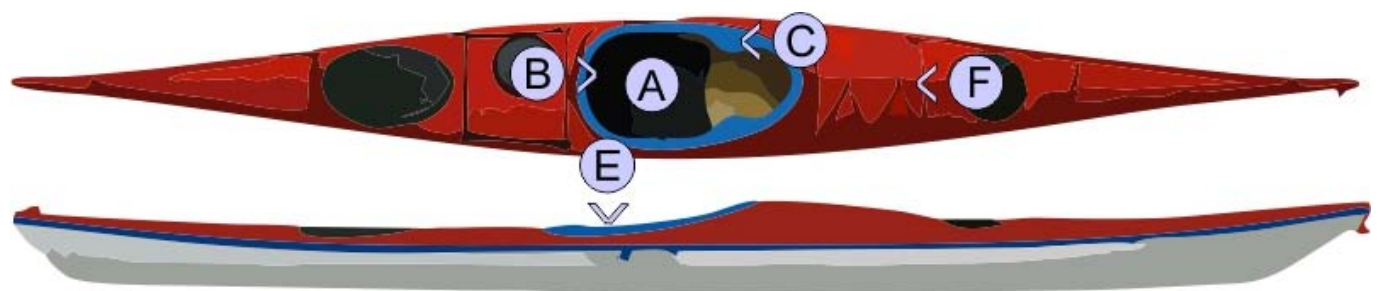


Do you need to improve the comfort of a kayak? Comfort Checklist by Tom Holtey

Older kayaks are outfitted with simple, no frills seating. While durable and rugged, this primitive outfitting is often not as comfortable as the outfitting of newer models (that may also need comfort enhancements). Explore these comfort options for your sit-on or sit-in kayak:

OUTFITTING TIPS & TRICKS W/ LINKS TO PRODUCTS ~ Sit-On & Sit-In ~

~ SIT-INSIDE KAYAKS: ~
[Use this link to SIT-INSIDE specific outfitting at The TopKayaker Shop](#)



- A SEAT PAD
- B BACK SUPPORT
- C THIGH BRACE

- E HIP PADS
- F FOOT BRACE

Key Concepts for a Sit-inside Kayak

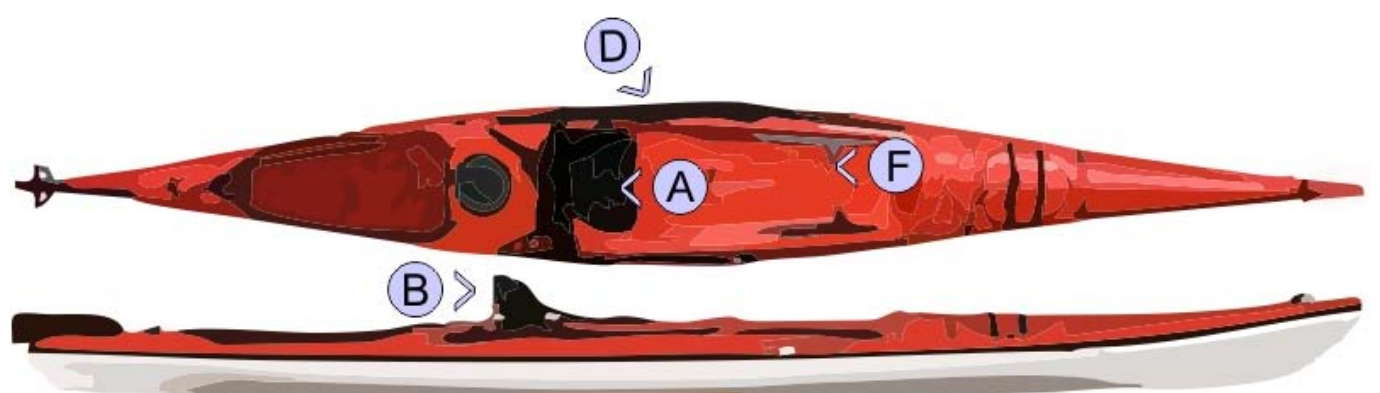
IMPORTANT: Outfitting components should not inhibit wet exit or re-entry from deep water. Replacing the entire seat should be a last resort option for customizing comfort.

- Lumbar supporting back bands are best for active paddlers. Use lumbar cushions for rec kayaks.
- A taller recreational back support is best for relaxed paddlers, and those who are tall.
- Legs should be bent, adjust foot braces as needed.
- Knees and/or thighs should be pressed against the inside of the cockpit of a sea kayak.

