the Aquatic Instructor does not hold a Lifeguard certificate, a certified Lifeguard must also be on the dock/shore during the swim test.
- Aquatic Instructor Certificates for Waterfronts:
 - Lifesaving Society - Instructor Certificate
 - YMCA - Instructor Certificate
- Verified copies of certification must be available in the swimming area.

Lifeguard Qualifications for the Swim Test for Watercraft

- A Lifeguard must be 18 years of age or older and possess a current (the date on the certificate must not be older than two years) Lifeguard certificate issued by one of the following organizations:
 - Lifesaving Society – National Lifeguard – Pool/Waterfront
 - Equivalent certificate approved by Minister of Health and Long Term Care
- A student may not act as a lifeguard if they are participating in the activity.
- Lifeguard certification is the only acceptable standard in a recreational camp waterfront scenario.
- Verified copies of certification must be available in the swimming area.

Supervision Ratios for the Swim Test for Watercraft

- There must be a minimum of 2 certified Aquatic Instructors or Lifeguards at the waterfront or in the water.
- Supervision ratio is 2 certified Aquatic Instructors or Lifeguards per 1 to 25 students.
- For every additional 25 students, an additional certified Aquatic Instructor or Lifeguard is required.

Definitions

- **Class I:**

- Easy. Fast moving water with riffles and small waves. There are few obstructions and all are obvious and easily missed with some training.

- **Class II:**

- Novice. Straightforward rapids with wide, clear channels which are evident without scouting. Occasional maneuvering may be required, but rocks and medium sized waves are easily missed by trained paddlers.

- **In-charge Person:**

- Some activities refer to an “In-Charge” person. While the teacher is in-charge and responsible for the overall safety and well-being of students under their care, sometimes there are other personnel who must be identified as “In-Charge” related to specific situations (for example, a pool lifeguard). In activities where an “In-Charge” person is designated, that person, in consultation with the teacher, must make final decisions regarding safety of the students

- **Instructional Time:**

- Time during which there is formal instruction and/or instructor led activities. Examples of instructional time are lessons, events, practice, and games.

- **Qualified Instructor:**

- An individual who provides safety and skill instruction, and monitoring for an activity, and possesses the required qualifications (e.g., experience, certifications). This role could be fulfilled by a teacher, volunteer, or an employee of an outside provider. An instructor does not have the authority to supervise.

- **Lifeguard, Assistant Lifeguard and Aquatic Instructor:**

- Refer to the Qualification section.

- **Lifejacket:**

- Canadian-approved lifejackets are designed to turn an unconscious or incapacitated person face-up in the water. Lifejackets are available with varying amounts of flotation and turning ability. Canadian approved Lifejackets are stamped or labelled indicating that they are approved by Transport Canada, the Canadian Coast Guard or the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

- **Monitor:**

- An individual who assists the Teacher with a group of students, (e.g., Volunteer, Qualified Instructor) and has a responsibility to monitor student behaviors for the duration of the activity.

- **Monitoring:**

- The role of monitoring is to observe, identify, act, and report:
 - Observe: Observe with attention to detail the actions of the students.
 - Identify: Identify the student and the unsafe behaviour.
 - Act: Take appropriate actions to safeguard students and others (e.g., stop the activity).
 - Report: Provide the name of the student and the unsafe behaviour to the teacher for management and direction.

- **Outside Activity Provider:**

- A commercial company, volunteer organization, or individual, not associated with the school board, who possess the required qualifications to provide safety and initial skill instruction, and monitoring for the duration of an activity.

- **Personal Flotation Device (P.F.D.):**

- Canadian-approved P.F.D.'s are designed for use in recreational boating and are generally smaller, less bulky and more comfortable than lifejackets. They may have less flotation than lifejackets and may have no or little self-turning ability (the ability to turn an unconscious or

incapacitated person face-up in the water). Canadian approved P.F.D.'s are stamped or labelled indicating that they are approved by Transport Canada, the Canadian Coast Guard or the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

- **Supervision:**

- The vigilant overseeing of an activity for management or direction. Activities, facilities, and equipment have inherent risks, but the more effectively they are supervised, the safer they become.
- The Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education includes three Types of supervision, Direct Supervision, On-Site Supervision, and In-the-Area Supervision. These types of supervision take into consideration the level of risk, which is related to the number of participants, the skill level of the participants, the type of equipment used, the environmental conditions, the age, and developmental stage.
- The three types of supervision described are not hierarchical but represent the type of supervision that activities require and the type of supervision that is inherently possible.
- Some activities in OPASSE transition from one type of supervision to another type of supervision (e.g., Direct Supervision to On-Site Supervision OR On-Site Supervision to In-the-Area Supervision).

