



Trip Briefing Checklist

This checklist should be used by the trip leader or nominated coach before a Club trip or river paddle begins.

It does not need to be read word-for-word, but all relevant points should be covered.

1. Introductions and Roles

- Confirm who is the overall trip leader.
 - Confirm who the coaches/leaders are.
 - Confirm who is responsible for each group, if the trip is split.
 - Confirm who has first aid kit, throwline, phone/radio or other safety equipment.
 - Confirm who is responsible for any juniors or non-member participants.
 - Confirm who will be at the front, middle and rear of the group.
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2. Group Check

- Confirm everyone expected is present.
 - Confirm everyone is still intending to paddle.
 - Check whether anyone is feeling unsure, unwell, cold, tired or anxious.
 - Check whether anyone has a medical issue the leader needs to know about.
 - Check whether any paddler is new to this type of water.
 - Check whether any parent, carer or non-member is paddling.
 - Confirm that the group size and ability are still suitable for the planned trip.
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3. Route Overview

- Explain the start point.
- Explain the finish point.
- Give the approximate distance.
- Give the expected time on the water.
- Explain the general nature of the route.

- Confirm whether it is flat water, moving water, white water or mixed.
 - Identify any known difficult sections.
 - Identify any rapids, weirs, shallows, bridges, trees, strainers or other hazards.
 - Explain whether the route has limited exit points.
 - Confirm any planned rest, regrouping or lunch stops.
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4. Conditions on the Day

- Explain the current weather conditions.
 - Explain the expected weather during the trip.
 - Explain the current water level and flow, where known.
 - Explain whether conditions are different from what was expected.
 - Explain whether the route has been checked, inspected, paddled recently or assessed using local knowledge.
 - Make clear that conditions can change and the plan may be adapted.
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5. Suitability and Final Decision to Paddle

- Confirm who the trip is suitable for.
- Confirm any minimum ability, confidence or experience needed.
- Explain that the trip leader and coaching team may decide that someone should not paddle if conditions are unsuitable.
- Explain that this is not personal and is part of keeping everyone safe.
- Ask whether anyone has concerns before the group commits to the paddle.
- Give people a clear opportunity to opt out before getting on the water.

Suggested wording:

“Before we get on the water, this is the point to say if you are unsure or concerned. There is no pressure to paddle if this does not feel right for you today.”

6. Paddling Expectations

- Explain the expected spacing between paddlers.
- Explain whether the group should stay together or paddle in smaller groups.
- Explain who paddlers should follow.

- Explain who paddlers should not go ahead of.
 - Explain who paddlers should not fall behind.
 - Explain what to do at bends, bridges, rapids or blind sections.
 - Explain where paddlers should wait and regroup.
 - Explain any hand signals, whistle signals or verbal calls being used.
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7. What to Do if Someone Capsizes

- Explain that capsizing can happen and is part of paddlesport.
 - Explain what the paddler should do if they capsize.
 - Explain whether they should hold onto boat and paddle or let go if necessary.
 - Explain who will assist.
 - Explain that other paddlers should not crowd the rescue.
 - Explain where the group should wait if a rescue is taking place.
 - Explain that the coaches will manage the situation.
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8. What to Do if Someone Is Separated

- Explain what to do if someone loses sight of the group.
 - Explain what to do if someone gets ahead.
 - Explain what to do if someone is left behind.
 - Confirm that nobody should leave the group without telling a coach or leader.
 - Confirm any agreed emergency contact method.
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9. Emergency Arrangements

- Confirm who has first aid equipment.
 - Confirm who has a phone or communication device.
 - Confirm whether mobile signal is likely to be reliable or unreliable.
 - Confirm emergency access points where known.
 - Confirm what will happen if the trip needs to be shortened, stopped or changed.
 - Confirm who will contact shore support or emergency services if required.
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10. Clothing, Equipment and Welfare

- Check everyone has suitable clothing for the conditions.
 - Check everyone has a buoyancy aid.
 - Check helmets are worn if required.
 - Check spray decks are suitable if being used.
 - Check boats have suitable buoyancy where required.
 - Check footwear is suitable.
 - Check paddlers have water, snacks or medication if needed.
 - Remind paddlers to speak up if they become cold, tired, anxious or unwell.
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11. Changing and End-of-Trip Arrangements

- Explain the get-out point.
 - Explain whether there are changing facilities at the finish.
 - Explain whether toilets are available.
 - Remind paddlers that changing facilities may be limited or unavailable.
 - Remind paddlers to use changing robes, towels, dry clothing and waterproof bags where needed.
 - Confirm that volunteers' personal vehicles should not be used as changing facilities.
 - Explain what happens to boats and equipment at the end.
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12. Behaviour and Respect

- Remind everyone to follow coach and leader instructions.
 - Remind paddlers to look after each other.
 - Remind paddlers not to pressure anyone into doing something they are not comfortable with.
 - Remind everyone that concerns can be raised at any point.
 - Remind adults and juniors to be respectful of other water users.
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13. Final Questions Before Launch

- Ask if anyone has any questions.
- Ask if anyone has any concerns.

- Ask if anyone no longer wishes to paddle.
- Confirm the final decision to proceed, adapt or cancel.
- Confirm the first regrouping point.
- Launch in an organised way.

Suggested closing wording:

“If anything changes, or if anyone feels uncomfortable, cold, tired or worried, tell a coach straight away. We can adapt the plan. The aim is for everyone to have a safe and enjoyable paddle.”

Very Short Version for Experienced Groups

For experienced groups, the briefing may be shorter, but should still cover:

- who is leading;
- route and distance;
- expected conditions;
- known hazards;
- group structure;
- communication signals;
- capsize and rescue approach;
- emergency arrangements;
- get-out and changing arrangements;
- opportunity for questions or concerns.