

Deep Water Re-Entry From Your Sit-on-top Kayak

By Tom Holtey, author of "[Tandem Sit-on-top Kayaking](#)" and "[Sit-on-top Kayaking, A Beginner's Guide](#)" here are some basics taken from his books to help you improve your skills.

Getting back on your kayak from deep water is one of the most important things that you need to know. The ability to get back on your kayak dependably and quickly can make a big difference in your personal safety, especially in a cold-water environment. Deep water re-entry skills also allow you to more confidently enjoy the advantages of swimming and diving from your sit-on-top kayak.

SOLO PADDLERS
TANDEM PADDLERS
WITH SMALL CHILDREN
WITH DIVE GEAR ON
PADDLERS WITH SPECIAL LIMITATIONS

Practice

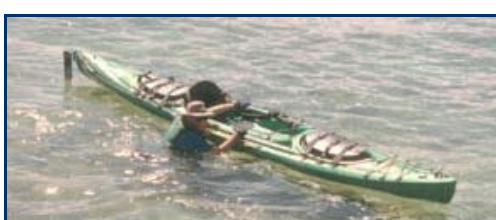
Deep Water Re-entry practice is very important. Practice in water over your head but not too far from shore. Do not venture out into deep-off shore waters until you have mastered this procedure and can do it easily every time.

SOLO KAYAK RE-ENTRY:

Whether you fall off the kayak in deep water, or get off intentionally to cool off, swim or snorkel, getting back in is easy. Just follow these steps:

1. Make sure the kayak is right side up. If not, reach under the kayak (grabbing a knee strap or backrest strap) and pull the far side of the cockpit to you, while pushing up on the close side. This will roll the boat over right side up. Alternatively, you can reach over the hull of the kayak, grab the far side, and fall back over to right the kayak. In windy conditions you may have to roll your kayak up on the upwind side.

2. Reach for the far side of the cockpit with one hand and the close side of the cockpit with the other hand, pulling yourself across the seat area.



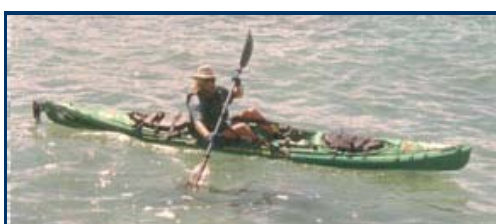
3. Allow the kayak to tip toward you. Let yourself sink deeper into the water and allow the buoyancy of your PFD and your pulling to pop you up out of the water. Flutter kicking can help propel you onto the cockpit.



4. When your belly is on the kayak and your hips are past the gunwale, turn over so your butt slides into the seat. You should be sitting sidesaddle at this point.



5. Lift your feet into the footwells and grab your paddle. A paddle leash really helps.



Practice these steps thoroughly and do not venture far until you have mastered them. Take your time learning to get back in your boat from deep water. It is the most important thing to learn to do.

TANDEM KAYAK RE-ENTRY:

Getting on your sit-on-top tandem is easy from deep water if you practice and follow these principles. If you have fallen off your boat chances are that your partner has also, or perhaps you are both enjoying a swim.

1. First turn the boat right side up, if necessary. Then get on opposite sides of the kayak making sure that your paddle, attached by a leash, is clear from your side.

2. One at a time reach for the far side of the boat, grabbing the gunwale, knee strap or backrest strap. Gripping with one hand on the close side and one on the far side is preferable.



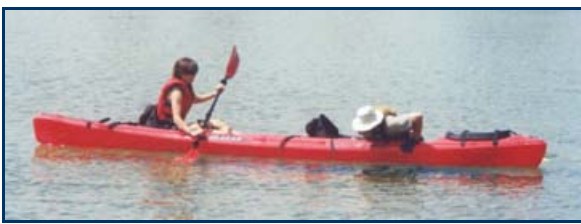
3. Pull yourself across the seat area with your arms and a forceful swimmer's kick with your legs. Allow the kayak to tilt a little making it easy to get aboard. Now you are lying across the kayak on your belly.



4. Pull yourself across the seat so your hips pass the gunwale and you are hanging over both sides of the kayak.



5. Roll over so your butt slides into the seat while your hands are on each side of the boat. Now you are sitting sidesaddle in the seat. Take a moment to gain stability and then put your feet into the foot wells.



6. Gather up your paddle and prepare to brace with your paddle as necessary. Knee straps are very useful for bracing.

7. Then the second rider can get on board while the first braces with their paddle. This can be done one at a time by having one person get on first while the other, in the water, holds the kayak steady. It is possible for both paddlers to reenter the kayak together but good timing and practice will be necessary.

RE-ENTRY WITH SMALL CHILDREN

If you are paddling with children, you must practice deep-water reentry with the kids. Make this practice into a game, it will be fun, and when it happens for real it will not be frightening.

1. Put the kids on the kayak in water that you can wade in but is deep to them. With the kids on board pretend that the water is rough. Children love to rock boats and pretend that they are in a storm at sea. Play up to their imagination.

2. Introduce the idea that the "ship" may capsize and that they will have to swim. Gently turn the kayak enough to spill the kids out. It is not necessary to turn the boat over; this could cause an unhappy bump on the head. They may want to turn the kayak over themselves, and that is OK as long as care is taken not to injure any one.

3. Now let them climb back on board. Some children will get on very easily, others will not. It will depend on their size and ability to grasp, pull, and kick. After some time with this you will be able to assess their ability and join in the fun. Kids love this kind of play and seem to enjoy it for hours, especially on a hot summer's day.

You and your children will be able to develop a routine procedure to re-enter the kayak as a group, with adults and children getting on board at the optimal times. Very small children will likely need to be lifted onto the kayak by an adult seated in the cockpit. Use you legs as a landing ramp while sitting side saddle with your feet in the water. An adult may want to get on board first to minimize tipping, assist the children, or brace as necessary. If there are two adults one may want to stay in the water to corral the youngsters. Larger children will be more like adults in their ability to climb on the kayak and brace with their paddles as others climb on.

SPECIAL PROBLEMS WITH DEEP ENTRY

*See "[Paddle Float and Rescue-Stirrup Re-Entry for Sit-On-Top Kayakers](#)"

*[Tandem Sit-on-top Kayaking: How To Avoid a Mutiny](#) by Tom Holtey here are some basics taken from his book to help Tandem paddlers get started off on the right "seat."