

BSA Stand Up Paddleboarding Award



The BSA Stand Up Paddleboarding award introduces Scouts to the basics of stand up paddleboarding (SUP) on calm water, including skills, equipment, self rescue, and safety precautions. This award also encourages Scouts to develop paddling skills that promote fitness and safe aquatics recreation.



This program implemented with assistance from the ACA.



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®

SUP Safety

The U.S. Coast Guard considers stand up paddleboards as vessels when they are used outside of designated swim areas or ocean surfing zones. Therefore, federal regulations concerning life jackets, sound devices, and lights apply.

In Scouting, federal regulations are supplemented by the BSA's Safety Afloat policy. The complete Safety Afloat guidelines are found in the [Guide to Safe Scouting](#) available at www.scouting.org. The following list highlights items specific to stand up paddling.

1. Qualified Supervision. All SUP activities must be supervised by a mature and conscientious adult who is trained in and committed to compliance with the nine points of Safety Afloat. That supervisor must be skilled in the safe operation of stand up paddleboards for the specific activity. For SUP activities on confined, calm water free of hazards, the supervisor should be able to demonstrate the knowledge and skills required for the BSA Stand Up Paddleboarding award and have the knowledge and ability to perform rescues of paddlers. Additional skills and knowledge are needed to supervise float trips or SUP activities on rivers or the ocean.

2. Personnel Health Review. The supervisor should review the health histories of all participants and adjust the activity to anticipate risks associated with individual health conditions.

3. Swimming Ability. Every participant must complete the 100-yard BSA swimmer classification test to participate in training for BSA Stand Up Paddleboarding or to paddle a SUP during a Scouting function.

4. Life Jackets. Properly fitted Coast Guard-approved life jackets must be worn by everyone engaged in SUP activities. Type III personal flotation devices are recommended, but inflatable life jackets are appropriate in calm water for those 16 years of age or older.

5. Buddy System. Everyone in a SUP activity is monitored by a buddy nearby who can sound an alarm and lend assistance if needed. During instruction, the instructor must also have a buddy familiar with the activity.

6. Skill Proficiency. Anyone classified as a swimmer may engage in SUP training provided by a qualified instructor. For unit recreational activities in calm, confined waters, participants need to be able to control the board adequately to return to shore, either on the board or by swimming. Units taking day or overnight trips on calm water should have the skills required for the BSA Stand Up Paddleboarding award. SUP activities on rivers or the ocean require training beyond that obtained from the BSA Stand Up Paddleboarding award.

7. Planning. Units engaged in any SUP activity should notify parents and other responsible parties of the location and duration of the activity. Units taking day or overnight trips on calm water should consult the BSA publication *Aquatics Supervision*, No. 34346, and other resources for additional guidance on trip safety. Planning for all SUP activities should include checking water and weather conditions prior to and during the activity and include plans for adjusting, delaying, or curtailing the activity when appropriate. In particular, everyone should be off the water for at least 30 minutes after any lightning or thunder.

8. Equipment. In addition to a board, paddle, and properly sized life jacket, each participant in a SUP activity on calm water should have a whistle and an appropriate leash. (Leashes are discussed in the equipment section.) All equipment should be safety checked and repaired as needed prior to use. Dress should be appropriate for air and water temperatures. Shoes, sunscreen, a hat, sunglasses, and a water bottle are also recommended.

9. Discipline. Scouts should know and respect the rules for safe paddling and follow directions from those leading the activity. Rules and safety procedures should be reviewed before each launch.

SUP Venues

Training for BSA Stand Up Paddleboarding should be conducted in calm, flat water free from wind, waves, current, or outside boat traffic—within swimming distance of shore. There should be no submerged trees or structures that could injure an individual falling off a board. Completion of the training should prepare Scouts and leaders to enjoy SUP activities in similar environments. That, in turn, can lead to opportunities such as flat-water racing. However, the further you venture from shore, the more you need to know about handling wind, waves, and currents.

