

Communications

When the wind is howling or the currents gurgle loudly it may be difficult to communicate by voice. Sometimes distances will make vocal communications impractical.

It is important to go over the meaning of your hand and paddle signals with the group prior to needing them. Signals are like dialects & different groups and situations will use different signals. Be sure that everyone is "in the know" at your pre-launch meeting.

The humble PFD whistle is a highly dependable communication device.



One strong blow of the whistle signals: "Attention" or "Gather Around".

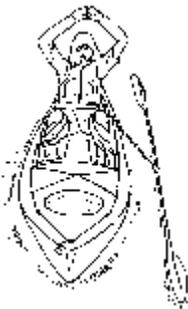


Three whistle blasts (or quickly repeated blows) signals the need for help.

Arm / Hand Signals

Your use of hand and arm signals is limited only to your group's imagination. While there are some "dialects" that are in use, and even published, this type of signaling does not have the long time tradition as the paddle signals do. Non-the-less it would be nice to work toward a uniform "language" while still adding to and tweaking the vocabulary to fit your group's needs.

Some groups use hand signals. The subtle gestures cannot always be seen clearly at distance or through foggy salt stained glasses. If you are close enough to see hand signals you are probably close enough to use your voice, and that may send a clearer message. Use both your voice and your hands for extra emphasis.

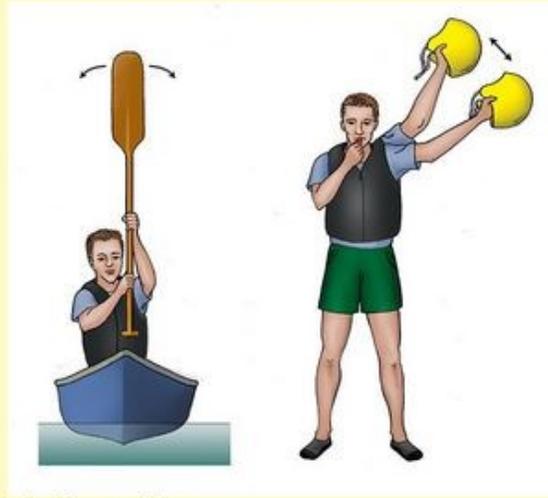


Larger body motions can be more effective, but take your hand(s) off the paddle shaft. Any hand or paddle signal can deter quick reaction with a needed paddle stroke or brace, so be sure you are in a stable situation when signaling, or do so quickly. Arm signals are very effective for surf landings when used from the shore.

- **Need Help:** Wave one hand overhead, side to side, like greeting a friend across a crowd.
- **All Clear - Go Center - Come:** Both arms held straight up and motioning. (Or use one arm)
- **Left / Right:** Point in direction to go with arm(s), motioning as needed. Never point to a hazard.
- **Stop or Back Paddle:** Hold both arms overhead making an X.
- **Paddle Harder:** Cranking motion with both hands.
- **OK:** To ask if someone is "OK" face them and place one hand on top of head, making an O shape, use both arms to make a big O, or tap on your head. To answer that you are OK, or to signal to others who may be wondering, make the same signal back. If you are not OK, do not signal or wave one hand overhead, side to side.

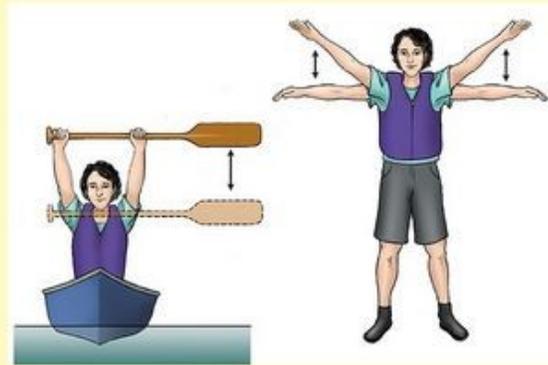
UNIVERSAL RIVER SIGNALS

Emergency! Help!



HELP

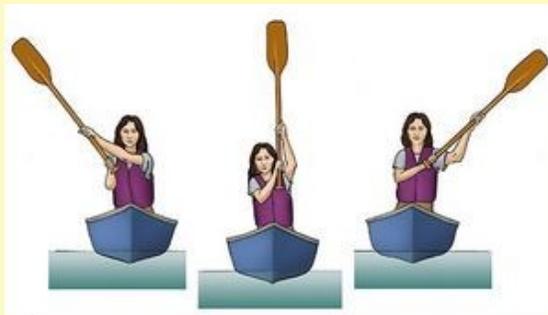
Paddle, PFD, or helmet waved overhead. Three long blasts on a whistle.
Means: "Assist the signaler as quickly as possible."



STOP

Stop!

Arms held straight out to sides, flapped up and down, or paddle held horizontal overhead and pumped up and down.
Means: "Potential hazard ahead."
Pass on signal to other boats in the party and wait for all clear signal before proceeding.



ALL CLEAR,
GO THIS WAY,
(COME TO ME)