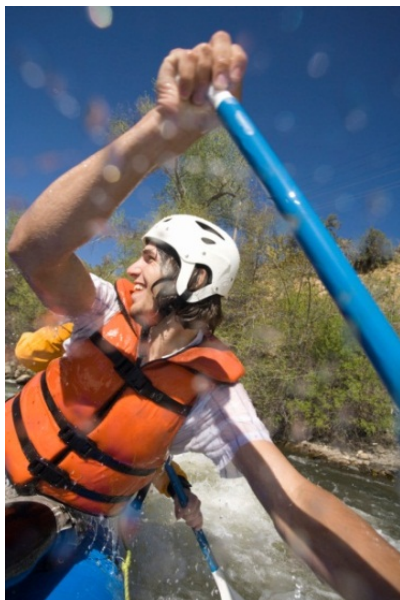




INFORMATION SHEET 3

**WEAR A PFD**

# INFORMATION SHEET - WEAR A PFD



## FACTS

Too many people decide not to wear a PFD when practicing nautical activities because they think they do not need any. In all drownings, an average of 9 out of 10 people drowned while not wearing or not properly wearing a PFD; if they had, most of them would still be alive today.

See why there are still a lot of people who think wearing a PFD is not necessary:

*"I'm a good swimmer; I don't need to wear a PFD."*

At least 25% of all people who drowned were good or excellent swimmers.

*"I don't have to wear a PFD if I can be seen from the shore."*

66% of all drowning victims were less than 15 meters away from the shore or a safe location, such as a dock or a boat.

*"The law states that a flotation device must be aboard; it doesn't mean that I have to be wearing it."*

A flotation device is useless if it is not worn! If you accidentally fall overboard, cold water, wind or currents can make it very difficult to locate and put on the flotation device, and to fasten its straps, buckles and zip.



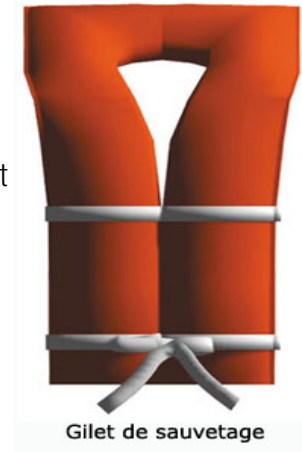
## LIFEJACKET OR PFD?

Two types of flotation devices are available on the market: the lifejacket and the personal flotation device (PFD).

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### THE LIFEJACKET

Lifejackets are brightly coloured (orange, red or yellow), so it is easier to see the person wearing it. They have better buoyancy than the PFDs and can turn an unconscious person onto their back in the water, ensuring that this person's face stays out of the water.



### THE PERSONAL FLOTATION DEVICE (PFD)



PFDs come in a variety of colors. However, bright colors are strongly recommended to ensure better visibility. They have been designed to be more comfortable than lifejackets and to ensure better mobility. There are several types of PFDs that are designed for specific activities (windsurfing, kayaking, canoeing, waterskiing, etc.) or purposes, such as preventing hypothermia. Some PFDs (the ones that have a collar behind the head) can even turn an unconscious person onto their back to ensure that this person's face stays out of the water.

## CHOOSING A PFD

### WHERE TO FIND A PFD?



PFDs and other flotation devices can be bought in stores that are specialized in nautical sports and outdoor equipment, and in superstores. Their price usually starts at \$20. They can also be rented – outdoor equipment stores and nautical activity centers usually offer a flotation device rental service.

### HOW TO CHOOSE A PFD

First of all, you need to take into account the type of activity you will be practicing. Nautical sports, such as waterskiing, towable air tubes, kayaking and canoeing, call for a PFD that offers great mobility. A simple lifejacket is enough for recreational boating (see the difference between lifejacket and PFD).

Make sure your flotation device has been approved by one of these organizations:

- TRANSPORT CANADA
- CANADIAN COAST GUARD
- FISHERIES AND OCEANS

**PLEASE NOTE THAT THERE  
IS NO PFD DESIGNED FOR  
PEOPLE WHO WEIGH LESS  
THAN  
9 KG (20 LBS).**

It is highly recommended that people who weigh less than 9 kg do not practice any nautical activity.

Secondly, you need to ensure that the PFD's size is adapted to each person's physical features. The size is determined by chest circumference for adults and by weight for children.

Read labels to know each model's details.

## TYPES OF PFD



### PFD MADE OF UNSINKABLE MATERIALS

This type of PFD is only recommended for recreational boating, since it is less buoyant than a lifejacket and cannot turn its user on their back. These PFDs are nevertheless designed to be worn at any time, be comfortable and offer mobility. They need to be much adjusted to the body to guarantee efficiency.

### INFLATABLE PFD

Inflatable PFDs are different from other flotation devices, in the sense that they are not made of unsinkable materials; they are filled with air, either by being manually triggered by the user, or by an automatic trigger that is activated by a water-soluble capsule that dissolves in a matter of seconds.



