

2018 **HTX**  
outdoors

# KAYAKING WORKBOOK





# KAYAKING 101: HOW TO GET STARTED ON THE WATER

## Introduction

So you want to kayak? We are so glad you are joining us on this water adventure. Kayaking can be fun, adventure, exercise and mediation. Today we'll be covering Kayaking 101 basics, terminology, types of paddling and what you can find in the Houston area. Plus, we'll cover some of the basics that can get you out on the water having fun in no time at all.

This workbook goes hand in hand with our 5 day Live Video Workshop. May 7, 2018 to May 11, 2018. Or you can watch the replays at [www.HTXoutdoors.com/kayaking](http://www.HTXoutdoors.com/kayaking)

## Brought to you by HTXoutdoors and Bayou City Outdoors

HTXO & BCO are Houstonians who love being active, getting outdoors and throwing in some awesome socials. We think FUN is a prerequisite to living in Houston. And, we're all about exploring all there is to offer in Houston, in Texas and in the world. Together we host over 100+ events each and every MONTH!

We have introduced hundreds of Houstonians to the Great Outdoors with:

- Online 101 classes
- Hands on 101 training
- Advanced training
- Hosting events with expert Event Leaders to show you the ropes
- Partnering with other active and interesting Houston businesses. We love supporting locals and small businesses!
- Providing equipment for you to use at activities such as kayaking, SUP, camping
- And bringing together a great group of people at the same time!

What's the difference? HTXoutdoors tends to be for 20's and 30's and Bayou City Outdoors tends to be 40s and up. Members of each club have access to the other so there is no wrong pick. Each month, we offer events open to the public so you can see what it's all about for yourself.

[HTXoutdoors Public Events](#)

[Bayou City Outdoors Public Events](#)



# KAYAKING 101: HOW TO GET STARTED ON THE WATER

## Amy's Example: Why I started kayaking:

Dumb luck actually. When I was a rafting guide on the Chattooga River, many of the guides were also kayakers. So one day my friend asked me if I wanted to kayak and I immediately jumped in a boat.

Looking back, it wasn't the best decision. I thought because I knew the river in a raft, that there would be no problem kayaking it. But a river in a kayak is a much different experience than a river in a raft. I ended up being okay... mainly because I had muscles to hold me up, not because of any technical kayaking skills.

Now I love it because you can see places that you normally wouldn't see. I like flat water and white-water kayaking... just hearing the sound of the a river flowing is very relaxing for me.

**Action Item:** When you're done, share your response in the comments section on [FB Event](#) and we can help you pick a type of kayaking based on what you're looking to experience.

## What is the number 1 piece of gear you need?

**A PFD (personal floatation device):** You can always borrow a boat or a paddle but your PFD is your most important piece of lifesaving gear. And, it needs to fit properly. Never purchase a PFD that is too large or too small. When your PFD fits properly, you won't even notice that you are wearing it. Here's a good article on fit from NRS (Northwest River Supplies)

[https://www.nrs.com/tech\\_talk/pfdfitting.asp](https://www.nrs.com/tech_talk/pfdfitting.asp)

When you are purchasing your PFD you'll need to let the shop know what type of paddling you plan on doing. Did you take a few minutes above to consider that? If not, please do so now so we can help you get the right vest to get on the river!

Have you taken any paddling instruction before? Yes  No

Do you have any gear already? Yes  No

# KAYAKING 101: HOW TO GET STARTED ON THE WATER

## Basics Checklist:

### Bare Necessities of Paddling (we will cover gear extensively on Day 3)

- Boat
- Paddle
- PFD (the cool way to say: lifejacket)

### Important to have:

- Booties or Water shoes (you must have some foot protection)
- Hat & gloves (sun protection)
- Dry bag – to keep your essentials in and dry

