

Fitness paddling

Pulsing Workout

Fresh Air

EQUIPMENT

Most paddle-sports shops can point you in the right direction to what equipment you need, but it's all fairly easy to understand, whether it's racing down some rapids in a Pyranha Speeder, zipping along a canal or lake in a Venture Kayaks Pulse or, for the more adventurous, clocking up some serious miles on a lake or the open sea in the impressive 21-foot long Kayak Pro Vampire, you can find a craft that will have you out on the water in no time.

Next up is a good paddle that will control the power you produce and transfer in to forward motion efficiently and smoothly. If you're venturing out on to any water it makes a lot of sense to wear a buoyancy aid at all times, but apart from these three essentials you're pretty much good to go!

Being out on the water is fun and invigorating and using paddle-sport, as a way of keeping fit is not new by any means. Modern fitness designs and materials, however, and the opening up of so many inland waterways, like old docks and canals, has made this form of training accessible to just about anyone, and more affordable than ever.

Why do so many people just stop going to the gym? Because you're cooped up in an expensive, boring environment just staring at a TV screen, while you work machines like some demented caged hamster! Why not just get outside in the fresh air to get a healthy low-impact workout? Paddling is easy on your body's joints, as they don't have to support any weight as all the resistance comes from the water. You also stretch your upper body and legs and hold your posture, while you control your breathing to be efficient with your strokes, thus giving you an all-round workout in one session.

A quick paddling session along your local river, canal or redeveloped dock area is really something special, especially early on a summer's morning! It clears the head and gets the body working without you even noticing it. Even when the weather's not so pleasant a good paddling session really leaves you invigorated and feeling like you have achieved something, not just worked some machine for 30 min!

TOP TIP

Staying hydrated while you work out is important, so make sure that you have a drinks bottle or hydration pack with you too.

GETTING STARTED

Before you start to learn any kayaking you need to be reasonably at ease in the water. But once you're happy with being out there, then you're going to have a lot of fun and some great workouts! Your local paddle-sports shop will also be able to suggest places to paddle if you're not sure where to start. Find a sheltered stretch of water and set up a bit of a track, whether it's out for a mile or so and back, or round a lake, just whatever you feel comfortable with. Just keep it simple to start off with and then progress as you get more confident, it won't take long! Concentrate on the basic strokes and using your whole body to propel the kayak through the water.

A coaching session focused on good forward paddling technique will also be of great benefit as you progress, to make sure you don't pick up any bad habits on the way. Once again your local paddle-sport shop should be able to provide more information.