

# A Student Guide to...

# **CANOEING!**



## ***Get Ready to Explore!***



**This guide will help to prepare you for your canoeing field trip to Caumsett State Historic Park and Preserve.**

**You will also learn about the animal and plant life in Lloyd Harbor.**

Caumsett was once the grand estate of Marshall Field III. The name Caumsett is a Matinecock Indian name which means “place by a sharp rock.” You may see many such rocks as you paddle along the shoreline.

The Matinecock people relied on their canoe skills for hunting, fishing and trading with other tribes. How wonderful that you will be learning these same skills on your trip with us!



### **What will happen on your Field Trip?**



Your bus will arrive at our Nature Center and you will be assigned to a group. You and your classmates will be working together with one of our naturalists. A naturalist is an outdoor educator who has studied many topics about the natural world.

Then, it’s back on the bus to travel to the canoe launching site. Depending on the day’s tide, your canoeing program will probably be combined with another land- based activity. In addition to teaching you about canoeing skills and water safety, our naturalists know lots of great ways to help you understand the subjects you may be learning in school. But now, you will get to see them first hand - not just from seeing it in a book. It’s a great and fun way to learn!

Don’t forget to dress for the weather and the season. It is always cooler on the water so dressing in layers is the best way to make sure you will enjoy your day with us!

## Can You Canoe? After your field trip, we know you will answer ...YES!

Your teacher may have chosen this activity for your class to provide you with a new challenge and perhaps to develop a life-long skill that you will want to continue as you get older.



Student checks the salinity of the water using a Hydrometer while canoeing in the marsh.

Many teachers also choose this program so that their students can take a closer look at life in an **estuary**. Estuaries are sheltered branches of the sea where there is a mixing of fresh and saltwater. This mixing of fresh water and saltwater creates an environment that is rich in nutrients and wildlife.



Snowy egret

You may see marine birds such as snowy egrets, great blue herons or osprey fishing in the quiet waters. Blue Fish and “bunker” may splash the water’s surface

and crabs may scurry out of your way should you need to beach your canoe. Be on the lookout for diamond-back terrapins swimming by – a special treat!

Because we live on an island, it is important for all of us to know about estuaries. They are filled with microscopic and macroscopic life forms and act as nurseries and food sources for the entire shallow water marine ecosystem. The health of our island depends on everyone understanding how special it is! That means YOU!

### The History of the Canoe

Canoes have been around for thousands of years. Several years ago, archeologists discovered the remains of a dugout canoe believed to be 8,000 years old! In North America, seagoing canoes were first used by the Arawak Indians of the Caribbean islands, and were made of large tree trunks which were shaped and hollowed, and were strong enough to travel between the islands and carry up to 50 -60 people!



60 ft. modern replica of an Arawak canoe. Photo by Paul Delisle

Europeans encountered these native peoples during the period of exploration to the New World. The Arawakans used the word "kana:wa" to describe their boats and the Spanish explorers settled on the word *canoa* which was even recorded by Christopher Columbus in his journals about his travels to the Americas. But it was not until the late 1700s that the word came to mean the modern idea of a canoe as we know it today.

North American Indians are responsible for creating the more well-known version of the canoe - a frame of wooden ribs covered with the light weight bark of birch trees, and sometimes elm or cedar trees. Birch bark was the perfect choice to build canoes because it was light in weight and smooth, and also waterproof and strong.



Algonquin birch bark canoe

These boats have remained mostly unchanged in design for thousands of years and were ideal for travelling the streams, rivers and lakes of North America.

The need for canoes grew in most areas of North America due to the fur trade and the French set up the world's first known canoe factory in Quebec in 1750. Many of the canoes that fur traders used were capable of carrying a crew of up to 12 people and a cargo weighing around 5300 pounds!

**Modern canoes:** If you wanted a canoe in the 1860s, you had one choice: wood. Then



people started crafting light canoes out of impregnated paper, or painted canvas and a German tailor even began making boats by stretching waterproof fabric over wooden frames. These methods continued to be used until the 1940s. Today, most of the canoes are made from three materials: thermoplastic, fiberglass, or aluminum. You will be using one of our plastic-based canoes.

## Let's Get Started

Before you launch your canoe into the water, your Naturalist will go over these important **Safety Rules:**

- **Everyone will wear a life vest** – including your teachers and our Naturalists!
- **No leaning or standing in the canoe!** You will learn to balance with the others in your canoe but remember to stay seated or kneeling at all times.
- **We will use the buddy system:** There will be a team of 2- 3 people in each canoe. Each canoe team will also have a buddy canoe. At least one of these canoe teams will include a teacher or a naturalist.
- The launch site is next to a road. **Students may not cross the road without an adult.**



These students use the "buddy system." Note that everyone is wearing life vests.