### Don't forget:

- Sunscreen
- Sunglasses
- Snacks
- Water

# KAYAKING 101: HOW TO GET STARTED ON THE WATER

## Day 2 {video 2} Safety

Paddling with a buddy is our favorite way to stay safe. If you don't have a friend who likes to paddle you might want to consider Bayou City Outdoors (40's+) or HTXOutdoors (20's & 30's) as a good place to find a paddle partner. If you are heading out on your own, please remember to let someone know your 4-Ws:

**Who:** Your name and the names of any others paddling with you \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Where:** Where you will be going? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**When:** When you are expected to launch and return? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**What to do:** Who to call or a plan for what to do if you don't return \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Weather changes in our area at the drop of a hat. Be sure that high winds, heavy rain or cold is not on the way. Along with this, be sure not to jump on an unknown body of water after high rains. You can run into unexpected hazards on the water.

### Quick Quiz:

**What is a strainer?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

If you answered partially submerged trees, branches, roots, you are on the right track. Strainers and underwater objects are typical safety hazards for our bayous and manmade lakes (see coastal safety below for open waterways).

**What is the one piece of equipment that is often overlooked and is very important to personal safety?** \_\_\_\_\_

If you said water shoes – good job! Most people (and all kids) do not consider water shoes an important piece of safety equipment. When you are moving through shallow water, areas you cannot see the bottom, parks with questionable ground cover – protect your feet!

# KAYAKING 101: HOW TO GET STARTED ON THE WATER

## Personal Safety (and comfort) Checklist

- Water – Typically 1 liter per hour PLUS additional in case you go over your assumed time on the water. (find a nifty by activity water calculator here: <https://www.camelbak.com/en/hydrated/hydration-calculator>)
- Snacks, hydration supplements, GU
- Sunscreen, hat & sunglasses
- Whistle – I like to keep mine attached to my life jacket
- Carry a dry bag (a small bag that folds up to stay watertight) with:
  - Any medications needed (an old contact case keeps tables dry)
  - Knife
  - Compass
  - Light
  - First Aid
  - Emergency blanket
  - Extra snacks
  - Duct tape
  - Charged phone

## Additional - Good-to-Have Gear depending on where you are:

- Extra paddle (breakdown)
- VHS & GPS
- Extra clothing

## General on the Water Safety

- Be a competent swimmer
- Be visible
- Wear your PFD
- Control your boat
- Watch for hazards in the water and allow plenty of space
- Know your physical limitations
- Don't drink while paddling

# KAYAKING 101: HOW TO GET STARTED ON THE WATER

## Coastal Paddling

- Stay close to shore
- Watch conditions for winds and fog
- Understand wave height, wind speed and how it could impact you
- Stay aware of all commercial or large boat traffic
- Know how to get back in your boat and how to help others back in
- On coastal areas know your tides
- When surfing, watch your landing and broadside waves

**Did we mention your life vest?** Check your local state laws, but in Texas children under 13 must always have a life vest on and vessels under 16' must have a life vest on board – might as well wear it!

**IMPORTANT:** If you plan to paddle an out and back, which is where you start and stop in the same spot, always start going up stream and/or into the wind. It's easy to paddle down stream or with the wind. To ensure you can get back to where you started, do the hard part first. And turn around before you get tired. Remember, you're only half way when you turn around.

# KAYAKING 101: HOW TO GET STARTED ON THE WATER

## Day 3 {video 3} - How to buy a boat in Houston

Houston is filled with used boats. These are boats from former dreamers, upgraders & those who purchased the wrong boat initially. This is your chance to save a few dollars, see if kayaking (canoeing) is really your next sport and learn a whole lot quickly, easily and inexpensively.

### STEP 1

Check out new boats, but promise you will resist the urge to buy.

This is simply an experiment and opportunity to see if what you think you want, really is what you want. You will save a bunch of time and money in the long term if you take a day and just look at boats. You want to examine materials, types of boats, cost and weight. This is a general overview. Call it a dream day – WITHOUT spending any money yet. Make your notes below - what do you like and why?

