

SCC Personal Kit Recommendations v3.0

This is my third attempt at recommending kit for people to buy. In the time since I wrote the first one in 2022 (!) lots of people have bought lots of kit. Some of them have followed this guide, some have not. Some people have been happy with their purchases, some have not.

In a break from tradition, I have done away with my individual recommendations and instead have offered my experience and opinion when choosing each individual component of a kayaking outfit. I hope that means this document will persist for longer, and I won't have to change it. It might also mean I have time to write a boat purchasing guide...

It is my aim that this document will serve as a useful reference guide for anyone looking to buy some of their own kit as a replacement for the club provided kit. These recommendations are my own personal preference.

Nothing will ever be better than going and trying kit out for yourself.

Bear in mind that this is from my experience as a male, white-water paddler, who doesn't easily get cold, and therefore the advice may be skewed towards that paddling style. If you have questions, please ask.

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Manufacturers

Since I have removed my 'top picks' for kit in this version, I have introduced a list of manufacturers so that you know what to Google. If you are thinking of buying kit from manufacturers not on this list, I would strongly recommend you ask someone (me or another experienced paddler) before you waste any money.

- Palm (all kit) ££
- WRSI (helmets) £
- Sweet Protection (helmets) ££
- Peak (all kit) ££
- Yak (dry kit) £
- Kokatat (dry kit and buoyancy aids) £££
- Immersion Research (dry kit and spraydecks) £££
- NRS (dry kit and buoyancy aids) ££
- Astral (shoes and buoyancy aids) £££
- Lomo (General watersports) £
- Reed (Specialist kit) £

My Own Kit

This is a list of all the kit I own and use on a regular basis. Unless it's my drysuit, I would recommend every single piece.

Helmet – Sweet Protection Wanderer

Buoyancy Aid – Astral Greenjacket

Dry Cag – NRS Flux

Drysuit – Yak Horizon Drysuit *I need to replace this. It's a remnant from my 'broke student' era*

Spraydeck – Immersion Research Klingon Empire

Trousers – Peak Neoskin Strides

Shorts – Dewestone Life Shorts

Thermals – Peak Thermal Rashy Top and Pants

Socks – Peak neoprene socks

Shoes – Astral Loyak

Paddle – VE Pro & Kober Vulcano

Boat – Pyranha Ripper 2 & Pyranha Jed

Safety Kit – Palm Snake Sling, Palm Screw Gate Carabiners, Palm Pro Throwline, Palm Folding Knife

Coaching Aid – Lego Kayak

Helmet

A well fitted helmet will not only improve your overall safety on the river but will keep you warmer and happier. (Certain models have the advantage of looking supremely stylish too...). You should always try on helmets before making a purchase, heads come in all shapes and sizes. Visors will protect you from sunlight being in your eyes but can also get more easily caught by the water if you're upside down.

Full cut helmets have ear pads. Half cut helmets do not.

It is not advisable to use non-kayaking (or at least paddlesports) helmets for kayaking. For example, Sweet Protection also make skiing/snowboarding helmets. These are far too warm and padded to be worn on the water, and when wet will be very heavy. The fixtures and fittings on non-paddlesports helmets are very often not corrosion resistant, and so will fail more quickly (and suddenly).

You should expect to replace a helmet around every 3 years, and sooner if you take a big knock on the head! I recently relegated one of my helmets to 'flat-water' only after an impact on the river left me seeing stars. Look after helmets!

Buoyancy Aid

Buoyancy Aids are one of those pieces of kit that you hope you never need. But, when you need it, you hope it's a good one. Storage for river snacks is also a requirement. Whitewater suitable buoyancy aids have adjustment straps (usually multiple) that sit under the ribcage, and further up. They also have adjustable shoulder straps. I look for freedom of movement around the shoulders and underarms when I shop for a buoyancy aid.

For flatwater paddling you may not need a full whitewater suitable BA. It should still be made by a reputable manufacturer (listed above).

Buoyancy aids come in specific women's cut variants. That can make them more comfortable and fit better.

