

DOCKWORKERS' HANDBOOK

Thanks for helping out. As you know or will soon find out most of the people who visit are wonderful. And many of them are here for the first time and have never kayaked before. Some have never been on a large body of open water before.

Our job is to make them happy to get them to relax and to show them the basics of kayaking. Oh, yeah, we've got to keep them safe, too. So here are a few things you might already know that can help.

Take a few moments to talk to them don't worry about how many people might be waiting for a boat. Be friendly, happy. Ask if this is their first time here and their first time kayaking. Make sure they have **PFDs on securely** and have paddles. As you hold the boat waiting for them to sit down, it sometimes helps to hold the boat with your legs a foot or so away from the dock. That way it's less of an invitation for them to try to step into it.

Explain the boating limits; A big box bounded on three sides by piers and a seawall and the outside by the ends of the piers, or an area to the north or south of the dock bounded by piers and the mooring field at 72nd Street. **THEY SHOULD STAY ABOUT 50 FEET INSIDE THAT BOX.**

If you think they might be the kind of people who need more information, you can tell them how the water tends to be shallow near the seawall and that waves often break there; that the piers can trap and even impale boaters who forget that the wind and current can sneak them in there before they notice; and that the currents in the river at the ends of the piers are often twice as fast as the currents inside. Are they nervous?

These boats are very stable, very safe. The waves will rock the boats a little but if the paddler just relaxes, the boat and the paddler's hips will rotate under the torso. As long as the torso is on the centerline of the boat, all's well. If the torso comes off the centerline ...oops. The torso and head go into the water. It's harder to move your hips when you're tense and it's easier to be tense if you lean backwards.

So paddlers should try to sit up straight or even lean a little forward so they can get good hip action. In big waves, try to turn the bow perpendicular to the waves. But most importantly, paddlers should just stay relaxed and let the river's waves move their butt. It's just dancing on water.

PADDLE STROKES

Try to take a minute or so to describe paddling techniques. Even experienced kayakers sometimes need a refresher and it's possible to show the basics in a few minutes. Be aware on a particularly busy days when there is a line you may want to minimize the time spend on instruction.

FORWARD STROKE: Holding the paddle above you head your hands should create an L shape or slightly in a bit. If less than that they will choke up on the paddle or more than the L shape the grip is too wide. Keep the hands away from the body but don't lock the elbows. Put the blade of the paddle into the water at about a 45-degree angle (reach for your toes). Try to twist the body so that the upper hand is pushing the paddle more than the lower hand is pulling. Silly as it sounds, novice paddlers most common mistake is not putting the paddle in the water. And it helps to remind them to put the paddle in the water.

They can really do anything they want, but proper form will keep them from getting too tired. On feathered paddles, make sure they paddle with both wrists straight. It's easy with these paddles to bend one wrist excessively, which can lead to injury.

REVERSE STROKE: Just the opposite of the forward stroke. Just place the blade of the paddle behind you and push it forward. Continuous reverse strokes makes the boat go backwards, don't forget to look out behind you.

TURNING: Paddle on one side and the boat will slowly turn to the other side. Paddle forward on one side and backwards on the other and the boat will turn quickly, almost in place.

STOPPING: Paddle backwards with two quick strokes followed with two longer strokes and the boat will start moving backwards.

Ask if they have any questions. No? Well, now's the time to check everything one last time.

LAUNCHING AND LANDING

LAUNCHING: Put the boat in the water and hold it steady against the dock. It is often a good idea to Sit down on the dock with your feet over the front of the boat to set an example. Make sure people sit down on the dock and put their feet in first and then scoot over. Hand then the paddle oriented correctly once they are settled and tell them the boundaries and rules one more time.

At Pier 40 People should only be launch from the South and West edges of the dock.

At Pier 96 People should be launched from the north low dock. If it very busy the smaller south dock can be used, but normally this is reserved for volunteer use and the safety boat. Do not launch or land the public from the high part of the dock.

At 72nd People should be launched from the South or West Edge of the dock, never from the north side where the piling are. At 72nd People should be sent North or south of the dock depending on the current. They should be sent out against the current so that if they get tired or are unable to control the boat the current will tend to bring them back to the dock.

THE RETURN: When they come back, hold the boat for them. Ask them to return their paddles to wherever the paddles are being stored usually by the ramp. Ask if they had a great time? Did they have any problems? For detailed questions refer them back to the desk so others can use the boats. If there is no one waiting for the boat it can be pulled out of the water and put on the dock. Boats should be stacked on the dock to make room. If the dock becomes over crowded with unused boats they can be moved up the ramp and placed near the top out of the way of pedestrian traffic.

Remind them to tell their friends about us and that we always-welcome volunteers at our three locations.

CAPSIZING

Explain that in the event of falling in to hold on to their boat. **DO NOT TRY TO SWIM BACK TO THE DOCK.** Let them know that they can climb back into their boat as if reaching for a high bed. Remember reach for the other side and pull you body across the bed on your belly and then turn right into your seat. They need to 'swim' into the boat with the legs behind and not under the boat. In the event that they cannot get back into their boat not to worry we will arrive quickly and help them back in. **Once there is a capsize, stop putting people into boats in case we need further help especially with doubles, we need all volunteers eyes on the rescue.**

TAKING CARE OF YOU

It gets hot and tiring down here. Please stay hydrated. Drink lots of water. At Pier 40, there's a hose at near the ramp if there's no other water available.

At Pier 96 there is Water fountain in the boathouse by the bathrooms

At 72nd there are water fountains a near the just south of the baseball diamonds, at 74th St, by the bathrooms and at 70th at the foot of the new recreation pier, if there's no other water available.

Take lots of breaks. Get some food. Trade jobs. Work the ramp or the desk. Or better yet, go patrol and get in lots of paddling. Work on your techniques. Nothing says you have to work every minute. Take out a boat. Try different boats.

Remember to ask those who have been working before you if they want to go out in a boat first. Try a self-rescue or assisted rescue. Try to roll, please try and stay near the dock and out of the way of the public launching and landing (south of the Dock at Pier 96, East of the Dock at Pier 40. North of the dock at 72nd

Practice your bracing skills. Please let those at the desk and on the dock that you are going out to practice these skills. Sometimes nervous people on the esplanade don't know you're just practicing and they call 911. It's happened several times before. Also we know that you are not having trouble.

Use our sunscreen (or better yet bring your own) and save your skin. A hat is a good idea, too and sunglasses with UV protection will keep you from damaging your eyes.

You might want to shower off with the hose as there are a lot of little microorganisms in the water – none harmful – but they can get a little sticky over time.

IDEAS???

Do you have an idea for a new program? An improvement to the way we do things? All of the public programs were conceived and implemented by volunteers. Some things work, some don't. But please don't be afraid to try. If it's safe and just a little sane, we can probably try it. Talk to two or three of the more experienced volunteers. Who knows?

REMEMBER ALWAYS SAFTY FIRST.
PFD TO BE WORN AT ALL TIMES ON
THE DOCK.