- Plastic (consider weight, durability, size, price:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

- Inflatable (consider weight, durability, size, price...)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

\* Composites are typically carbon blends, fiberglass & Kevlar

## KAYAKING 101: HOW TO GET STARTED ON THE WATER

- Recreational: are you day tripping on lakes and bayous? Decide if you want a sit-ontop boat or a cockpit boat.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

- Touring Boats & Sea Kayaks: are you dreaming of overnight paddle and distant rivers? Look at storage options, weight, ease of paddling

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

- Fishing Boat: Kayak fishing is becoming bigger and bigger. You can find boats with light outfitting; all the way to built in Yeti's

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# KAYAKING 101: HOW TO GET STARTED ON THE WATER

- Whitewater boats: built specifically for paddling fast moving rivers and rapids, these are a litter harder to fin in Houston but certainly possible

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## STEP 2.

Can you rent or demo? If possible, several boats at one time is best.

### DEMO:

- Austin Canoe & Kayak typically holds a Spring & Fall demo
- Fishing Tackle Unlimited holds a Spring & Fall demo
- Southwest Paddlesports holds an occasional demo

### RENTAL:

- Pinky's rents on the south side of town
- Buffalo Bayou Park rents through Bayou City Adventures
- Southwest Paddlesports rents on the north side of town

## STEP 3.

Time to shop.

**New Boats:** If you have decided to purchase a new boat, you can find starter boats of plastic and kayak shops for around \$500 to \$600. You can find them for less at stores like Academy and Bass Pro. Keep in mind, these are starter boats and typically a lower end.

You can also shop online stores for new boats. Keep in mind the transportation and delivery costs. Something the lack of sales tax will off set the delivery fees.

<http://www.outdoorplay.com>

<http://www.paddling.net/>

# KAYAKING 101: HOW TO GET STARTED ON THE WATER

## Used Boats:

Craig's List – frequently has a selection of used boats

Houston.claz.org – large selection of used boats depending on season

TexasKayakFisherMan.com – forum with used boats

Garage sales frequently list larger items like boats

Houston Canoe Club forum

ebay

Bayou City Outdoors private facebook group – always boats to be sold

[info@BayouCityOutdoors.com](mailto:info@BayouCityOutdoors.com) - Give a brief description of what you are looking for and we will post for you.

## STEP 4.

### What to look for when buying used.

- Look it over carefully. Check for wear and tear. Based on the type of material, you might want to look for delamination, holes and/or worn spots. Are there dents or patches?
- In Houston the biggest wear and tear is the sun. Was this boat stored outside? Is there discoloration, or wavy areas? Wavy area on plastic boats are possibly fine, on finer materials this could indicate a potential future problem.
- Check the seams. On a fiberglass, used kayak you can note wear and ensure there is no evidence of separation.
- If it is an inflatable kayak, check the seams for any separation. Inflate the boat and leave it inflated for a while. Does it hold?
- Look for a hairline crack across the hull. This can prove to be structurally costly in the future.
- Check seaworthiness. Take it for a test run. Look for small leaks.
- Inspect the interior of the kayak with a good flashlight. Check all wires, rudder, foot pegs.
- Don't worry about scratches, but be concerned with deep cracks.

## KAYAKING 101: HOW TO GET STARTED ON THE WATER

- Ask questions. Find out how the kayak was treated, how often it was used, and where it was stored. Walk away from a boat stored in the direct sun for a very long period of time.

### Step 5

#### What other gear do you need/have to have?

- **Paddle:** Often will come with a used boat. You will want a touring paddle for a recreational boat and a whitewater (shorter paddle) for a whitewater boat. Once again, don't invest a large amount in your first paddle. You can always keep your beginner gear to loan to your friends.
- **PFD (lifejacket):** This is your most important piece of gear, if you are going to be a paddler. Buy a good PFD. There is no set time for how long a PFD will last, but careful care will keep it in good shape longer; avoid mildew, don't leave in the sun, rinse after use.
- **Carrier:** How are you going to move your new boat around? A carrier can be as simple as foam blocks and straps for your roof, straps & a red handkerchief for the back of your truck. If you are going all out on your carrier, checkout [www.rackattack.com](http://www.rackattack.com). They have good prices, and a great interactive tool to determine exactly what is right for your vehicle.