Flat-water touring is another possibility. Gear can be carried on the deck in waterproof bags. Consult other resources for what to carry, where to go, and how to deal with changing environments.

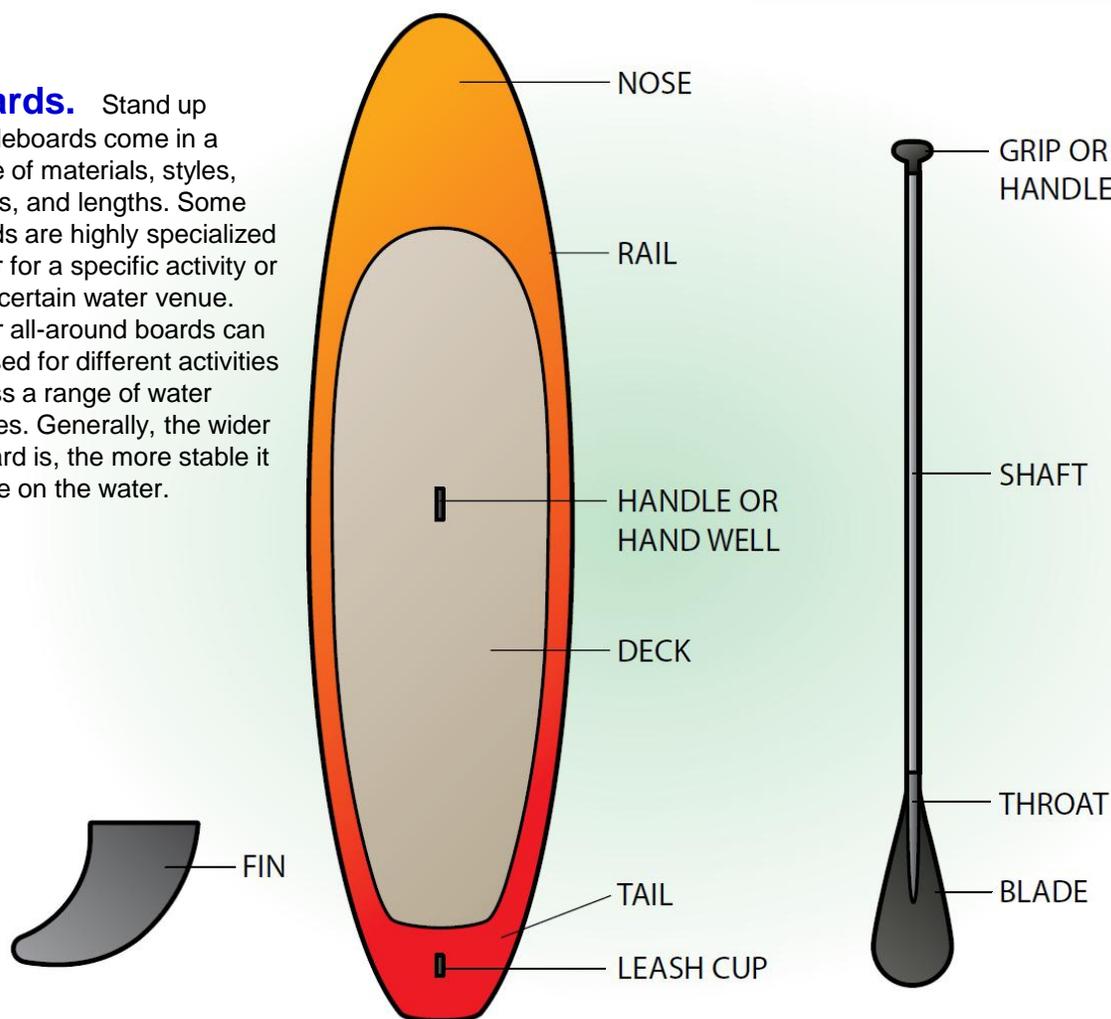
SUP originated as an offshoot of surfing. It is still used in the surf and has expanded into whitewater. Stand up paddleboarding in the surf or whitewater requires skills beyond those covered in the BSA Stand Up Paddleboarding award. Such skills are best acquired from qualified instruction. Check local paddling clubs and the ACA (www.americancanoe.org) for opportunities to learn more advanced skills.

