

# Paddle Length Selection

Compiled by Gordon Dayton for Sea Kayaking Skills and Adventures, Ltd – May 2005.

This is a rough guide to paddle selection in a number of areas, compiled from a variety of resources. Individual preferences may differ greatly from these general guidelines depending on experience and individual requirements.

**Sea kayak paddles:** Sea kayak paddles vary depending mainly on paddling style, width of boat and size of paddler in that order. Many novice paddlers have a very low paddling style and wider boat that requires a longer paddle. The size of your frame has a minor influence since taller people also have longer arms (it is mainly difference in shoulder width that contributes to length choice). Generally, the shorter the paddle the higher and more efficient will be the stroke. Racers and endurance paddlers may subtract another 5-10 cm from the lengths given below.

<b>High Angle Paddlers</b>			
<b>Paddler Size</b>	<b>Narrow Boats</b>	<b>Wide Boats</b>	<b>Very Wide Boats</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• hard shells</li> <li>• race boats</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rec boat</li> <li>• Sit-on-top</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doubles</li> <li>• Inflatables</li> </ul>
Small: 5'0" – 5'5"	213 – 217 cm	218 – 220 cm	223 – 230 cm
Medium: 5'5" – 6' 2"	218 – 220 cm	220 – 230 cm	225 – 235 cm
Tall: 6"2" plus	221 – 224 cm	225 – 235 cm	220 – 240 cm
<b>Low Angle Paddlers</b>			
Small: 5'0" – 5'5"	215 – 220 cm	225 – 230 cm	225 – 230 cm
Medium: 5'5" – 6' 2"	220 – 225 cm	230 – 235 cm	235 – 240 cm
Tall: 6"2" plus	230 – 235 cm	235 – 240 cm	240 – 245 cm

**Whitewater paddles:** In general, whitewater paddlers are less interested in an efficient forward stroke and more interested in maneuvering. They use the paddle in a near vertical position much more of the time. Thus, they typically need a much shorter paddle than sea kayakers. More aggressive paddlers can subtract as much as 5 cm or more from the lengths below.

<b>White Water Paddles</b>			
<b>Paddler Size</b>	<b>Typical Width (Closed Cockpit)</b>	<b>Wider (Sit-on-tops)</b>	<b>Very wide (Inflatables)</b>
Small: 5'0" – 5'5"	190 - 197 cm	205 – 210 cm	215 – 225 cm
Medium: 5'5" – 6' 2"	198 – 204 cm	210 – 215 cm	220 – 230 cm
Tall: 6"2" plus	205 - 216 cm	215 – 220 cm	230 – 235 cm

**Canoe Paddles:** Canoe paddles are single blade versions of the above, and vary in length depending on application, seat height and paddler size. Again, the higher performance application will utilize a shorter paddle shaft that sets one up for a faster stroke rate.

<b>Canoe Paddles</b>			
<b>Paddler Size</b>	<b>Marathon Racers</b>	<b>Whitewater/ Cruisers</b>	<b>Slalom Racers</b>
Small: 5'0" – 5'5"	190 - 197 cm	205 – 210 cm	215 – 225 cm
Medium: 5'5" – 6' 2"	198 – 204 cm	210 – 215 cm	220 – 230 cm
Tall: 6"2" plus	205 - 216 cm	215 – 220 cm	230 – 235 cm

An excellent article on selection of paddles for canoe touring is one by Charles Burchill. It may be found at [http://www.home.cc.umanitoba.ca/~burchill/pm\\_canoe/paddle\\_size.html](http://www.home.cc.umanitoba.ca/~burchill/pm_canoe/paddle_size.html) .  
[Charles Burchill: Canoe Paddle Selection](#)