# KAYAKING 101: HOW TO GET STARTED ON THE WATER

## Day 4 {video 4} - Strokes, maneuvering, & transport

### Quick Quiz

1. Men make better paddlers because they have more upper body strength: True or False
2. Body position to paddle is a relaxed back slightly lounging toward the stern: True or False
3. Your legs are on vacation while paddling: True or False
4. You need an expensive rack to transport a kayak: True or False

Answers: False, False, False and False!

### **Men make better paddlers because they have more upper body strength: False**

Women make great paddlers because they tend to have more balance and don't try to muscle through their strokes. Kayaking is as much a core workout as anything!

### **Body position to paddle is a relaxed back slightly lounging toward the stern: False**

Keep a relaxed but upright body posture. Straight back, relaxed neck and shoulders. The more you slouch and lean back, the harder it is to paddle and control your boat.

### **Your legs are on vacation while paddling: False**

Legs and hips help move your strokes forward.

### **You need an expensive rack to transport a kayak: False**

Kayak transportation can be as simple as purchasing foam blocks, straps and quick loop straps for under your hood and back of car. (<https://www.rei.com/product/818227/seattle-sports-quick-loops-pair> )

### **Which of these strokes do you have to know to control your kayak?**

- Forward Stroke
- Back stroke
- Forward Sweep
- Reverse Sweep
- Draw (nice to have)
- Rudder

Actually, with just a forward stroke and a rudder (and a back stroke thrown in here and there) you can propel yourself through almost any flat, calm water.

## KAYAKING 101: HOW TO GET STARTED ON THE WATER

But it's so much more fun to feel like you're in control of your boat without flailing about. I know for years I drooled over a friend's smooth, effortless ferries (moving laterally across river currents). I practiced again and again.

That day comes where you realize people are studying your moves, the moves that you make from habit, without even trying.

Kayaking is part fun, part effort and part magic and well worth the time and practice it takes to reach that point where you feel effortless (or at least competent) on the water!

### **Proper paddling technique (Please watch video 3 for examples)**

Sit in your boat relaxed shoulders, neck and hips with a nice, upright back.

As you reach forward for your first stroke, slightly turn your body, as if you are winding up a rubber band and then unwind as you take the stroke. Remove your paddle from the water at roughly level with your hip and then make the same stroke on the other side.

Another way of thinking about this is to engage your oblique's and really concentrate on using your abs and not your arms. You don't want to be on a weeklong paddling trip and have tired arms and shoulders the first day! By using your core, you can paddle for days.

Slouching in your boat ("oh I'm tired") will create twice as much work because you have disengaged your hips and your core and are relaying 100% on your arms, mostly your forearms to move you through the water.

### **Maneuvering (Please watch Videos 3 & 4 for examples):**

Moving your kayak forward, through non-moving water, is simply a matter of evenly placed forward strokes, with an adjustment stroke thrown in as needed! Over the years I have learned that no one needs to be taught the "rudder stroke". Which is when you reach back to the stern with your paddle and adjust your direction. This stroke works. And, there are more effective strokes that you can use. A mantra we paddle by is "always use a positive stroke". What this simply means is if you have the opportunity to correct your direction with a rudder stroke, but at the same time possibly slowing your forward momentum, consider a stroke that keeps you moving forward smoothly. With a little practice, all of these strokes will come naturally!

### **Sweep Stroke:**

Used for turning your boat. Place your paddle in the water at the front of your boat and on the opposite side of where you want to go and "sweep" it out the to side in an arch. Paddle blade

## KAYAKING 101: HOW TO GET STARTED ON THE WATER

is fully in the water. A sweep stroke IS going to turn your boat. You may not need that much of a direction correction so consider a partial sweep and bring your paddle out mid-way.

- Is your blade in the proper position?
- Did you use a smooth movement?
- Did you practice “taking it out at your hip”?

