



MERIT BADGE WORKSHEET

Kayaking

Scouts BSA · Aquatics

Name

Started

Completed

Kayaking lets you glide across lakes and rivers under your own power. You'll learn to stay safe on the water, handle your boat with confidence, and help others if someone tips over. It's a skill you can enjoy for the rest of your life.

Requirements

Every official requirement, in plain language. Check the official wording when you sign off (scouting.org/merit-badges/kayaking/). Tips and examples are ideas, not extra requirements.

1 Safety and first aid

Tips for this section: Learn the Safety Afloat points before you ever get in a boat, and practice what you'd do for cold water, sunburn, or a sprain.

Example for this section: Walk through a scenario: on a cool spring day, a buddy capsizes and comes up shivering. Explain cold water shock, how to get them out and into dry layers, and which Safety Afloat points would have prevented it, like the right gear and skill level.

- ☐ **1a** Explain to your counselor the hazards you're most likely to meet while kayaking, including weather and water hazards, and how to anticipate, prevent, reduce, and respond to them

- ☐ **1b** Review how to prevent, recognize, and give first aid for kayaking injuries and illnesses: sunburn, blisters, dehydration, heat-related illness, cold-water shock, hypothermia, strains, and sprains

- ☐ **1c** Review Scouting America's Safety Afloat policy and explain to your counselor how it applies to kayaking

- ☐ **2** Pass the Scouting America swimmer test before starting requirements 3–8 (see the Swimming merit badge pamphlet for test details)

Tip: Practice your swimming ahead of time so the swimmer test feels easy. Ask your troop when the next test is offered.

3 Life jackets and safety gear

Tips for this section: Try on several life jackets and learn how to check that one fits snugly. Wear it every time you're on the water.

Example for this section: Try on three life jackets. Show how to tighten all the straps, then have a buddy lift the shoulders; if it rides up past your ears, it's too loose. Add other gear you'd bring, like a whistle, bilge pump, and paddle float.

- ☐ **3a** Review which life jacket features suit kayaking best and why you must always wear one when paddling. Then show how to choose and fit a kayaking life jacket

- ☐ **3b** Review why safety gear matters, such as a throw bag, flotation bags, bilge pump, sponge, spare paddle, and signal device

4 Kayak parts, design, and care

Tips for this section: Look at different kayaks side by side at a rental shop or camp waterfront and name the parts out loud.

Example for this section: Compare a short, wide recreational kayak that's stable but slow with a long, narrow touring kayak that tracks straight and goes far. Name the bow, stern, cockpit, hull, and deck, and explain how to rinse and store a boat.

- ☐ **4a** Name and point to the main parts of a kayak

- ☐ **4b** Review how recreational, whitewater, and sea or touring kayaks are designed differently, including how length, width, stability, and rocker figure into each

- ☐ **4c** Explain how to care for, maintain, and store a kayak

5 Paddles

Tips for this section: Hold different paddles and notice the blade shape and length. Learn how to rinse and store one so it lasts.

Example for this section: Hold a paddle with your hands a little wider than your shoulders, knuckles of your control hand lined up with the blade's edge. Explain the shaft, blade, and power face, and why a paddle that's too long or short makes paddling harder.

- ☐ **5a** Discuss how to use a kayak paddle correctly

- ☐ **5b** Discuss the parts of a paddle

- ☐ **5c** Discuss how to care for and maintain a paddle

6 Rescues in an open-cockpit, sit-on-top, or inflatable kayak

Tips for this section: Practice capsizing and wet exits in calm, warm, shallow water with a trained instructor right there. Stay calm and go slowly the first few times.

Example for this section: In calm, shallow water with an instructor, tip over, tuck forward, and push out of the boat. Then practice getting back in with a buddy steadying your boat from theirs, and swimming your kayak and paddle to shore.

- ☐ **6a** Capsize safely and do a wet exit

- ☐ **6b** Get back into the kayak with help from a buddy boat

- ☐ **6c** Show a kayak-over-kayak rescue

- ☐ **6d** Show the HELP position

- ☐ **6e** Capsize, swim the kayak and paddle to shore, and empty the water out (with help if needed)

7 Solo strokes in a properly equipped kayak

Tips for this section: Start with the forward stroke and add one new stroke each session. Short practices beat long, tiring ones.

- ☐ **7a** Paddling solo, show the forward stroke

- ☐ **7b** Paddling solo, show the backstroke

- ☐ **7c** Paddling solo, show the forward sweep

- ☐ **7d** Paddling solo, show the reverse sweep

- ☐ **7e** Paddling solo, show the draw stroke

- ☐ **7f** Paddling solo, show the stern draw

8 Solo maneuvers in a properly equipped kayak

Tips for this section: Set up a few floating markers and practice pivots and stops around them until your moves feel smooth.

Example for this section: Set up two buoys or floating noodles. Paddle to the first, stop with backstrokes, pivot in place with sweep strokes, and come back. Do it until you can stop and turn without drifting past the mark.

- ☐ **8a** Paddle solo in a straight line for 15–20 boat lengths with the right strokes, keeping the kayak trimmed and balanced

- ☐ **8b** From a standstill, spin 180 degrees to the right and to the left, staying within 2 boat lengths

- ☐ **8c** Move sideways (abeam) 10 feet to the right and 10 feet to the left

- ☐ **8d** Stop the kayak within 1 boat length

- ☐ **8e** Keep moving forward while turning 90 degrees to the right and to the left

- ☐ **8f** Paddle backward 3–4 boat lengths using effective reverse strokes

- ☐ **8g** Paddle a figure 8 around buoys or markers set 3–4 boat lengths apart

