



# Flatwater Floating and Paddling

**Good Practice Guide**  
2018

## Flatwater Floating and Paddling

*Flatwater Floating and Paddling activities include all self (human) powered craft that float on the water, such as; sit in and sit on kayaks, open canoes, SUPs, aqua bikes, pedal boats, inflatables, waka-ama, tubing, boogie boards and self built rafts.*

*The environmental scope is flat or sheltered water, including estuaries, coastal inlets, river deltas, sheltered (no surf) beaches, lakes and swimming pools. Also included are rivers, when the flow and hazards present no greater risk than flatwater. In these rivers participants would be able to paddle or make progress upstream without assistance.*

This GPG covers situations where participants are being directly supervised by a designated leader, guide or instructor and does not cover the hire or rental of craft and equipment for unsupervised use.

This guidance is specific to **Flatwater Floating and Paddling** activities and is designed to be used in conjunction with the **General Guidance for Organised Outdoor Activities** and the **Flatwater Floating and Paddling Planning Template**.

## Potential value of activity

### FLATWATER FLOATING AND PADDLING ACTIVITIES CAN PROVIDE:

- Opportunity to try new activities/ have new experiences.
- Adventure and challenge.
- Self-confidence and self-reliance.
- Water confidence and water safety skills.
- An introduction to watersports.
- Physical activity, fitness and health.
- Enhancing and enriching the school curriculum.
- Exploring and appreciating new environments.

*“Believe me, my young friend, there is nothing - absolutely nothing - half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats.”* Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows*.

## Planning Considerations

See the [General Guidance for Organised Outdoor Activities](#)

# Participants

## *Guidance on:*

*How to ensure the activities match the participants' abilities and needs.*

In addition to the generic participant considerations (see **General Guidance for Organized Outdoor Activities**) organisers of flatwater floating and paddling activities should consider:

- Identifying participant's aquatic competency/ swimming ability is important before undertaking water activities.
- Focus on modifying or adjusting the activity to suit the participants and have an all-inclusive approach.
- Assessing the participant's ability and confidence before doing the activity by asking questions about their knowledge and prior experience.
- Giving participants information about activity beforehand helps them assess their own ability level, knowledge and experience in relation to the planned activity. Consider the use of video clips to illustrate activity for novices.
- Dividing into ability level groups or buddying up less confident participants with more confident ones.
- Sequencing activities to match the participants' characteristics and needs. Sequencing is about setting challenges and choosing activities at an appropriate level for each participant. It involves progressively building on a participant's knowledge and skills. An example of sequencing would be doing a swimming pool session before taking a kayaking trip on estuary or giving non-swimmers an opportunity to experience floating in their PFDs before needing to use them in a real situation.
- Select and adjust equipment to suit participants. If possible offer a range of equipment for participants to use. Examples of how to adjust equipment include; kayaks of different sizes and stability, using double kayaks, joining tubes for buddies to tube together, or having two children on a SUP.

# Supervision

*Guidance on:*

*The level and style of supervision would typically be required for this activity.*

## **CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING WHEN DETERMINING THE APPROPRIATE SUPERVISION STRUCTURE FOR FLATWATER FLOATING AND PADDLING ACTIVITIES:**