### **Reverse Sweep:**

Another direction correction, place your paddle in the water towards the back of the boat on the opposite side of your boat from where you want to turn. “Sweep forward”, typically removing your paddle from the water about at your hip.

**Paddler NOTE** – when doing a Reverse Sweep, turn your body, do not over-extend your shoulder.

Wide hand position on the paddle shaft gives you more strength? True or False

Your paddle blade can be held in any direction? True or False

Face straight ahead and reach back with your blade for a reverse sweep? True or False

Is a reverse sweep a better stroke with a 180 degree arch from stern to bow? True or False

Transporting a kayak. Please watch Video 4 and TAKE notes! Also, never move a boat on a vehicle that you will be crushed if it gets a ding. Scratches and dings can happen although generally can be avoided with careful planning!

### **Transport Checklist:**

- Rack with crossbars, and “J” style or kayak Towers
- OR foam kayak blocks
- Straps with the correct length
- Front and rear tiedowns quick loop straps for under your hood and back of car.  
(<https://www.rei.com/product/818227/seattle-sports-quick-loops-pair>)

# KAYAKING 101: HOW TO GET STARTED ON THE WATER

## Day 5 {video 5} - Getting ready for your first paddling trip & Where to Paddle

Before you set out on your paddling adventure, do a quick run-through on the following checklist. Paddling is supposed to be great fun, and is.

AND, the one thing that makes your trip the most fun is knowing that you've got this, you know where you're going, you know your gear and your strokes and you know what to do if something doesn't go perfectly. But, that's not a problem because you did your pre-trip planning,

### Pre-Planning Trip & Gear Checklist:

- You did your research on where are you paddling
- You know the type of water are you paddling
- You have a guide who knows the area before OR you have researched
- If required, you have an alternate route planned
- Do you need a shuttle? Set-up a shuttle.
- You know how long you will be on the water
- Gear – you have checked you have all your gear before heading out
- You have a well fitting PFD
- Do you need any specialty gear for this paddle? Maps and charts, rescue equipment and extra clothes, etc.
- Did you let someone know where you will be and when you will return
- You have a paddling buddy along
- Have you checked the weather and taken into consideration potential weather changes
- Are you visible?

### Where to Paddle

#### Buffalo Bayou

The "Heart of Houston" bayou, begins it's journey way west of Houston in Katy and winds its way through the suburbs and into the center of Houston. You'll pass tree-lined banks, freeways, new trails, bats, downtown, and areas you didn't know existed! With the current construction on the bayou trails, it can be a little tricky launching. You can find loads of info and trail maps at [https://tpwd.texas.gov/fishboat/boat/paddlingtrails/coastal/buffalo\\_bayou/index.phtml](https://tpwd.texas.gov/fishboat/boat/paddlingtrails/coastal/buffalo_bayou/index.phtml)

## KAYAKING 101: HOW TO GET STARTED ON THE WATER

### **Brays Bayou**

Winding across the city of Houston, past Hermann Park, and on through University of Houston and MacGregor Park you'll find plenty of parks to put in at or take out at. Plus, you'll be able to check out the new trails along the bayou, another great city resources.

### **Sims Bayou**

Just south of downtown, Sims' is filled with lush greenery and wide-open channels. You can put in at Reveille Park off of Reveille and paddle down to the new East Side trails

### **Armand Bayou**

A little further down 45 south is Armand Bayou in the NASA Space Center area. It has been declared a Coastal Preserve by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and is one of the last undisturbed bayous in the Houston area. You can put in at the Armand Bayou Nature Center and paddle either direction, but make sure you watch for the local alligators, they are quite a sight from the water!

### **Cypress Creek:**

Flowing from west to east, on the north side of the city, you'll find Cypress Creek. It is a beautiful wooded stream with sandy banks and big white sandbars. If it hasn't been raining, it can be quite low so you may have to cross sand bars by foot. If it has been raining quite a bit, please avoid any tress or logs in the water. Give them clear berth and walk when necessary.