Dry Cag

A good dry cag, with latex seals on **both** neck and wrist, will cover you for most situations while kayaking. Until you start swimming. Look after it, dry it after every outing, and re-waterproof at the same time as you would a waterproof cagoule.

Spraydeck

The club does own some neoprene spraydecks, but they aren't as well looked after as a personal one would be, and therefore ideally shouldn't be relied upon in a white-water setting. Deck implosions (force of water removing your deck for you) are a problem that will result in a very wet day even on some of the simplest rivers.

Sizing is very important on spraydecks. Not only waist size (how many pies you eat), but also deck size (how many pies your boat eats). Be sure to check with the quartermaster what size is best for your boat (either club or personal).

Having your own deck will make a world of difference when learning to roll. Less water coming in when upside down means you're less likely to need to empty your boat out every 5 minutes, which your coach will appreciate.

Dry Trousers

The eternal dilemma! Given that you already own a dry cag, do you buy a pair of dry trousers to go with them, or do you go all out and buy a dry suit?

In my experience, dry trousers and a dry cag can be an excellent substitute for a dry suit. But they will never be a like-for-like replacement. If you are prone to swimming, or get cold easily, buy a drysuit. It's just that easy!

Note the difference between bib trousers (dungaree style) and conventional trousers. Bib trousers tend to stay up better, but not by much. Most importantly, note the difference between trousers with feet, and trousers without feet. One will keep your feet dry, one won't.

Drysuit

The ultimate comfort in kayaking. A good drysuit will increase your enjoyment in the sport tenfold. Look for **kayaking** drysuits (not sailing) with a Velcro waist for a spraydeck, and latex seals on wrists and neck.

The Pee Zip Problem. When getting into a full body waterproof suit, the problem of going to the toilet becomes slightly more difficult. Do your own research depending on your pee preference. I will say this though, go to the loo **BEFORE** you put the suit on!

River Shoes

Personal preference. Shoes are so dependent on your boat choice, and your foot shape. Do your own research. If you playboat, you won't want a chunky boot, but similarly if you are on white-water, you won't want a neoprene bootie. If you're just starting out, go to Decathlon, buy a pair of their cheapest walking boots or trainers. Done.

Thermals

Go to Decathlon and pick out some synthetic NOT COTTON thermals that fit you. Stick them on and you'll be happy in most conditions. Failing that, purchase specific watersports thermals. The Peak Thermal Rashy is my preferred thermal. Look at that, an actual recommendation!

[A note on drysuit thermals.](#)

There do exist full body thermal suits for wearing under a drysuit. Let me be clear, this will only exacerbate The Pee Zip Problem.

Paddle

Paddles are slightly different from regular 'soft' kit in that it is all down to the individual paddler. In general, carbon fibre is lighter than fibreglass, which is lighter than plastic. And price will follow that trend too. Brands to look for include Werner (All Price Levels), VE (High-End), and Palm (Cheaper).

Most club members will let you use theirs as a demo, ask nicely or offer them baked goods!

Boat

As with paddles. Try as many as you can before you commit to a purchase. For white-water, a boat with adjustable outfitting (ratchets or cleats) is a must. Talk to other club members for completely biased opinions about what boat is best.

Safety Gear

Throwlines etc. Come speak to me directly if you're interested in this sort of stuff. There are far more considerations to make than I want to write here.

A Note On Neoprene

Neoprene Socks are the cheapest, easiest, quality of life improvement for kayaking early on. Buy a pair and thank me later. Hot Socks have reflective foil in them too.

A wetsuit is the way that everyone gets into kayaking initially. You can either hold on as long as possible before investing in dry kit or bite the bullet. It will depend on your skill level, how quickly you improve, and the time of year!

Neoprene trousers and a dry bag is how I have paddled my playboat for years. It's the right measure of warm and manoeuvrable. Peak's Neoskin range is widely regarded as the best, with Peak UK Neoskin Strides being my personal favourite.

A Note on Latex

Some people have latex allergies. If this is something that affects you, speak to a coach for alternatives. Reed make latex-free dry bags.