

All I Need to Know about Kayaking I Learned from Momma

Chapter 5: “Make Sure People Can See You”

Bicyclists know that, in the evening, reflective clothing is essential in alerting cars to their presence. I remember my mom always saying “Make sure people can see you!” when I took my bike for a spin around the neighborhood at dusk. Visibility is just as vital in kayaking as it is in biking—the only difference is, in a kayak, you are avoiding motorboats instead of traffic.

There are two main ways to increase your visibility on the water. First, when you are purchasing your kayak and paddle, consider brighter colors like red and yellow. Be aware that colors like blue, green, and gray easily blend in with the water. Even when they are further away from the observer, bright kayaks and paddles are far more visible than duller ones.

Because they move, paddle blades tend to be the most eye-catching aspect of a kayak on the water. Therefore, if you want to alert a motor boat to your presence, try paddling at a higher angle, keeping your hands higher than you normally would. Your paddle then acts almost as a waving flag. To enhance this effect, stick strips of reflective tape on your paddle blades, to make them even more attention-grabbing.

Also, consider purchasing a deck light and/or headlamp. While deck lights attach to the back of a kayak with a suction cup, headlamps are attached to a thin band that wraps around the forehead. Both are extremely bright and cast their light across a wide area. Prepared kayakers always have one aboard when they expect to be paddling in fog, in the evening, or in other conditions where visibility is poor.

So heed Momma’s advice and make sure people can see you! Trusting in the vigilance of motor boaters is a risky bargain.

Stay tuned for more sayings from Momma