SUP Equipment

Life Jackets. Everyone in a SUP Scouting activity must wear a properly fitted Coast Guard-approved life jacket. To determine the proper fit, first check the label to determine if the life jacket is designed for your weight. Put it on, fasten and tighten all the straps, and then lift at the shoulders. It should not lift up around your head.



Boards. Stand up paddleboards come in a range of materials, styles, widths, and lengths. Some boards are highly specialized either for a specific activity or for a certain water venue. Other all-around boards can be used for different activities across a range of water venues. Generally, the wider a board is, the more stable it will be on the water.



There are different types of stand up paddleboards: (from left) all-around, touring, all-around, inflatable, and whitewater.

Paddles. There are many different materials and styles of paddles. Key components to understand when choosing a good paddle are length and weight. Heavy paddles will tire a person quickly, but lighter paddles can be more expensive. There are also numerous techniques for sizing a paddle, so consider going with the manufacturer's recommendation. However, the key point when sizing a paddle is that when the blade is fully immersed in the water, the grip should not be higher than your shoulder. In addition, different SUP activities might be better executed with a different length of paddle. For example, some ocean SUP surfers prefer a shorter paddle length than when they are paddling on flat water .

SUP Equipment

Leashes. Leashes are a crucial piece of equipment in numerous situations. In flat water, a leash will keep your board from blowing away in the wind and may keep it from striking another paddler if you fall. Leashes are either straight, coiled or a hybrid of both. A coiled lease is appropriate for flat water since a straight lease may drag in the water and snag paddle blades or other objects. One end of the leash is attached with a Velcro cuff to your ankle or calf. The other end is attached to a fitting on the tail of the board.

Straight or hybrid leashes are typically used in surf. In flowing rivers, with or without whitewater, leash use is not as straightforward since there is a possibility the leash could lead to entanglement. For river use, the leash should be attached to your life jacket with a quick-release mechanism, never to your ankle or calf. Seek specialized training before attempting SUP in moving water rivers or whitewater, and follow the advice of your instructor. When in doubt, do not wear a leash in moving or whitewater.



Whistles. In waters under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Coast Guard, every participant must have a sound-producing device readily accessible. A whistle attached to one's PFD suffices and is advisable on any body of water.

Footwear. Despite what you might see in a range of pictures, footwear that will not fall off your feet is highly recommended. You do not want your SUP experience to be cut short with a trip to the local hospital due to a cut from a sharp object, a piece of glass, a fish hook, or an oyster shell.

SUP Techniques

Underarm Carry. Place one arm over the rail and grab the handle or hand well in the center of the board. Bend with your knees to lift the board—do not bend with your back. If the board is too heavy or too long to carry by yourself, use the two-person carry. One person places his or her arm over the nose of the board and the other places an arm around the tail of the board, being careful not to get cut from the fin(s).



SUP Techniques

Paddle on Knees. To become comfortable on the board before standing up, or to paddle away from a dock, paddle on your knees using either an over/under grip, a double-overhand grip, or the standard grip. For the over/under grip, hold the paddle in the center of the shaft with your hands in the same configuration as if you were holding a baseball bat, realizing though that your hands should not be touching each other. To use the double-overhand grip, hold the shaft so that your

knuckles on each hand are facing the same direction, and if you stick your thumbs out, they will be pointing at one another. In using either the over/under or double-overhand, you do not have to place a hand on the T-grip. The standard grip is only for those who can comfortably hold the paddle with one hand on the grip and the other hand on the shaft without putting undue pressure on their shoulders.



Over/under grip



Double-overhand grip



Standard grip

Stand and Balance in Neutral Position.

Here are two techniques to go from kneeling to standing on a stand up paddleboard. The first (at right) is to place your paddle on the board in front of you with the blade on one side of the board and the grip on the other. Keeping your hands on the shaft, and staying balanced on the board, slowly drag one foot up underneath your body. Next bring your other foot forward while slowly standing up, holding the paddle perpendicular to the board.

