

## INFORMATION SHEET

Contact: [safety@britishcanoeing.org.uk](mailto:safety@britishcanoeing.org.uk)

Subject	<b>Stand Up Paddleboard (SUP) Safety - Choosing the right leash</b>
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### Overview

In addition to your buoyancy aid or personal floatation device, your leash is a key source of support when stand up paddleboarding. It enables you to prevent your board from floating away from you. To stay safe, it is essential to choose the correct type of leash for the environment and conditions in which you are paddling.

The following sections appraise and give advice on which leashes suit different environments:

### 1. Ankle and Calf (knee) leashes

Suitable environments for use:

Lakes / canals / sea / coastal bays / surf where there is no risk of snag or entrapment

#### a. Ankle Cuff leashes

These are the most common leashes, they often come with your board if you buy a package. They are easy to wear and to fit. Always attach them to the same leg each time you paddle, that way you will always know where to release them if needed.

#### b. Calf Cuff (knee) leashes

These are similar to an ankle leash but the cuff attachment is slightly larger and fits just below your knee. Some people may prefer this type of leash for ease of attachment but the environments in which they should be used are similar.



A coiled leash is normally preferred for general paddleboarding. A Straight leash is mainly used for surfing.

## 2. Quick release waist belt.

Suitable environments for use:

Moving / flowing water including, rivers, tidal rivers and estuaries, tidal races

[For white water rivers grade 1 - 6 we recommend no leash is used.](#)

A waist leash is connected to a waist belt with a quick release buckle or fastening. When fitted and used correctly it could provide a better chance of locating the release system and freeing you from your board and leash attachment.



It is normally worn around your waist and below the level of your buoyancy aid or PFD. It can also be worn on top of your buoyancy aid if fitted high on the chest. It is common practice to attach the cuff from a coiled leash, which would normally attach to your ankle or calf, to the waist belt.

The following video uses a white water setting to demonstrate the potential problems that an ankle and calf leash can cause in flowing water and the advantage of a quick release waist leash in freeing the paddler: [Video: dangers of leashes in a whitewater environment](#)

### Case study

The need for a quick release waist leash has been illustrated on the tidal section of the river Thames below Teddington. Tidal rivers can be deceptive with slack water around high and low tide being followed by very fast flowing water on the incoming and outgoing tides.

On this section of the Thames it has led to paddlers colliding with fixed obstacles such as, pontoons, moored boats and buoys where the paddler and paddleboard have been swept either side of the obstacle and have been unable to free themselves. Through this experience the Port of London Authority (PLA), who manage the Thames Tideway; now require all SUP paddlers to use quick release waist belts rather than ankle leashes. The PLA have published safety guidance for SUP paddlers click [here](#) to view.

### Safety checklist for SUP paddlers

As well as choosing the right leash, a buoyancy aid is essential, and it is important to prepare properly for any trip on the water. British Canoeing have produced some tips on how to enjoy your paddling and staying safe, click [here](#) to view.