



## **Choosing a Kayak Paddle - the Basics**

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It is important to keep in mind that there are a few good guidelines when choosing a paddle, but there are also a lot of opinions, and unless you spend hours and days at a time and work on perfecting your strokes, many of the distinctions the "experts" speak of will be lost. Make sure you have the basics covered and then paddle, paddle, paddle to gain the perspective on what all of the other stuff means. My personal checklist for a kayak paddle is:

- 1) Lean towards light weight but durable. You lift the paddle a lot, the weight matters, but you also want to be able to lean on it and bang it into the rocks and know that it will not break (or not fear it would break). Weight and cost are in a direct inverse relationship.
- 2) Make sure the paddle has an adjustable shaft that you can feather the blades. The good ones do.
- 3) It is wise to consider the ergo shafts (also known as bent shaft or crank shaft) as these appear to put less stress on the arm joints.
- 4) Don't get too long of a paddle as they can get unruly at the end of the day when you tire out and if you have to paddle at a fast cadence (fighting a tidal current), as the shorter length can be cycled faster. Besides, shorter develops better torso rotation. However, the width of your kayak may force you into a longer paddle.
- 5) The paddle shaft needs to feel comfortable in your hands – so handle the paddle as much as you can when trying it out.
- 6) When choosing a paddle, be sure to handle the different shaft characteristics and combinations – i.e. straight, bent, carbon, metal – feel the difference in the weight, balance and comfort in the hand.
- 7) Try them! Try each of 5 minutes of paddling. Narrow to two and then try and spend 20 minutes with each.
- 8) It is okay to take a sales person's advice, but it is not a substitute for trying the paddles out. If you can attend a "demo day" where a number of paddle makers will be present and you can try a variety of paddles that may be optimal. Watch for the end of year sales or spring demo day sales.



A couple of good, concise articles on kayak paddles from the Paddling.net web site. If you are curious about kayak or paddles, the reviews section of the site is worth viewing. [www.paddling.net](http://www.paddling.net)

(These two articles are attached)

Choosing a Euro-Style Paddle

<http://www.paddling.net/guidelines/showArticle.html?82>

Don't be confused by the title "Euro-Style" as that is the nomenclature that has been adopted to identify the standard, most common kayak paddle style - shaft with "large, contoured" blades at the end that are or can be feathered. This is juxtaposed with the "Greenland-style" paddle which is a more of a stick with the long narrow, symmetrical ends that are the blades.

Paddle Lengths and Fit

<http://www.paddling.net/guidelines/showArticle.html?132>

Good general information to be equipped with before you go paddle testing.

There are a number of quality paddle manufacturers out there but here are some that I have personal experience with:

Werner Paddles

<http://www.wernerpaddles.com/>

Excellent, high end, super light weight quality paddles.

Aqua Bound

<http://www.aquabound.com/>

Good quality, great value, basic but very serviceable.

AT Paddles (Adventure Technology)

<http://atpaddles.com/>

Good quality, nice feel, have lightweight models.

Bending Branches

<http://www.bendingbranches.com/index.php>

Good but basic paddle, a step up from the livery paddles. Not the lightest.