The tripod method (below) is another option to rise from the kneeling position. Place the blade of the paddle in the center of the board in front of you with the grip pointing upwards toward the sky. Then, maintaining your balance in the center of the board, hold the shaft in an over/under grip and begin to slowly bring one foot forward underneath your body. You can then walk your hands up the shaft while bringing the other foot forward. Once you are standing in the center of the board and the board is trim, keep your feet about shoulder width apart and place one foot approximately one to two inches forward of the other.



Proper Falling Technique. Try to anticipate and avoid situations that may lead to a fall. For example, if a motorboat with a large wake approaches from a distance, you may want to kneel until the waves arrive and die down. However, sooner or later you are going to fall. If you feel yourself losing balance and cannot easily recover by bracing with your paddle, try to fall away from the board with your paddle held to the side. You do not want your elbow or chin to hit the board when falling, nor do you want your board to shoot out away from you and potentially injure someone else nearby.



Remount. To recover back onto the board, approach the board from the center. Using the handle or hand well, pull/lift your upper torso over the rail and onto the deck. Next, slide around into the prone position. Unless there is a strong current, you can place your paddle next to the board and retrieve it after you remount since it will float. If you try to remount from the tail of the board, be very careful that you do not get cut by the fin(s) or that the board does not shoot out in front of you and injure someone.



Forward Stroke. Three key components to the forward stroke are the catch phase, the power phase, and the recovery phase. With one hand on the grip and the other at a comfortable position on the shaft, the paddle should be as vertical (the shaft being straight up and down) as possible when viewed from the front. Both the top hand and shaft hand should be on the outside of the rail or both hands out over the water as much as possible. Then rotate your body and hips around its vertical axis and place the blade of the paddle into the water several feet in front of the paddler for the catch phase.

At this point, the back face of the blade should be directed forward toward the nose, and the power face should be directed backward toward the tail. Once the blade is fully submerged, and without splashing, begin to unwind your body, simultaneously pulling slightly with your shaft arm and pushing with your grip arm for the power phase of the forward stroke. Transition from the power phase to the recovery phase before your blade passes your feet. A foot or so before your feet, begin to slice the blade out of the water by dropping your grip hand down toward the centerline of the board. Then rotate your torso and hips so that the blade swings back toward the nose of the board for the next catch phase.



Catch phase



Power phase



Recovery phase

Back Stroke. To stop the board or generate initial momentum backward, use the back stroke. Rotate your torso and hips toward your paddling side and place the paddle blade behind you in the water next to the rail, with the back face of the blade facing down. Keeping the shaft as vertical as possible, push the blade forward with your shaft arm while unwinding your torso and hips. Once the blade is no longer vertical in the water (usually after it passes your feet), begin the recovery phase by dropping your grip hand down toward the centerline of the board.