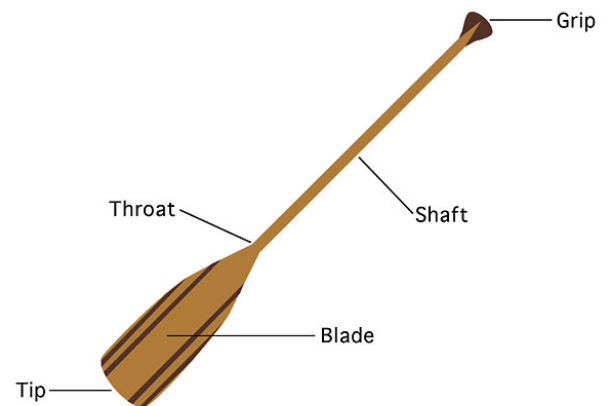
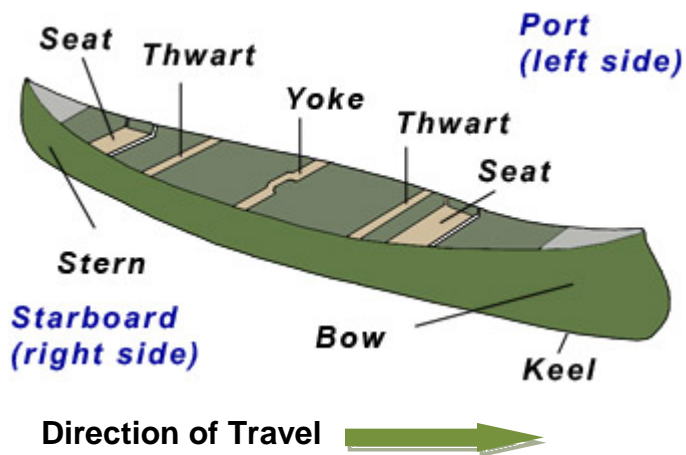
- **Stay with your canoe if you tip over!**  
If anyone falls in the water, a naturalist is nearby in a small motorized boat and will offer support as needed. The canoes will float (even when capsized) and the life vest is designed to keep you afloat.



Someone is always nearby in a motorized boat.

## Canoe and Paddle Terms

Your naturalist will also show you the parts of the canoe and paddle. These are important to know in learning how to canoe.



## Paddling Practice

Your naturalist will ask you to practice several different kinds of paddle strokes before getting on the water. These three are the most basic canoe strokes:

### 1. Forward Stroke: moves the canoe forward:



**Notice the positioning of the hands, left hand on the grip right hand on the shaft, when paddling on the right!**

**2. Draw Stroke: A steering stroke; moves the canoe to the same side as the stroke.**



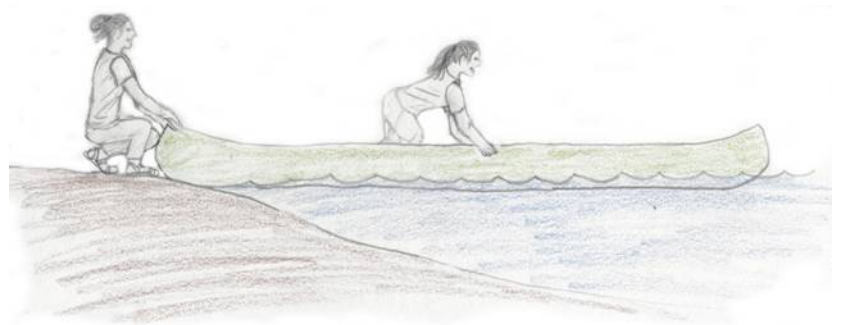
**3. Back Sweep or J Stroke: usually used by paddler in the stern**



Graphics from: <http://www.canoeingbasics.com/>

## Getting Ready to Launch

The naturalist will steady the canoe by straddling it at the stern end. The first person will step in, staying low in a crouched position and move to the bow of the canoe.



If you are 3 people to a team, the next person to step in will be sitting in the middle and followed finally by the paddler who will sit in the stern. You'll get pushed away from the shoreline and very shortly, you will be afloat!

## What Do the Tides and Wind Have to Do with Canoeing?



Almost everywhere on our planet, oceans rise and fall twice a day to produce tides. Tides are caused by gravity. The gravitational attraction of the Moon and Sun pull the ocean waters away from the surface of our planet.

Because the Moon is closer to us than the Sun, the tides are mostly due to the Moon. Ideally, you will want to canoe during high tide. If not, you may find yourself in the mud! (Remember to wear your old sneakers!)

Your naturalist will know if there is an incoming or outgoing tide and tell you to Head out in a specific direction. It is easier to paddle with the tide because you will not get as tired as you would be when going against the tide.



This class heads into the marsh with the incoming tide. They are keeping out of the wind, too!



The wind plays an important part as well. You and your canoe can act as a sail on a very windy day and get blown into the harbor even though you are paddling as fast as you can. In this case you should always put in to the shore. The naturalist in the motorized boat will be able to tow you to the site where you launched the canoe.

## Beaching, Rafting Up and Switching Roles

Depending on the length of your program, you may be on the water for several hours and may want to put into shore or beach your canoe to switch positions so that everyone on your canoe team has a chance in all roles. Or perhaps you have an all-day canoeing program and lunch is planned on the beach.



Students rafting up to use water sampling equipment

Paddling is hard work and you may feel the need to take a rest while still on the water. It is best to raft up with your buddy canoe and with others because this helps to create a stable, floating “canoe island.”

If your teacher requested that water sampling data be collected, you will raft up to better stabilize your canoes. This works great, too if you will be eating lunch on the water!

**We hope you will enjoy leaning to canoe. You will also be able to say:  
“I Can Canoe...Can You?”**



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