



# Axe Vale Canoe Club (AVCC)

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## Kayak and Canoe - Information

The Axe Vale Canoe Club has produced this information sheet to cover the knowledge you need to support the BCU 1-Star and 2-Star Paddlesport awards.

When these topics are discussed during the coaching sessions, we appreciate that there are many distractions and this can lead to a poor understanding the issues you need to be aware of when going paddling. So we have created these notes as an aid to understanding and to provide links to other sources of information which you can access to improve your knowledge and paddle more safely.

Topics:

- Equipment
- Safety
- First Aid-Hypothermia
- Access
- Environment
- Planning

### *Equipment*

There is a lot of information about Kayaks, Canoes and Paddles (and links to manufacturers and shops) on the [AVCC Information](#) page (or the *BCU Handbook p20*). You should know the basic types of canoe/kayak, the differences between them and their intended use. For example:

- What are the differences between a sea kayak and a river kayak?
- What are the parts of a canoe/kayak called (bow, stern, gunwales, etc.).
- What are the benefits of asymmetric paddles?

*Try out the various types of canoe, kayak and paddles at the club.*



# Axe Vale Canoe Club (AVCC)

## *Safety*

Canoeing and kayaking are 'risk sports' as they do involve deep and or fast flowing water, and also take place around other moving vessels, boat yards, etc.

- Personal            Be aware of your surroundings and what can happen in and around water. Assess the risk and only do things which you are comfortable with.
- Clothing            Buoyancy Aids (these are not Life Jackets)  
Helmets  
Clothing - See AVCC [Summer Kit List](#) & [Winter Kit Lists](#).
- Equipment        Throw lines - Used as rescue lines thrown to capsized paddlers.  
Additional buoyancy to boats (whilst boats are self supporting, airbags are added to ensure that they remain buoyant).  
(The Leader would carry additional safety equipment for the group.)

## *First Aid*

- First Aid Kit        All paddlers should learn to carry their own first aid kit, tailored to their needs. (A Group First Aid kit would be carried by the Leader. This would typically include bandages, plasters, dressings, antiseptic, tape, tweezers & scissors. Some people have allergies to plasters and hence need their own.)
- Hypothermia        The result of getting cold - See [Hypothermia](#) (*BCU Handbook p87*).
- Dehydration        Paddlers should recognize the need to maintain fluid intake and should carry their own drink. Hyperthermia is overheating (*BCU Handbook p88*).
- Energy             Paddlers should be aware that Paddlesport is an active past-time and they should carry food tailored to their needs.
- Pollution           Water pollution can occur anywhere but particularly on slow moving water; i.e. docks, canals and at outfalls on rivers. Awareness of [Weils Disease](#) and its occurrence in canals and slow moving water and [Ticks](#) where livestock and animals (e.g. deer) graze. (*BCU Handbook p89/90*)

# Axe Vale Canoe Club (AVCC)

## Access

- Where can you paddle? In England access to rivers is limited and canals generally need a licence (BCU Membership provides licence cover for some canals). For details on access restrictions and risk, see [the Canoe England access site](#). (also see *BCU Handbook p172*)
- Access Officers The British Canoe Union (BCU) is the sports governing body and they identify Access Officers for most rivers. (John Martell of the AVCC is the Access Officer for the Axe - see [Axe Access](#).)
- Winter Rivers For access to white water rivers (in winter) see the [UK Rivers Guide](#).

## Environment

Paddlers must be aware of the Environment and should follow good practices to ensure they do not harm flora and fauna habitats.

- Litter Litter occurs both at Sea and on Rivers. Don't cause litter and, if possible, collect any seen and dispose of it responsibly.
- Wildlife Don't disturb habitat. Don't approach animals, e.g. seals. Report finds of injured or dead wildlife, e.g. dolphins, to the Environment Agency.
- Flora & Fauna Be mindful of riverbank, riverbed and shoreline plants and creatures. Take care when landing and 'seal launching'.
- Invasive species Be aware that there are invasive species of plant/insect that can be spread to unaffected waterways on clothing & equipment. See the [Canoe England 'Stop the Spread' site](#).

## Planning

You should go through a planning checklist prior to all canoe/kayak trips, whether a short evening trip or a casual day trip on a sunny day.

- Numbers Desirably there should be a group of at least three such that if problems occur there is cover to go and get help.
- Abilities Does your group have the ability to do the trip you plan?
- Safety Do you have sufficient experienced paddlers to accompany the less experienced.

# Axe Vale Canoe Club (AVCC)

- Craft Are the paddlers experienced in the craft they are taking?
- What to check? There are a group of links on the [AVCC Information Page](#):
- Weather - temperature (sun), wind speed/direction, rain, etc. (BBC or Met Office)
  - Tide - times and heights (Easy Tide)
  - Inshore conditions - sea state, surf conditions (e.g. Magic Seaweed)
  - River heights (e.g. Environment Agency, webcams)
  - River routes (e.g. maps, directions, put-ins, exit points, weirs, obstructions, alternate exit points if things change or tiredness) - (UK Rivers Guide)
- Who to inform Tell someone where you are going and when you will be back.

## Quiz

What are the symptoms of Hypothermia?

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How do you treat Hypothermia when on a paddling trip?

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List four types of kayak:  
What are kayaks generally made from?

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What is a skeg and why does it help?

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During which months can you paddle from Whitford on the river Axe?

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When might 'seal launching' not be a good idea?

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What elements of the weather might you need to check before a trip?

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What do you need to take on a summer trip along the coast?

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