

## Glossary of Canoe Terminology

**ABEAM.** To the right, or at right angles to the center of a craft.

**ABOARD.** On, or in, the canoe.

**A.C.A.** American Canoe Association.

**ACCESS or ACCESS POINT.** The place on the shore of a lake or river where you put in or take out.

**ACTIVE BLADE.** When using a double, or kayak, blade, that blade which is in the water at any given time.

**AFLOAT.** Floating. Not stuck on a rock or sandbar.

**AFT.** Toward the rear, or stern, of the canoe.

**AGROUND.** Stuck-usually on a shoal or rock-when you didn't intend to be.

**AHEAD.** Forward-as in the nautical phrase "Full speed ahead."

**AIR LOCK.** The pressure of air that holds water inside an overturned canoe if you attempt to lift it straight up.

**ALONGSIDE.** "Hey, bring your canoe up alongside this rock."

**ANCHOR, SEA.** Your largest kettle tied to the end of a 20-foot rope and tossed over the stern when you are being driven by a heavy tail wind in a running sea.

**ANKLE DEEP.** The water level when you get out of the canoe to haul it across a sand bar.

**ASTERN.** Toward the rear, behind, or in back of your canoe.

**AU COURANT.** Fully aware of the current.

**AZIMUTH.** The angle of horizontal deviation from north. When using a compass, the direction in degrees. East, for example, is an azimuth of 90 degrees.

**BACK FERRY.** Paddling the canoe backward at an angle to the current when crossing a stream laterally.

**BACKCOUNTRY.** Distant wilderness invaded by those with a sense of adventure.

**BACKPADDLE.** Paddling backward to slow or reverse the forward motion of a canoe.

**BAIL.** To empty water from a craft by scooping it out with anything from a sponge to a tin can.

**BAILER.** Anything used to bail out a canoe. One of the most effective is an old plastic bottle with the bottom cut off.

**BANG PLATE.** See Stem Band.

**BEAM.** Width of a canoe when measured at its widest point.

**BEAM ENDS.** A canoe tipped on its side is said to be "on her beam ends."

**BEAR OFF.** To push off from an obstruction or an object.

**BEARING.** A direction with respect to either a compass point, such as north, or to the craft.

**BEAVER TAIL PADDLE.** A paddle with a narrow blade.

**BEFORE.** What lies ahead; in front of.

**BELOW.** Downriver.

**BENT SHAFT PADDLE.** Paddles with the blade at an angle to the shaft for greater efficiency in canoeing flat water.

**BERRY BREAK.** What happens when you pass bushes loaded with delicious berries on a long, hot, difficult portage.

**BILGE.** When a hull is cut in a cross section, the bilge is the point of maximum curvature between the bottom and the side of the canoe below the waterline.

**BILGE KEEL.** Two additional keels, one on each side of the main keel, that protect canvas-covered canoes.

**BLADDER.** An air bag inside a kayak which adds to the buoyancy of the craft in the event of a capsize.

**BLADE.** The wide, flat end of the paddle.

**BOIL.** Where current foams upward when it is deflected by obstructions under the water.

**BOTTOM.** The part of the canoe that is under the water.

**BOW.** The front or extreme forward end of the canoe.

**BOW-IN.** With the bow forward.

**BOW-PADDLER, BOWMAN, BOW PERSON.** The person who paddles in the bow.

**BOW PLATE.** Another term for the stem band.

**BOW SEAT.** The seat located at the front end of a canoe.

**BRACE.** A stroke used somewhat like an outrigger to stabilize a canoe. The brace may be a high or low brace. The usual reference is to "throw" or "hang" a brace.

**BRIDLE.** A line looped around the front end of the canoe to which another is attached under the canoe and used for towing the craft.

**BROACH.** Broadside to any obstacle-wind, waves, current, or rocks; usually the prelude to an upstream capsize. Don't broach!

**BULKHEAD.** A partition under the forward and aft decks inside which flotation blocks are attached.

**BULL COOK.** An ancient and honorable north woods term for the person whose job it is washing pots and pans and cleaning up the kitchen.

**BUSH.** In Canada, the deep wilderness.

**C-1.** A one-man covered canoe in which the paddler may kneel or sit. At one time C-1s were made with the bow and stern higher than the middle, but this is no longer standard practice. While a C-1 looks much like a kayak, it has a larger volume and rides higher.