Note that these PFDs can only be used by adults (16 years old and up) who weight at least 36.3 kg (80 lbs). They should not be used when practicing swift water activities or jetskiing. Additionally, PFDs that have an automated trigger should not be worn when practicing a windsurfing activity. Furthermore, since there is a five-second delay between the entry in the water and the PFDs' inflation, inflatable PFDs are not recommended to people who are not good swimmers or who lack confidence in their aquatic skills. In case of PFD failure, only good swimmers might be able to inflate the PFD using the alternate mechanism. Finally, in order for the inflatable PFDs to be considered as part of the boat's inventory required by regulations, the users must wear them as soon as they are onboard.

### AFTER BUYING A PFD

It is recommended to keep all receipts and carefully read instructions (labels, booklets, pamphlets, etc.) provided with the flotation device that you bought. Test your PFD or lifejacket in a controlled environment (such as a pool) and under an adult's supervision before starting your first nautical activity. Follow these simple steps:

- Fasten all straps and belts (do not forget the strap between the legs, if there is one).
- Enter water until you are chest deep.
- Bend your knees and let yourself float.
- Move as much as possible to assess the device's efficiency.

Ensure the device:

- Allows your chin to stay above the water, so it is easy to breath.
- Does not push your head forward so your face dips into water.

If you notice a problem with the device while evaluating it, do not hesitate to return it and get a new one. Flotation devices are designed to protect the user; if it is damaged or incompatible with the user, its efficiency is reduced.

## MAINTENANCE

Before and after each season, all flotation devices – no matter what type they are – must be inspected in order to detect any sign of wear or damage. Check all seams, fabrics, straps, buckles and clasps, since exposition to the sun and extended storing in poor conditions can deteriorate the device's floating foam and its external materials.

Pay close attention when inspecting an inflatable PFD. First of all, check the gas cylinder and the triggering mechanism (note that several models include a green indicator to indicate that the device is armed and ready to function). Additionally, visually inspect the CO<sub>2</sub> cylinder to ensure it has not been damaged.

Automated inflatable PFDs must be inspected in the same way; the only difference is that the water-soluble capsule must be checked to ensure it is intact. If it is not, it must be replaced.

Finally, to ensure its total airtightness, inflate the PFD using the oral inflator, and leave it inflated for the night. If it loses air overnight, it needs to be repaired or replaced.

## FALLING INTO STILL WATER



A flotation device can be lifesaving; however, the user needs to wear it before falling into water. Putting on a PFD once you are in the water is extremely difficult.

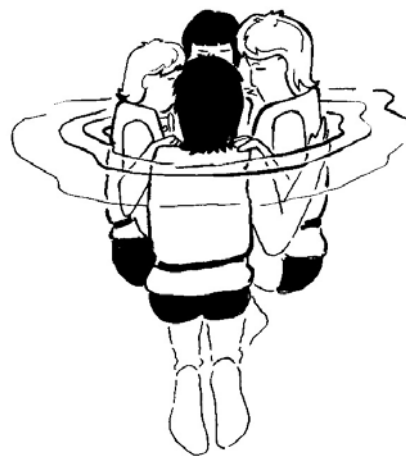
A brightly coloured flotation device makes it easier for rescuers to locate a person in danger.

Additionally, a PFD protects the body against the cold, and helps the person stay afloat. A person who is alone in the water can adopt the foetal position to help keep body warmth. If several people are in the water, it is better to use the huddle position. People who are more likely to rapidly lose their body warmth (children and elderly) can go inside the circle formed by the huddle.

When immersed in cold water, the 1-10-1 rule applies: 1 minute to calm down and catch your breath, 10 minutes of fine motor skills and 1 hour before losing consciousness.



FŒTAL POSITION



HUDDLE POSITION

## FALLING INTO SWIFT WATER

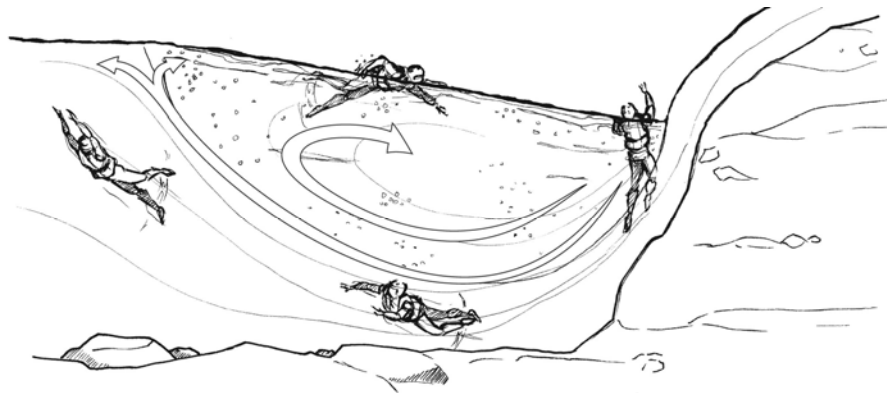
Someone who accidentally falls into swift water might be carried away by currents and seriously injured if their body is not in the right position.



Source : Manuel sauvetage en eau vive; figure 42

First of all, the person must lie on their back, while keeping the head out of the water. Legs must be slightly bended, so feet can absorb any shock caused by an obstacle. The person must use their arms to try approaching the shore by pulling water to the side of the body.

If you are swallowed in a current from which you cannot exit (reversal), never take off your PFD. Try to get away by going under the reversal, all the while keeping your personal flotation device on.



Source : Manuel sauvetage en eau vive; figure 51

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