- **Teacher:**

- A person with a current certification from the Ontario College of Teachers and under contract by the school/school board (i.e., teacher, vice-principal, principal). This person is legally responsible for the students and has the authority and responsibility to supervise.

- **Trip Guide:**

- An individual who has the required certifications and/or knowledge/skills of the route and activity. This role could be fulfilled by a Teacher, a Volunteer, or an employee of an Outside Activity Provider and must be approved by the school/school board. Trip Guides have been instructed on their monitoring responsibilities.

- **Types of Supervision:**

- **Direct Supervision:**

- Direct Supervision requires that the Teacher is physically present at the activity, providing visual and verbal oversight for management and direction of both, the activity and student safety.

- **Provisos:**

- No other activity can occur when part of the activity or the entire activity is under Direct Supervision when there is only one Teacher supervising.
 - The Supervision section of the relevant activity safety standards page in the Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education describes when parts of an activity are under Direct Supervision.
 - Where a Qualified Instructor(s) is providing the safety and initial skill instruction and monitoring for one activity and requires the Teacher to be present at that activity for management and direction.

- An activity may be under Direct Supervision:

- During the entire duration of the activity;
 - During the set up and take down of equipment; .
 - During the safety and initial skill instruction;
 - During the performance/practice of the activity skill; and
 - When the activities transition from Direct Supervision to On-Site Supervision.

- **In-the-Area Supervision:**

- The Teacher is located in proximity to a combination of locations where the student activities take place, is circulating, and is accessible for providing management and direction of the physical activity and student safety.

- **Provisos:**

- The Teacher is circulating between the activities occurring at separate locations, and is readily accessible, or the location of the Teacher is communicated to the student.
- Where a Qualified Instructor(s) is providing the safety and skill and instruction and is monitoring at a combination of locations, the Teacher is located in proximity to where the student activities take place, is circulating between the activity locations, and is accessible for management and direction.
- Students may be out of sight for periods of time.

- **An activity or a component of the activity is under In-the-Area Supervision:**

- Where the same activity is located in separate locations (e.g., Fitness activities);
- Where two or more activities under In-the-Area Supervision occur in separate locations (e.g., Badminton, Table Tennis, Handball (Wall));
- Where the skill application of the activity takes place at a separate location from the teacher (e.g., Cross Country Running, Skiing (Alpine), Cycling, hiking on trails);
- When the activities occur in double or triple gymnasiums; and
- Where more than one Qualified Instructor is providing activities at a combination of locations.

- **On-Site Supervision:**

- The Teacher is present at one location where the student activity takes place (e.g., gymnasium, sports field, climbing wall at an Outside Activity Provider's facility, campsite) and is accessible for providing management and direction of the physical activity and student safety.

- **Provisos:**

- Where more than one activity occurs in one location, the Teacher is circulating between the activities and is accessible for management and direction.
- Momentary presence in adjoining rooms (e.g., equipment room, outdoor storage shed, boathouse, staff tent) is considered to be On-Site Supervision.
- Where a Qualified Instructor(s) is providing the safety and initial skill instruction and monitoring for an activity or a combination of activities at one location and the Teacher is present and is circulating and accessible for management and direction.

- **An activity may be under On-Site Supervision:**

- During the entire duration of the activity;
- During the safety and initial skill instruction;
- With activities using multiple stations while the Teacher is circulating;
- When combining two or more activities at one location while the Teacher is circulating; and
- When activities transition from On-Site Supervision to In-the-Area Supervision.

- **Volunteer:**

- A responsible adult (e.g., Educational Assistants, Retired Teachers, Co-op Students, Parents/Guardians, Teacher Candidates) approved by the Principal/Designate who is under the direction of a Teacher and has been instructed on their monitoring responsibilities. Refer to your school board's policy on volunteers assisting with student's physical activities.

Last Published
Tue, 07/22/25 12:29 pm