**C-2.** A two-man covered canoe.

**CANADIAN CANOE.** In Europe an open canoe is referred to as a Canadian or North American Indian canoe.

**CANOE POLE.** See Pick Pole.

**CAPSIZE.** What happens when you are gobbled up in whitewater, or flipped by a combination of wind and waves, or-well, it shouldn't happen.

**CARRY.** See Portage.

**CARVEL-BUILT.** A wooden canoe built so the longitudinal sides are laid edge to edge, smoothed, and the gaps sealed with waterproofing material.

**CAT HOLE.** What you dig at least 200 feet from camp and water when there are no outhouses. Bury the toilet paper, too.

**CFS.** The flow of water measured in cubic feet per second. A cubic foot contains about 8 gallons of water.

**CHANNEL.** A stretch of passable water through shallows or among obstructions.

**CHART.** A map especially prepared for navigation.

**CHINE.** Where the curving sides of the hull gradually merge into the bottom.

**CHUTE.** A fast current where part of a stream is compressed and flows between two obstructions.

**CLOSED BOAT, COVERED CANOE.** Any kayak or C-1 or C-2 where the deck is not detachable but built as an integral part of the craft.

**COAMING.** A rim around a kayak or C-1 or C-2 cockpit to which a spray skirt is attached.

**CONSENSUS.** When the leader can't decide how to handle a problem.

**CREST.** The summit of a standing wave.

**CURLER.** A steep wave, usually at the base of a drop or chute, that curls back onto its upstream side.

**DEAD RECKONING.** A way of figuring your position based upon the influence of such things as currents and wind upon your projected course and anticipated speed.

**DECK.** The triangular piece of material, usually metal or wood, to which the gunnels are attached at the bow and stern. A deck may also be the entire top covering built as an integral part of a kayak, C-1, or C-2.

**DEFILADE.** A depression in the ground; where you foolishly pitched your tent just before it rains.

**DEPTH.** The depth of a canoe measured from gunnel to bottom amidships.

**DOUBLE-BLADE PADDLE.** A paddle with a blade at each end, used mostly in kayaks but occasionally favored by some canoeists.

**DOWNRIVER RACE.** A race, usually including whitewater, over a long distance on a river.

**DRAFT.** The depth of water necessary for a craft to float; the distance between the waterline and the bottom of the keel.

**DRAG.** The resistance to forward motion. Drag may be decrease by use of special waxes.

**DRAW or DRAW STROKE.** A stroke in which the blade is placed well out from the canoe and pulled directly toward the side of the canoe; designed to move the craft sideways.

**DRY SUIT.** A lightweight, totally waterproof suit; usually worn in cold weather over heavy clothing.

**DUFFEK STROKE.** See High Brace.

**DUFFLE.** See Gear.

**EDDY.** A current at variance with the main current, and where the main current either stops or reverses its flow upstream; caused by rocks, obstructions, or the bends in a river or stream. Once avoided as dangerous, eddies now are routinely used in maneuvers and for rest stops.

**EDDY HOPPING.** Using eddies to maneuver upstream or downstream.

**EDDY LINE.** The boundary between a downstream and an upstream current.

**EDDY TURN.** A dynamic maneuver used to enter or leave an eddy.

**FACE.** The side of a blade pushing against the water.

**FALLS.** A sudden drop in which the water falls free for at least part of the way.

**FATHOM.** A nautical measure of depth: 6 feet.

**FAULT.** What can go wrong, will go wrong. In tandem canoeing, it's always your partner's FAULT.

**FEATHER.** To turn the paddle so that the blade is parallel to the current or wind and the resistance is reduced.

**FERRY.** To move a canoe laterally across a current.

**FIBERGLASS.** Glass threads formed into matting or fabric and used with special resins to form a covering of high strength-to-weight ratio for a canoe or kayak.

**FILL POWER.** The cubic inches one ounce of down will fill. Top quality fill power ranges from 550 to 700-plus cubic inches.

**FLATWATER.** Calm river water without rapids; lake water.

**FLOORBOARDS.** Slats placed in the bilge of a wooden canoe to protect the ribs.

**FLOTATION.** Styrofoam or air bags placed in a canoe or kayak to help keep the craft afloat in the event of a capsizing.

