



Canoe Trip Readiness Checklist and Resources:

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We have compiled a checklist of basic tasks and procedures related to backcountry canoe trip travel in Algonquin Park. While comprehensive, this list won't cover every conceivable detail or situation. Please visit the links to various resources included in the text for more information.

Many of these items should be completed before leaving home, and others are done while on the trip. If you have questions about any of these items, please feel free to call us at 1-800-469-4948.

TRIP PLANNING

- Plan a canoe [route](#) appropriate to the experience and abilities of the group. Always plan according to the abilities of the most inexperienced member of your group. Ensure that everyone in the group understands the [basic principles of canoe tripping](#) and what to expect while on the trip.
- If you need to rent equipment, pick an access point that is convenient to an [outfitter](#) that offers the services you require.
- Book [permits](#) with Ontario [Parks](#).
- Understand the terrain and typical [conditions](#) for the time of year you are visiting.
- Ensure that all group members understand the relevant park [regulations](#).
- Check the weather [forecast](#) before heading out. Weather in Algonquin Park can change quickly and can be very localized. Pay particular attention to [wind forecasts](#), paddling in windy conditions requires skill, takes more time and can be dangerous. Paddlers can be shore-bound by wind on a beautiful sunny day.
- Fill out a trip plan, share with your group members and emergency contacts. This is a detailed itinerary of your trip and should include details like where you are going, your intended paddle route, the names and contact information for the people in your group, when you intend to return and local emergency [contacts](#). The trip plan should be given to a competent adult. If you run into trouble and do not return on time, this person will inform the authorities and give them the important information in the plan to help them find you quickly. Here is a [sample](#).
- Check with your group members and find out what health concerns, medical conditions, medications and dietary restrictions may impact the trip. Include this information in your trip plan.
- Understand and be prepared to practice "[Leave No Trace](#)" practices while on your trip.
- Arrange [rental](#) or [outfitting](#) services well ahead of your start dates. Check with the other members of your group to make sure they have all the [necessary equipment](#) and clothing.

- Plan and pack a healthy menu that is easy to prepare, takes dietary restrictions into account and is packaged in compliance with Algonquin Park's food container [regulations](#). Be prepared to store your food properly and away from [wildlife](#).

TRAINING

- Obtain the knowledge and skills you need before heading out. Read trip reports [online](#) and/or watch [videos](#) made by experienced canoe trippers. Practice canoeing locally or take a [course](#) from a certified instructor; take first aid [training](#); research the area you are visiting, and test out new equipment at home.
- Whether you are new to canoeing or consider yourself an expert, consider taking the free online [paddle sports safety course](#).

TAKING THE ESSENTIALS

Always carry the essentials and know how to use them:

- Emergency [contact](#) information for the local area and copy of your trip plan.
- Map(s) that covers your entire route. The entire park can be seen on the [official park map](#), more detail is available on maps from [independent mapmakers](#).
- Flashlight
- Fire making kit
- Signalling device (i.e. whistle)
- Extra food and water (or water purification method)
- Extra clothing packed in a waterproof bag. Cold water and/or cold weather can result in hypothermia.
- Navigational/communication devices, portable charger
- First-aid kit - make sure all group members know the location and contents
- Emergency blanket/shelter
- Pocket knife
- Sun protection
- Add other equipment specific to your chosen activity, season and location.

TRIP TIPS

- Travel with a companion: a companion can give you a hand to overcome difficulties or emergencies.
- Be prepared: ensure everyone with you understands what to do in case of an emergency.
- Don't depend solely on technology: equipment failure and [lack of reception](#) are very possible in the outdoors. Carry a map and compass and know how to use them.
- Know the limits of your group and stay within them. Be honest with yourself and respect the concerns of everyone in the group.
- Understand the safety hazards presented by environmental conditions like wind, rain, thunderstorms and cold water. [Hypothermia](#) is a real danger at any time of year.
- Never use alcohol or mind altering drugs before or during a paddle.
- Avoid dehydration! Ensure that everyone has a water bottle and understands how to properly treat water from a lake (eg. boiling, filter and/or chemical treatments)

BEFORE GETTING ON THE WATER

- Ensure that ALL passengers are wearing properly fitting [Transport Canada approved PFDs](#) and that each canoe has a regulation “safety kit” (rope/whistle/bailer) and a spare paddle.
- Establish simple, non-verbal communication signals and make sure that everyone *clearly* understands the communication signals used (i.e. basic paddling instructions, “come here”, “get to shore quickly” etc.).
- Check that each person has a whistle or sound signaling device attached to their PFD or at their disposal.
- Check that everyone is dressed appropriately for the weather and water conditions.
- Check that everyone is wearing a hat and sunscreen.
- Ensure that all loose gear is secured to the boat to avoid losing items in case of capsizing.
- Skills of paddlers should be assessed before leaving the access point. Review capsize protocols and basic rescue procedures.
- Discuss the route, navigation and pace. Ensure that every boat in your party stays within sight and sound of the others.

EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION

- Consider using a satellite-based emergency locator, such as a SPOT or InReach, to help rescuers quickly find your location. Algonquin Outfitters rents the SPOT satellite messenger device, which can send pre-set messages and activate EMS.
- Ensure that you have a fully charged mobile device and carry it in a waterproof, floating case. If you're in an area without cell reception, consider bringing a satellite-enabled device, such as a satellite phone or a device with texting capabilities, such as a SPOT X or InReach.

IN AN EMERGENCY

- Don't panic: Stay calm and maintain a positive attitude.
- S.T.O.P.: Sit, Think, Observe and Plan.
- Stay put: It reduces time and search area for the authorities looking for you.
- Seek shelter: Protect yourself from the elements by staying warm and dry.
- Signal for help:
 - Think BIG, Think CONTRAST, Think 3's.- Create a ground-to-air symbol by making the letter “V” or “SOS”, at least 3 meters in length.
 - Use whistle blasts x 3, mirror flashes x 3, horn blasts x 3, signal fires x 3 or rock piles x 3 to signal distress.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Algonquin Outfitters trip planning resource page:
<https://algonquinoutfitters.com/canoe-trips/planning-canoe-trip/>
- Another outfitter's resource page with detail on many of the points above:
<https://www.frontenacoutfitters.com/blogs/tutorials/canoe-trip-planning-and-safety/>