- There is no one 'ratio' of leaders or supervisors to participants for any given activity. Supervision needs vary according to age and ability of the participants, the activity, the location and environmental conditions and the skill and experience of the leaders and supervisors.
- Supervision in a water environment needs to include the ability for direct physical intervention. The question to ask is: How quickly can a competent leader or supervisor get to someone on the water who needs immediate assistance?
- Consideration also needs to include supervision of the other participants, while assisting someone who needs help. A second supervisor is helpful to supervise the rest of the group while one is assisting a participant in difficulty. The worst-case scenario would be all participants needing assistance at the same time. Examples of this would be multiple capsizes when kayaking or if a whole group ended up in the water after a waka ama capsized.
- When there is more than one supervisor, clearly defined roles and responsibilities should be delegated. This is particularly important when using assistant leaders, accompanying teachers (who are not the activity leader), student leaders or parent helpers.
- Supervision needs will change if participants have any special needs, behavioural or medical needs.
- Supervision requirements are also craft dependent and need to consider how much risk a participant likely to be exposed to and therefore how quickly intervention needs to happen. For example, a participant who has capsized in a sit in type kayak, is at greater risk of becoming entrapped and drowning than one who has fallen off a sit on type kayak.
- Participants needing assistance need to know what they must do in any rescue situation i.e. hold onto their sit on kayak, do a wet exit, swim to shore.
- The other participants also need to know what to do i.e. raft up, or if there are any buddy rescue procedures.
- Participants should be given opportunity to practice the skills required in a rescue situation e.g. wet exit, rafting up.
- Self rescue procedures should be briefed and/ or practiced prior to activity. The level of briefing or practice will depend on; the participants (their age, maturity, experience, ability etc.), craft type and the environment (water depth, temperature, wind, tides etc.).
- A key question to ask is: "Can participants get back in or on their craft without assistance?" If the answer is no, then they will need a higher level of supervision.



**An example of a supervision structure and how this might change in a different situation.**

**Craft:** Sit on kayak

**Location:** Enclosed pond, confined area.

**Participants:** Group of 10 – 12 participants aged 8 and above, with no special requirements, well behaved, briefed and managed.

**Supervision:** 1 competent leader on the water, 1 well briefed adult helper on the bank.

If the same group was taken onto an open estuary or river delta, the supervision requirements would change to having 2 competent leaders on the water, 1 of these could be an assistant leader.

## Assessing an Activity Provider's Competence

**IN THE SITUATION WHERE AN EXTERNAL OPERATOR IS BEING CONTRACTED TO PROVIDE THE ACTIVITY, IT IS APPROPRIATE TO ASK FOR EVIDENCE OF:**

- The safety management system the operator has for the activities being provided.
- If the activity is covered by the Adventure Activity Regulations, the provider must be registered with WorkSafe as an adventure activity operator.



# Leader competence

*The experience and knowledge required by those running the activity, both for normal operation and for managing emergencies. What competence other assistant leaders should have should also be considered (e.g. where parents or other adults are helping the person running the activity).*

## Skills and knowledge

The simplest way to evaluate competence is to look at the qualifications they hold. Asking questions of potential leaders and having them provide examples of training or experience as part of their answer allows you to assess their experience and knowledge. It is also appropriate to ask for references to confirm the information they provide.

### **SPECIFIC LEADER COMPETENCIES RELEVANT TO THE ACTIVITIES AND ENVIRONMENTS COVERED IN THIS GPG INCLUDE:**

- Confident in the water environment the activity is being held in.
- Ability to use and be confident in the type of craft being used for the activity. i.e. can they manoeuvre the craft in all directions and could they get to any participant who required assistance?
- Knowledge of the equipment, clothing and footwear and being used for the activity e.g. fitting and wearing PFDs, what footwear is required.
- Knowledge of sequencing and progressions to build participants' confidence and competence in the craft.
- Be able to establish rapport with participants.
- Good judgement and decision making in changing situations and conditions i.e. weather, tides.
- Effective management of the group on the water in normal and emergency situations.
- Knowledge of and able to perform rescues for the craft being used.
- Knowledge of the site/ location being used e.g. entry, exit and access points, weather forecast, depth, tide, flow, water quality and how to source this information. The ability to interpret and make good decisions based on this information.
- In addition to a current first aid qualification specific knowledge of drowning, CPR, cold water shock, hypothermia and any other site or location specific issues i.e. jellyfish stings, sharp objects (rocks, shells etc.)
- Knowledge of appropriate environmental and cultural practices for the site/ location e.g. toileting, seafood gathering.

## IF USING ASSISTANT LEADERS, THE MINIMUM COMPETENCIES FOR THESE WOULD BE:

- Confident in the water environment the activity is being held in.
- Ability to use and be confident in the craft being used for the activity.
- Ability to assist the Leader in the management of the group on the water in normal and emergency situations.

