

Coach's Corner by Chris Crain

Getting In and Out

Entering and exiting kayaks are the first and last things we do on paddle outings, and are also the actions most likely to result in wet exits. If it hasn't happened to you yet, just wait. While dunking is good entertainment for the group, a few basics will increase your odds of a more dignified experience.

Most capsizes result from the high center of gravity which occurs when getting in or out. So, rule one is to get your butt down into the seat as quickly as possible. Also, be sure not to launch while the kayak's bow is in the water and the stern is well up on shore, which is a very unstable position. Instead, first float your boat, which is also much kinder to the kayak's bottom. For most of our paddle venues, start by positioning the boat in a few inches of water, close to shore. Parallel to shore is a bit easier if the bottom drops off quickly.

Entering your kayak on most of our paddles involves either of two approaches:

- Straddling your kayak and plopping into the seat is the quickest way to get stable, after which legs are drawn back and inserted into the boat, one at a time.
- Paddle outrigger support is often required on awkward launch sites and with smaller cockpits, greatly enhancing stability. Begin by placing your paddle at 90 degrees to the kayak, with the shaft resting just behind the cockpit combing, and with the far outrigger blade positioned face up (to minimize damage) on the shore or shallow bottom. Then grab the paddle shaft and combing behind your back with one hand and squat down beside your kayak. Sit on the kayak aft deck just behind the cockpit and place your other hand (outrigger side) on the paddle shaft just outbound of the boat's side, cheating your weight slightly onto your outrigger for stability. Slip your legs into the boat one at a time, drop your butt into the seat, retrieve your paddle, and you're off. Be sure your weight is on the kayak, with only minimal weight on the outboard paddle shaft, so as not to harm the paddle.



Exiting your kayak is basically a reversal of the entry procedure.

Other situations (e.g., docks, wind, waves) require somewhat different techniques, though aren't typical of the ramps, calm waters, and gentle slopes typically encountered on our club paddles. Follow your trip leader's suggestions for challenging situations.

Finally, when things get tricky (wind, waves, drop-offs, mud, rocks, ...), be quick to offer and accept kayak stabilizing help. We're a team. And bring a bag of dry clothes, for times when things take a bad turn.

Check out the following YouTube clips, which walk through basic entry and exit procedures. Then get out and practice in different situations!

Entering - Exiting a Kayak	2:42	https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=YfGKHvJE6nQ
Kayak - How to Launch	2:48	https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=cQonCRZzTro
Tips for Launching and Landing	1:59	https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=j50kSU6Zobs