

# 'YAK FAQ

## **Is kayaking for me?**

- Please know that our kayaks have a maximum weight of 275 lbs. and a member of your party must be able to lift 50 lbs. to get the kayaks down from the storage unit.
- Be honest about your physical capabilities: while kayaking is a relaxing endeavour, it is a challenging physical activity. Be mindful of the effects of hot and humid weather. This program is use at your own risk.

## **How do I stay safe while kayaking?**

- Only one person per kayak at a time.
- We recommend this activity for children 8 and older.
- Wear comfortable clothing that dries quickly, and water shoes or athletic sandals.
- Adjust your lifejacket straps as required so it fits snugly, and keep it on at all times while using your kayak. We have lifejackets available on a first-come, first-serve basis in sizes child to XL.
- Your kayak comes with a marine safety kit that includes: 15m heaving line with float, a whistle to signal distress, a watertight flashlight and a watertight container that doubles as a bailing device. Keep the kit near to you at all times and use if needed.
- Do not kayak in inclement weather; if you see lightning and hear thunder, please return to shore immediately.
- Stay close to other members of your party if kayaking as a group.
- Stay at least four metres away from the falls. Not only are the falls a danger, there is also a drain on the west bank close to the falls that has a powerful pull.
- Strong winds can make kayaking challenging. Consider shortening your route on a windy day.
- If you're new to kayaking, try the Trout Creek route first as it is shorter and gentler.
- Do not consume alcohol or recreational drugs before or during your kayaking experience. If you are taking prescription medication, please heed its warnings and cautions for operating machinery and physical exertion.
- Do not engage in horseplay while kayaking.
- Do not attempt any tricks, such as standing up in the kayak, while you're on the water.

## **What do I do after receiving my key?**

- Kayaks are stored at the northwest end of Milt Dunnell Field, just west of the parking lot of Lions Park. Each kayak is named; your key will only unlock the kayak with the same name.
- Before launching, check over your kayak to ensure all parts are intact. If any part of your kayak appears to be broken or missing, immediately contact the library (519-284-3346).
- While still on land, position the interior foot pedals so when you're sitting inside, your knees are bent at a comfortable angle while seated with your back against the backrest. Store any carry-on in the hatch.
- Put on your lifejacket, fully zipping it and adjusting buckles as required to ensure a comfortable fit. Connect your paddle by sliding the ends together and clicking the nub into the hole.

## **How do I get into the water?**

- There are two grassy areas, one north and one south, of the 'Yak Shack. Carry the kayak over to either area and place it in the water parallel to the riverbank. Lock the paddle in the stabilizer mechanism if desired.
- Stand at the cockpit, crouch down, grab the cockpit on either side and slowly hop in, shuffling your legs down into the hull until your feet reach the pedals. Take your time and make no sudden moves to keep your balance! Slide your rear back against the backrest, unlock the paddle and push off from the riverbank using your paddle.

## How do I paddle?

- Grasp your paddle with both hands and centre your paddle shaft on top of your head. Your hands will be in the proper starting position when your elbows are bent at 90 degrees.
- Lower your arms so the paddle rests across the deck. Confirm that the scooped side of the paddles are facing you and that the blades are in-line with each other.
- Turn your torso slightly and dip one blade fully into the water near your feet. Follow the blade with your eyes as you push it through the water. When your hand nears your hip, lift the blade out of the water. Then repeat on your other side to move forward. Make the opposite movement to move backward. Repeat the same motion on desired side to turn.
- Some of our kayaks are sit-on kayaks. You may get wet.

## Where can I go?

- The river is yours to explore! Please stay at least four metres away from the falls and be mindful of others using the river.
- Head south from the launch to travel down Trout Creek; this gentle route will take you under the Water, Wellington and Church street bridges. Turn around at the small green foot bridge for a round trip of approximately two kilometres. Ideal for those new to paddling.
- Head north from the launch to take in the Grand Trunk Trestle and a round-trip route of approximately four kilometres. The water gets progressively shallow as you head north, so keep an eye out for rocks once the riverbanks change from residential lawns to farmland and forest. The river flows from north to south but there is often a southern headwind. Be sure to save some energy for your return!

## What will I see?

- The Trout Creek route takes you under three very different bridges, and offers a unique view of downtown. After the Church Street Bridge, you'll see Kin Park and Rotary Park, as well as the impressive London trestle bridge. Expect to see ducks and geese.
- If you head north, you'll enjoy a new perspective of the Grand Trunk Trestle. Look for turtles and beavers near the trestle, and north of the trestle, look for bald eagles, osprey and other birds of prey hunting fish.
- No matter which direction you go in, you'll likely encounter other paddlers! Please be respectful but know that a friendly hello is always appreciated!

## How do I end my journey?

- Return to where you "put in" your kayak. Park parallel to the river bank and place your paddle on dry land. Put a hand on the land and slowly hoist yourself out. Keep a hand on your kayak as much as possible so it doesn't drift away.
- Hoist your kayak out of the water, remove personal belongings, and flip the kayak to drain if necessary. Place back in storage unit as you found it and lock. Return key, paddle(s), lifejacket and safety kit to the library within the three-hour window. Report any issues to the library.

## That was fun! How do I show my appreciation?

- Feel free to tag us in any social media posts:  
Instagram: @stmaryspl and @townofstmarys  
Facebook: @stmaryspubliclibrary and @stmarysontario  
#StMarysON
- Tell others about the program!