Sit-inside Kayak Adjustments

- Add or adjust hip pads as needed
- Foot Pegs - move forward or back
- Back Band Tension (performance kayak)
- Seat Back Height and Tension (recreational kayak)
- Thigh Braces (adjustable on some models)
- Hip Pads (available on some models, often adjust fit with foam shims)
- Leg Lifters (found on a few brands) raise front edge of seat

~ SIT-ON-TOP KAYAKS: ~
[Use this link to SIT-ON-TOP specific outfitting at The TopKayaker Shop](#)



- A SEAT PAD
- B BACK REST

- D LEG STRAPS
- F FOOT BRACES

Key Concepts for a Sit-on-top Kayak

- Seat adjusted properly for support and comfort.
- Use taller accessory seats for relaxed paddlers or for those who are large.
- Use shorter seats for active paddlers and those who are small.
- Legs slightly bent (adjustable foot pegs on some models).
- Adjust leg straps for proper control of kayak. (usually an optional after-market accessory)

Sit-on-top Kayak Seat

A standard SOT seat is a separate accessory that is removable from the kayak. It has four straps. The rear straps must be very tightly adjusted to hold the seat in place. Adjust the front straps to suit the paddler's need for support.

Some sit-on kayaks have a built in proprietary seat. Fully explore the adjustability. Look for seat back height and tilt settings as well as leg lifting thigh support adjustment.

Leg Straps for Sit-on-top kayak

Leg straps allow the kayaker to grip and control their sit-on kayak. Leg straps should be tight, but not so tight as to spread the legs wide. The paddler's knees should not be touching.

~ STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO IMPROVE COMFORT: ~
[Use this link to COMFORT specific outfitting at The TopKayaker Shop](#)

- **Add or replace the seat pad.** Thick seat pads (such as the [Tech Lift Seat Pad](#)) are best for sit-on-top and sit-in rec kayaks. Thinner seat pads (maybe just thin self-adhesive foam) are best for tight fitting sit-in kayaks.
- **Replace the back support.** Use a lumbar hugging back band (such as the [Sonic Back Band](#)) for sit-in touring kayaks. Use the [Tall Back Back-Band](#) for sit-in rec kayaks. Sometimes you can upgrade a back band to sit-in recreational seat back, using a [Back Band](#). See the [Phase 3 Seat Video](#) for info. Consider a taller seat back, or thicker seat pad. Replace the accessory seat on your sit-on-top kayak.

Sit-in-side seat attachment points can be improved with custom located strap eyes. Some built-in sit-top seats can be removed and replaced with a standard sit-on-top seat.
[Read more about kayak seats: How To Choose Sit-on-top Kayak Accessories as well as How To Use Sit-on-top Kayak Accessories.](#)

- **Thigh pads** can be added to recreational sit-in-side kayaks not originally outfitted with them. Thigh braces can sometimes be added to sit-in-side touring kayaks if not originally outfitted with them (selection could be difficult). Find here: [Sit-inside Outfitting Dept](#) or use [close cell foam](#).
- **Leg supports** are very rare on older sit-in-side kayaks. Modern kayak seating (such as those made by Necky and Old Town (ASC), or those by Wilderness Systems (Phase 3) and Perception (Zone) is not typically compatible with older kayaks. Consider using a thigh support cushion (a bolster under your legs to create a "bucket seat" feel). While some thigh and lumbar support cushions are available as an accessory you might use a paddle float or a dry bag with a warm garment in it. A thigh support cushion can also be used for a sit-on-top kayak.

Proper Kayak Seating

- Back Strait and Erect
- Legs Slightly Bent
- Feet on Foot Braces, Adjusted to Fit Legs
- Backside Pressed into Seat (adjust as needed)

Back Pain? Try the following:

- A taller seat back support.
- Sit higher on a thicker seat pad, butt higher than feet.
- Use a lumbar support or switch to a back band.
- Add leg support, under upper legs.

Feet Get Numb or Fall Asleep? Try:

- Sit higher on thicker seat pad, butt higher than feet.
- Add leg support, under upper legs.

Sciatic Leg and Back Pain? Try:

- Sit on a thicker seat pad, placed as far back as possible, and up the back edge of the seat a bit.

Article:

- [Kayaker's Guide To Avoiding Injury & Paddling With Disabilities, Sports Injuries & Joint Pain](#) by Marna Powell

Shopping for a Kayak?

- Make sure the kayak seating is properly adjusted to fit you while testing. Seek the help of an expert if necessary.
- Attend a demo day, kayak lesson, join a tour or rent a kayak for the day.
- Try a few different kayaks. Test paddle them on the water for as long as you can, about 1 hour or more each boat for the best results.

Can't Test Paddle on the water?

- "Test sit" the kayak on the showroom floor for as long as you can. Read a kayak book or magazine, maybe watch a video, to pass the time.
- Fully understand the return policy.

Sit-inside kayak shoppers:

- Try [recreational kayak seating, day touring seating and performance touring seating](#) options.

Sit-on-top Kayak shoppers:

- Adjust the seat properly; seek the help of an expert if necessary.
- Try both [tall and short sit-on-top accessory seats](#) if not outfitted with a built-in seat system.
- Accessory seats that come with a new kayak are usually low end products and might be upgraded.

White Water Kayak Outfitting:

- Seek the help of a certified white water instructor for the safest and best results.

Related Articles:

- [Kayaker's Guide To Avoiding Injury & Paddling With Disabilities, Sports Injuries & Joint Pain](#) by Marna Powell
- [Choosing Sit-on-top Kayak Seats, Knee Straps, Paddle Leashes](#) by Tom Holtey
- [How To Use Sit-on-top Kayak Accessories](#) by Tom Holtey