Catch phase

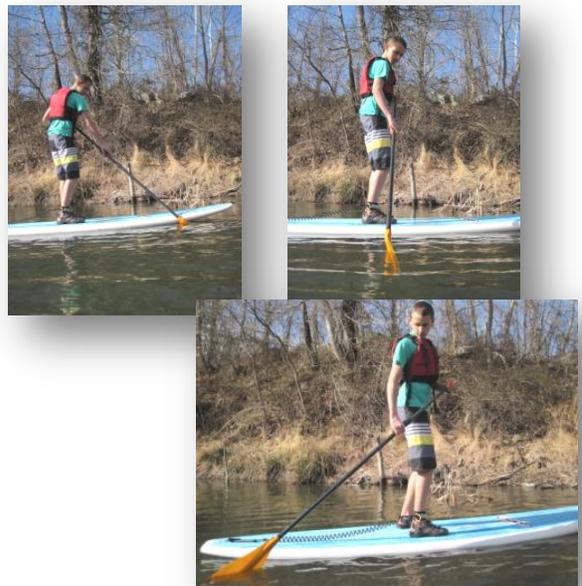


Power phase

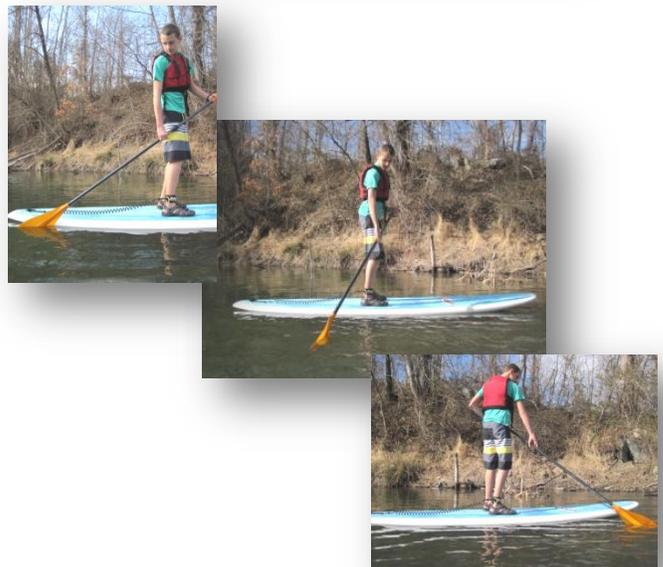


Recovery phase

Forward Sweep. The forward sweep turns the nose of the board away from the paddling side. With your knees slightly bent, rotate your torso and hips so that you place the paddle blade as close to the nose of the board as you can reach with the power face directed away from the nose. Your thumb on your grip hand should be in a thumbs-up position for this part of the catch phase. This assures that the blade is in the correct orientation before beginning the power phase of the stroke. Then, without splashing, begin to unwind your hips and torso back to the normal position so that the blade makes a wide sweeping arc away from the rail. You can end the power phase of the forward sweep either once the paddle shaft becomes perpendicular to the board or you can continue to rotate your body so that the blade exits the water closer to the tail of the board. The start of the recovery phase of the stroke, slicing the blade out of the water, will be dictated by how much you want the board to turn.



Reverse Sweep. The reverse sweep turns the nose of the board toward the paddling side. With your knees slightly bent, rotate your torso and hips so that you place the paddle blade as close to the tail of the board as you can reach with the power face of the blade directed toward the tail. Your thumb on the grip hand should be in a thumbs-up position for this part of the catch phase. This assures that the blade is in the correct orientation before beginning the power phase of the stroke. Then, without splashing, begin to unwind your hips and torso back to the normal position so that the blade makes a wide sweeping arc away from the rail. You can end the power phase of the reverse sweep either once the paddle shaft becomes perpendicular to the board or you can continue to rotate your body so that the blade exits the water closer to the nose of the board. The start of the recovery phase of the stroke, slicing the blade out of the water, will be dictated by how much you want the board to turn.



Draw Stroke. To move the board sideways, you can use the draw stroke. Begin the stroke by rotating your torso and hips until your shoulders are parallel to the centerline of the board. Then, keeping the paddle shaft vertical and the power face of the blade parallel to the rail, reach out to the side and place the blade into the water. Using your torso and arms, draw the board toward the blade for the power phase. Before the power face of the blade touches the rail, being the recovery phase of the stroke. Drop your grip hand forward toward the nose, thereby slicing the blade out of the water behind you. Remember, due to the fin(s) on the board, you might need to rotate enough so that the power phase of the draw stroke occurs right behind your feet to truly make the board go sideways without turning the nose.





