

Know Your River Signals

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On the river, where distance and the roar of rapids can make it impossible to hear, hand signals are crucial. William McGinnis, author of the iconic handbook *Whitewater Rafting*, advocates these universal hand signals.

Are You OK?/I'm OK - tap finger tips on top of head or helmet;

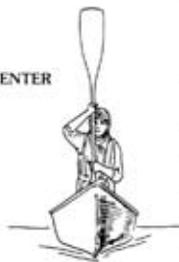
Eddy Out - circle upraised finger;

Look - with index and middle fingers forming a V, point to eyes then twist and point;

Scout - horizontal hand at brow, often combined with a stop signal.



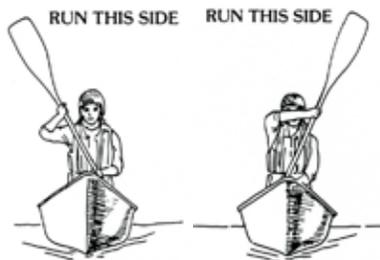
RUN CENTER



In rapids, a paddle held with the blade straight up means take the center route;

a paddle or arm angled 45 degrees to the

left or the right means you should run the rapid on the indicated side of the river.



Always point in the direction you want someone to go, never in the direction of danger.

Help/Emergency - Assist the signaller as quickly as possible. Give three long blasts on a whistle while waving a paddle,



helmet or life vest over your head in a circular motion. If a whistle is not available, use the visual signal alone. A whistle can be carried on a lanyard, or attached to the zipper of a life vest. (PFD)

Stop - Potential hazard



ahead. form a horizontal bar with your paddle or outstretched arms. Move this bar up and down to attract attention by using a pumping motion with paddle or flying motions with arms. Those seeing the signal should pass it back to others in the party. Wait for "all clear" signal before proceeding, or scout ahead.

Attention - This signal, audible only, consists of a series of short "chirps" on the whistle. It is used where no emergency exists, but where the need to communicate is obvious and necessary. This signal should not be given casually; only when other common forms of communication are having little or no effect.



All Clear - come ahead. In the absence of other directions, proceed down the center. Form a vertical bar with your paddle or with one arm held high above your head. Paddle blade should be turned flat for maximum visibility.