## Relevant Qualifications

The following qualifications may be relevant for the activity (including but not limited to):

- A first aid certificate
- A life-saving qualification such as the Bronze Star or Bronze Medallion
- National Certificate in Outdoor Recreation (Leadership) L3 with strand in Kayaking
- NZOIA Kayak Leader
- NZOIA Sea Kayak Leader
- International Surfing Association (ISA) Stand Up Paddle boarding Level One Instructors Course

*“Competent leaders are one of the mainstays of ensuring safety”*



## Resources and equipment

*Consider what equipment and resources are required to ensure the activity to be run safely. The participants may be required to bring this, or it may be provided to them.*

### Participant

*What each participant would need to bring to the activity.*

- Clothing and footwear appropriate for the activity and location e.g. swimwear such as rash tops and/or wetsuits, no cotton clothing or clothing likely to become heavy or limit movement when wet.
- Sunhat, sunscreen, warm hat - depending on the time of year and weather conditions.
- Any personal medication that could be needed during the activity i.e. EpiPen, asthma inhaler. Most likely these items will be carried by the Leader during the activity.
- Clothing for after the activity.

### Group

*Equipment that will be provided to the participants for the activity.*

- Activity specific craft that are in good condition and suitable for the intended use. Things to look for, depending on the type of craft being used, include:
  - Cracks, holes, leaks in the hull and deck
  - Hatches or bungs are in place
  - Any permanent buoyancy foam, air bags or bulkheads are intact
  - Deck lines, end or grab loops
  - Valves on inflatable craft
  - Rudders, foot pegs, pedals etc.
- Paddles. Suitable type and size for type of craft being used and the age/ size of the participants.
- PFDs (Personal Flotation Devices) / Lifejackets. Things to check include:
  - Size and fit appropriate for the participants
  - Foam buoyancy in intact and adequate
  - Condition of fabric, buckles and webbing
  - Appropriate type for participants. In most cases a type 405 buoyancy aid will be appropriate, but a type 402 life jacket would be a good consideration for non-swimmers. Also consider the addition of a crotch strap for non-swimmers or small children.

**For information on PFD types refer to:**

<http://www.maritimenz.govt.nz/recreational/safety/lifejackets/lifejacket-types.asp>

- Helmets for some craft and situations e.g. low hanging trees, rocks, vigorous games or activities likely to lead to paddle – head collisions.
- A paddle jacket, spray jacket, light wind breaker or similar. Even if participants are required to provide their own, it is useful to have some available for participants to borrow.



## Leader

*Equipment that should be carried by the leader or that the leader should have easy access to.*

- First aid kit and any personal medication of participants.
- Communications device and emergency contact list.
- Spare clothing. Especially useful for situations where participants are likely to get wet and cold.
- Hot drink and food.
- Repair kit - contents will be craft dependent.
- Dry bag.

**All of the above should be easily accessible i.e. it can be left on shore, in a gear shed, parked car etc. if intending to operate close by.**

**The following should be carried by the leader on the water:**

- Throw bag or towline.
- Knife attached to leader's PFD.
- Whistle attached to leader's PFD.

## Further support

*Places to gain more information from, e.g. specialist websites, industry bodies or clubs.*

[www.maritimenz.govt.nz/recreational/kayaks-and-canoes.asp](http://www.maritimenz.govt.nz/recreational/kayaks-and-canoes.asp)  
[www.maritimenz.govt.nz/commercial/safety/safety-management-systems/adventure-activity/documents/Safety-guidelines-commercial-kayaking-and-canoeing-operations.pdf](http://www.maritimenz.govt.nz/commercial/safety/safety-management-systems/adventure-activity/documents/Safety-guidelines-commercial-kayaking-and-canoeing-operations.pdf)  
[www.maritimenz.govt.nz/recreational/waka.asp](http://www.maritimenz.govt.nz/recreational/waka.asp)  
[www.maritimenz.govt.nz/recreational/documents/Waka-Ama-safety-rules.pdf](http://www.maritimenz.govt.nz/recreational/documents/Waka-Ama-safety-rules.pdf)  
[www.nzsup.org](http://www.nzsup.org)

[Flatwater Floating and Paddling Planning Template](#)

[Overarching Risk Management Guidance](#)