BSA

Stand Up Paddleboarding Award Application

Name of applicant		
Address		
City	State	ZIP code
Council name		Council number
Unit type		Unit number
Name of counselor*	Qualification	
Counselor signature signifies that applicant has completed all requirements		Date

Requirements

1. Review the BSA Safety Afloat policy. Explain to your instructor how this applies to stand up paddleboarding.
2. Before fulfilling other requirements, successfully complete the BSA swimmer test: Jump feetfirst into water over the head in depth, level off, and begin swimming. Swim 75 yards in a strong manner using one or more of the following strokes: sidestroke, breaststroke, trudgen, or crawl; then swim 25 yards using an easy, resting backstroke. The 100 yards must be completed in one swim without stops and must include one sharp turn. After the swim, rest by floating.
3. Explain safety considerations for stand up paddleboarding in the following environments: lake, moving water, whitewater, open ocean, and ocean surf.
4. Review the characteristics of life jackets most appropriate for stand up paddleboarding and understand why one must always be worn while paddling. Then demonstrate how to select and fit a life jacket for stand up paddleboarding.
5. Describe the appropriate type of leash to wear in different water venues.
6. Name and point out the following:
 - a. Major parts of a stand up paddleboard
 - b. Parts of a paddle for stand up paddleboarding
7. Discuss the following:
 - a. Different types of stand up paddleboards
 - b. How to correctly size and hold a paddle for stand up paddleboarding
8. Using a properly outfitted stand up paddleboard, safely demonstrate the following:
 - a. How to carry a stand up paddleboard
 - b. How to safely paddle away from a dock or shoreline (on knees)
 - c. How to stand and balance on a board in the neutral position
 - d. How to appropriately fall off a board
 - e. How to remount the board
 - f. Forward stroke
 - g. Back stroke
 - h. Forward sweep
 - i. Reverse sweep
 - j. Draw stroke
 - k. One self-rescue technique—lay on your stomach and paddle with your hands
9. With supervision from your instructor, paddle a course that involves the following:
 - a. A straight line for 25 yards and stop within one board length
 - b. A figure 8
 - c. Moving abeam to the right 10 feet and to the left 10 feet.

* Counselor must review information on back of application form.

Information for Counselors

Overview. Any youth or adult who is registered with a troop, ship, or crew and completes the requirements is eligible for a patch and recognition card, available from the local council service center. Instruction for BSA Stand Up Paddleboarding is to be conducted under safe conditions on calm, flat water free from wind, waves, current, or outside boat traffic—within swimming distance of shore. There should be no submerged trees or structures that could injure an individual falling off a board. One to three hours in one or more sessions should suffice for instruction and practice. Paddle lengths and life-jacket sizes should be adequate to fit all participants. Counselors are expected to supplement the material in this document with their own knowledge and resources. All counselors must be trained in BSA Safety Afloat. Completion of this award should prepare the participants for unit activities in similar environments and encourage them to seek more advanced courses prior to paddling in more challenging venues.

Who Can Teach SUP. Any person recognized as a SUP instructor by the ACA | Canoe - Kayak - SUP - Raft - Rescue or equivalent organization may serve as a counselor for this award, with the approval of the local council. An ACA Level 1 or Level 2 Stand Up Paddleboarding Assessment Course or ACA Instructor certification is strongly recommended. A person experienced in SUP skills and safety may serve as a counselor in a BSA summer camp program under the direction of a currently certified BSA Aquatics Instructor.

SUP Safety. In addition to the basic board-handling skills, the counselor needs to have the following:

- Knowledge of the dangers of falling off the board near docks or onto submerged obstructions—scene safety
- Knowledge of the different leash types and when and when not to wear them
- Knowledge of how to rescue SUPs; both with and without an attachment point at the nose

Scout-to-Counselor Ratio. There should be one qualified counselor for every six Scouts. Ratios of youth to adults must also meet the BSA Youth Protection policies. Everyone must be monitored by a buddy, including the instructor. The instructor's buddy may serve as an assistant on the water or as a lookout on land if the instruction is close enough to shore for easy verbal communication. The instructor's buddy must know enough to realize when the instructor is having difficulty rather than demonstrating a fall.

References

- ACA | Canoe - Kayak - SUP - Raft - Rescue, www.sup-aca.org or www.americancanoe.org
- BSA *Aquatics Supervision*, 2013 Printing, No. 34346

Photo Credits

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Acknowledgments

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