**FOLDBOAT.** Ingeniously designed kayaks or canoes made of a rubberized fabric with a collapsible wooden frame; can be packed into carry bags for transportation.

**FORWARD FERRY.** Paddling with the canoe at a downstream angle to the current and crossing laterally.

**FREEBOARD.** The part of the canoe that rides above the waterline.

**FREIGHTER.** Canoe with large carrying capacity; often used in wilderness regions as a work craft.

**GAUGING STATION.** A permanent device measuring the level of water at a given point.

**GEAR.** Everything you carry in your canoe, from food to foolish items; something you always wish you had more of in camp and less of on a portage.

**GIRTH.** The circumference of the hull at its widest section.

**GRAB LOOP.** A loop of rope on the bow or stern of a kayak which is useful for grabbing on to in an upset.

**GRADIENT.** The degree of inclination of a riverbed, usually described as the number of feet the river drops per mile.

**GRIP.** The top of a paddle. The two most popular shapes are the pear grip and the T grip. The former is used for general canoeing; the latter is favored by whitewater canoeists.

**GUNNEL.** The section along the top of the canoe from stern to bow where the sides meet; a strip along the top of the canoe's sides.

**HEAVY WATER.** A huge flow of water through rapids marked by extreme velocity difference in currents and violent turbulence.

**HELMET.** Plastic head protection worn by skiers, cyclists, roller bladers and whitewater canoeists.

**HIGH BRACE.** A powerful, dynamic kayak or canoe stroke for entering or leaving an eddy. Also called the "Duffek stroke" because it was developed by Milovan Duffek of Czechoslovakia.

**HULL.** The lower half of a kayak or closed canoe, or the main structure of an open canoe.

**HUNG UP.** When a craft is caught on a rock.

**HYDRAULIC.** An area of major current changes which in turn create problems normally associated with rocks. Also, the formation of a backflow at the base of a ledge where the current reverses itself.

**HYPOTHERMIA.** The dangerous lowering of body temperature under wet, cold conditions. Can lead to death due to exposure.

**ICF.** International Canoe Federation.

**INTERNATIONAL RATING.** How violent the rapids really are; range from Class I, marred by light ripples, to Class VI, say your prayers.

**INWALE.** The inside of the gunnel.

**K-1.** A one-man kayak.

**K-2.** A two-man kayak.

**KAYAK.** A decked craft in which the paddlers sit with legs extended and propel the craft with a double blade paddle.

**KEEL.** A projection below the hull, running from stern to bow, which adds strength to the hull, protects it from damage, and helps the craft maintain straight movement, though the last is a result of the use of a keel, not the reason the keels are built into metal and wooden craft. Keels usually are found only on aluminum and wooden canoes.

**KEVLAR.** A synthetic material five times stronger than steel; used in making aircraft tires and canoes of exceptional lightness and strength.

**KNEE BRACE.** Supports attached to the canoe into which the canoeist may slide his knees to gain greater control.

**LAPSTRAKE.** Construction of a wooden canoe so that each longitudinal board overlaps the one below, like a clapboard house; also, clinker built.

**LASH.** To make gear secure, usually with a rope.

**LAUNCH.** To slide a craft into the water.

**LEAN.** A deliberate tipping of the canoe as a maneuver in ferrying or to regain stability.

**LEDGE.** Rock shelf which extends at right angles to the current and acts as a natural dam over which the water flows.

**LEE, LEEWARD.** Away from the wind; downwind. Opposite of windward.

**LEFT BANK.** The left side of the river when facing downstream.

**LIFE JACKET, LIFE VEST.** A flotation device to provide buoyancy in the water. Wear one when canoeing! See also PFD.

**LINE.** See Painter.

**LINING.** The use of ropes, one fore and one aft, to maneuver an empty canoe downstream.

**LIVERY.** Where you rent canoes and equipment.

**LOB TREE.** A tall tree with some or all of the top branches removed to make it a distinct landmark.

**LONG-DISTANCE RACING.** A term usually used for downriver races of at least 10 miles for senior canoeists and 5 miles for junior canoeists.

**MOLD.** A form used to make a canoe. A female mold is said to produce a male canoe; a male mold to produce a female structure.

