

# What to wear?

These notes are intended to offer some guidance to newer paddlers on suitable clothing for canoeing. Correct clothing is always important, but especially so as the colder months are approaching. (Yes, Maidstone Canoe Club does paddle right through the winter).

Proper canoeing gear is great, obviously, but you can get by with other clothing by following the tips below. The notes are not intended for those attempting white water.

It's worth noting that canoeists rely constantly on fellow paddlers for safety. Wearing suitable clothing to keep you safe means that the risk to other paddlers is also reduced! **Anyway, starting at the top...**

**Head** - A lot of body heat can be lost through your head, so it's a good idea to **wear a warm hat** on colder days, especially when it's windy. Ideally it should cover your ears, and be waterproof.



**Body** - Two main points...

1. First, it is always best to **wear layers**. A few thinner layers will keep you warm much more efficiently than one thick layer. It also allows you to remove layers if you get too warm.
2. Second, material choice is important. Cotton, for example, will retain moisture for a long time, and all that time it will be cooling you down (even more so when it is windy). The **best materials to wear are man-made** (e.g. polyester etc). A good guide is to wear material that feels almost dry when it comes out of the washing machine. (Guys, you might need to talk to the ladies here!)



So, against your body wear one or more shirts (modern football kit type

T-shirts are good). Over these base layers, wear a fleece or similar.

The **top layer should be waterproof and wind proof**. Proper canoeing cagoules are best, but everyday 'hiking' cagoules will suffice for general paddling (but won't stop you getting wet if you fall in!).

It goes without saying that all paddlers should **always wear a buoyancy aid\***.



## Legs

Again, wear layers for maximum warmth. Swimming trunks/costume makes a good base layer. Shorts are fine, or track suit bottoms. Again, wear man made material. **Don't wear denim**, it becomes extremely heavy when waterlogged, and will stay wet for absolutely ages.

The outer layer should be waterproof and wind proof. Proper canoeing trousers are best, but waterproof trousers, e.g. those intended for hiking are good too.



## Feet

Always **wear shoes** of some sort when paddling, in case you do need to climb up a bank, etc. 'Aqua shoes' can be bought



really cheaply nowadays and are ideal for canoeing. Old trainers are better than nothing, but can restrict movement in smaller boats and are heavy if you need to swim.

## Hands

There are three main options here; bare hands, **gloves or 'paddle mitts'**. Even on quite cold days, you'll be able to get away with bare hands - the main exception being if it's windy. Then, either wear special gloves or paddle mitts. Normal gloves are not really suitable, as they will quickly get waterlogged. Paddle mitts attach to your paddle shaft with 'Velcro' and are especially good at stopping the wind getting to your hands. Some people don't get on with paddle mitts; if you want to try some, just ask one of the regular paddlers.



## Spraydeck\*

A spraydeck helps keep you warm and dry, but you should only wear a deck once you are confident, and competent, at removing the deck following a capsized.



**The club recommends that all paddlers practice a capsized drill. This can be done with or without a spraydeck - if you want to do a capsized drill, just ask any of the regular paddlers.**

## Spare clothes

This is obvious, really, but there will always be a chance of you getting wet if you paddle, so everyone should **leave a spare set of dry clothes and a towel at the clubhouse.**

## \*Buoyancy Aids & Spraydecks

Whilst the club does hold a range of buoyancy aids and a limited number of spraydecks, **we do prefer that members endeavour to buy their own**. Buoyancy aids and spraydecks for beginners are reasonably cheap, but it can vary depending on what name you get and where you get them from, we can recommend trying [www.ebay.co.uk](http://www.ebay.co.uk) if it's second hand you're looking for and for new items go see Grant or Glenn at the Kent Canoe Services Superstore where you will get a discount as a MCC member see advert overleaf.

**Please note: This has been written by a closed cockpit paddler and is intended only as a guide, placid water paddling requirements will differ.**