**MOUTH.** Where a river empties into another body of water.

**OFF SIDE.** The side opposite to the side where the canoeist is paddling.

**OPEN CANOE.** The standard North American canoe.

**OUTFIT.** To equip a canoe for a particular purpose.

**OUTFITTER.** Commercial companies that supply all necessary equipment for wilderness travel.

**OUTSIDE BANK.** The outside of a bend.

**OUTWALE.** The outside gunnel.

**OVERBOARD.** "Man overboard."

**PADDLE.** The instrument used to propel a canoe through the water; it is not an "oar."

**PAINTER.** A rope attached either to the bow or stern, usually from 15 to 25 feet long.

**PFD.** Personal Flotation Device. The term now used by the U.S. Coast Guard to designate life jackets. Do not use any PFD that is not approved by the U.S. Coast Guard for a person of your weight.

**PICK POLE.** A pole used to propel a canoe. Also called a "canoe pole."

**PIKE.** The iron point on a canoe pole.

**PILLOW.** A gentle bulge on the surface of the water caused by an underwater obstruction. All such pillows have hard centers.

**PITCH.** A sudden drop in, or steeper section of, a set of rapids.

**PIVOT.** To turn sharply, or to pivot the craft around a point.

**PLAYING.** Enjoying running a particular set of rapids several times.

**POLE.** See Pick Pole.

**POOL.** A stretch of river with little current.

**PORT.** The left side of the canoe when facing the bow.

**PORTAGE.** How you get your gear and canoe across a stretch of land between two bodies of water. A solid reason why canoe-campers, like backpackers, attempt to reduce their gear to the lightest load possible.

**POWER FACE.** The face of the blade which pushes against the water.

**PRY STROKE.** A paddle stroke used to move the craft sideways, away from the paddle.

**PURCHASE.** The application of power on a paddle to get leverage.

**PUT-IN.** Where a canoe is placed in the water; a launching site; the start of a trip.

**QUARTERING.** Running at an angle to the wind or waves; a technique for riding over waves at a slight angle to avoid burying the bow in a standing wave.

**RAPIDS.** Waves, whitewater, haystacks, and similar contortions of water in a fast and turbulent stretch of river.

**READING THE WATER.** Determining water conditions by the appearance of water formations; used in determining the appropriate route through rapids.

**RECOVERY STROKE.** Not really a stroke, but getting ready for the next stroke.

**RESCUE PACK.** A special pack in which is kept all rescue equipment.

**REVERSAL.** Where the current curls back on itself; usually treacherous. May be caused by large obstructions, either on the surface or underwater. Reversals also may be known as souse holes, hydraulics, curlers, or back rollers.

**RIBS.** Curved strips from gunnel to gunnel that form the shape of a wooden canoe hull; may also be used to add strength to the hull.

**RIFFLES.** Light rapids where water flows across a shallow section of river.

**RIGHT BANK.** The right side of the river when facing downstream.

**ROCK GARDEN.** A navigable waterway filled with rocks; requires constant maneuvering by the canoeist.

**ROCKAGATOR.** A sullen rock hiding in the rapids which the bow paddler failed to detect until after it reached up and smacked the canoe, sometimes hard enough to cause a capsize or hangup.

**ROCKOPOTAMUS.** A huge, sleepy rock over which water flows in a gentle pillow so unobtrusively that no one recognizes it until the canoe slides to a stop atop it.

**ROCKER.** The upward sweep of the keel toward the bow and stern. The more pronounced the rocker, the easier the canoe is to pivot.

**RUNNING.** To sail with the wind; in canoeing, to hoist a jury sail and let the wind sweep the craft along.

**SCOUTING.** To inspect an unknown stretch of water on foot before attempting it.

**SCULLING STROKE.** A figure-eight stroke with the paddle in the water at all times; used for fine adjustments, or when necessary to keep the paddle in a ready position when running a tricky set of rapids.

**SECONDS.** What you didn't get when your hungry partners got there first.

**SHAFT.** The handle of the canoe paddle between the grip and the blade.

**SHEER.** The fore and aft curving sides of a hull.

**SHOAL.** Shallows caused by a sand bar or sand bank, especially those which may be exposed at low water. Swift current shoals are also known as riffles.

**SHOE KEEL.** A wide, flat keel used on river canoes.

**SHUTTLE.** The art of maneuvering cars and canoes from put-in to take-out points.

**SKIN.** The covering of a craft; may be fiberglass, canvas, or a sheath placed over a fiberglass or wooden canoe to protect the craft from chafing.

**SLALOM.** A race in which crafts are maneuvered through a series of gates.

**SMOKER.** A single violent set of rapids.

**SPOON.** The curved shape of some types of kayak paddle blades.

**SPRAY COVER.** A fabric deck used to enclose open canoes when running whitewater. Also called a "spray deck."

**SPRAY SKIRT.** A garment worn by the canoeist which attaches to the spray cover to keep water out of the craft.

**SQUALL.** A quick, driving gust of wind or rain.

**SQUARE STERN.** A canoe with the stern cut off to provide a "transom" for attaching a motor.

**STANDING WAVE.** Perpetual waves which remain in one place; may be caused by decelerating current when fast water meets slower-moving water, or by obstructions.

**STARBOARD.** The right side of the canoe when facing the bow.

**STEM.** The curved outer section of the frame which forms the extreme forward and stern sections of the canoe.

**STEM BAND.** Also known as a "bang plate." A strip attached to the stem to protect it from damage.

**STERN.** The rear of the canoe.

**STERN PADDLER.** The person who paddles from the rear of a two-man canoe or C-2.

**STRAINER.** Brush or trees which have fallen into a river, usually on the outside of a bend. Current may sweep through, but the obstruction will stop a craft. Can be deadly.

**STROKES.** The various movements used by the paddler to control the direction and speed of the craft.

**SWAMP.** When a canoe is accidentally filled with water.

**TAKE-OUT.** Where you end your trip; the take-out point.

**TECHNICAL PASSAGE.** A route through a rock garden in which considerable maneuvering is required for safe transit.

**THROAT.** Where the paddle shaft flares into the blade.

**THROW LINE.** An emergency rope used to throw out to a canoe in trouble.

**THWART.** The cross braces which stretch from gunnel to gunnel to strengthen an open canoe.

**TICKS.** Peer for them every night wherever your hair grows.

**TIP.** The end of the paddle blade opposite the shaft.

**TOAST.** The nip of brandy everyone in your party salutes you with after they haul your flipped canoe out of the water.

**TONGUE.** The V of smooth water which indicates a safe passage between two obstructions.

**TOP SIDES.** The part of the hull above the water.

**TRIM.** The angle at which a canoe rides in the water. A canoe may be trimmed so it rides even, down at the stern, or down at the bow.

**TRIP LEADER.** The person in charge.

**TROUGH.** The bottom between two waves.

**TUMBLEHOME.** The curving inward of the upper section of the canoe. This produces a canoe narrower at the gunnels than at the bulging sides. An aid in keeping open canoes dry.

**TUMPLINE.** A strap which slips around either the chest or fore-head to help support a heavy pack.

**UNDERWAY.** Moving, at last.

**VOYAGEURS.** The canoe trappers and traders of another era.

**WAKE.** The temporary trail in the water behind the canoe; also called the "wash." Beginning canoeists should peek occasionally at their wake to see if it is a straight line, which indicates good directional control.

**WATERLINE.** The line of water on the side of the canoe when it is afloat. The waterline will vary with the load.

**WATERSHED.** The entire region drained by a single river.

**WEIR.** A low dam used to divert water; frequently built by commercial eel-trap operators to catch eels and confuse canoeists.

**WET SUIT.** A garment made of neoprene foam which insulates canoeists, kayakers, and scuba divers against the chill of cold water. Essential for cold-water canoeing to avoid hypothermia.

**WHITEWATER.** A long stretch of foaming waves and rapids. Also called "wild water."

**WHITEWATER PADDLE.** A paddle with a large blade with square tips, and a T-shaped grip.

**WINDWARD.** The direction from which the wind is blowing; into the wind. Opposite of leeward.

**WRAPPED UP or WRAPPED AROUND.** Said of a canoe or kayak which has slammed sideways into an obstruction with sufficient force to physically bend it in a horseshoe shape around the rock.

**YAW.** When a canoe swerves from its course.

**YOKE.** Cushioned shoulder blocks that clamp onto the gunnels or mid thwart of a canoe to make portaging by one person easier