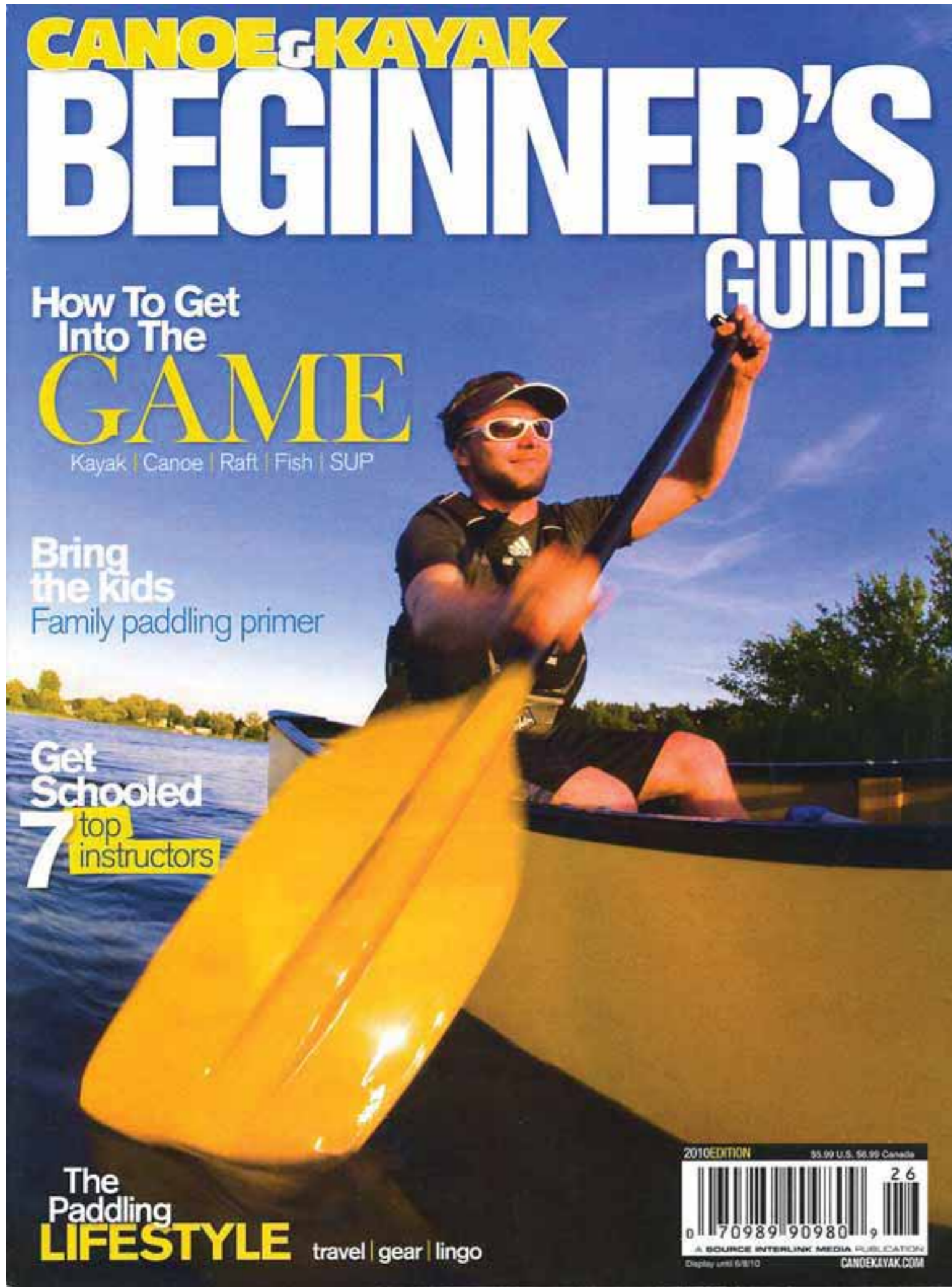


Spring 2010 Canoe & Kayak Beginner's Guide

Featuring NRS Sea Tour Jacket.



KAYAK TOURING GEAR



*PADDLE FACTORS

***PADDLE LENGTH.** Paddle length depends on your style of paddling, torso size, how high you sit in your boat and boat width. Length also dictates your stroke rate—longer paddles result in more torque, but a shorter stroke rate. Whitewater paddles range from 190 to 200 centimeters from blade tip to blade tip. Touring paddles are usually longer (210-230 cm).

***BLADE SIZE.** Think of paddle blades as ice cream spoons—larger spoons yield big chunks of ice cream with more effort, while smaller spoons (i.e. your typical mid-size blade) chip away with less effort (think consistent, low-angle strokes for first-time touring paddlers).

***SHAFT SHAPE.** Bent-shaft paddles are intended to align the wrists for comfort and injury prevention, while conventional straight shafts are typically lighter and less expensive. An oval cross-section in the grip for your dominant, control hand allows you to know intuitively that the blades are properly oriented. Smaller diameters are better suited for paddlers with smaller hands. Two-piece designs, or breakdown paddles, allow the paddler to quickly adjust the blade's

feather angle and sometimes the paddle's length.

***WEIGHT AND FEEL.** Composite materials, such as carbon fiber and fiberglass, are lighter than the plastic and aluminum basics, but come at a price. Fortunately, they can be molded, woven, and manipulated in different blade and shaft combinations at various price points. Traditional wood paddles are stronger and heavier than most composite paddles, but manufacturers have also found ways to combine wooden shafts with composite blades.

Beginners simply need a lightweight paddle with durable blades to help them master stroke basics. Consider a two-piece, which will stow well for transport and will rig to the back deck as a great spare once you're ready to progress to a higher-performing paddle. **Pictured:** The Werner Laguna boasts durable fiberglass-reinforced nylon blades for logging those long miles. The fiberglass shaft with a two-position, push-button ferrule attachment locks together the two ends of this worthy touring paddle. (\$109, WERNERPADDLES.COM) L: 220, 230 AND 240 CM, 37.5 OZ.



*THE ESSENTIALS

Once you're ready to head away from shore, make sure you're carrying the two vital pieces of gear should you capsize and need to perform a self-rescue. First, you need a paddle float to fashion the outrigger necessary to climb back in from the water (it's also a great tool to help you learn to roll). Once you're back in the boat, you'll need a bilge pump to empty the swamped water inside. **Pictured, left:** The Gaia Bean Bag paddle float utilizes the same PVC-free, high-buoyancy enclosed-foam beads Gaia uses in Jackson Kayak's popular outfitting (p. 57), the airtight nylon Bean Bag fits all paddle sizes, no inflation necessary (\$37, GAIASPORTS.COM). **Pictured, right:** Stash the Aqua-Bound BilgeMaster pump behind your seat or lash it to your deck (\$27, AQUABOUND.COM).

Be ready for variable elements with a protective splash top. Beginners who don't want to drop lots of cash on high-end materials like Gore-Tex have plenty of comparable options at lower prices. **Pictured, left:** The Kokatat TROPOS Light Breeze top is a minimalist's dream, featuring sealed seams of waterproof/breathable TROPOS Light material and an adjustable, Lycra-coated splash collar and cuffs, plus drawcord waists to keep off the wind, water and especially, ~~cross your fingers~~ the sun. (\$76, KOKATAT.COM). **Pictured, right:** The NRS Sea Tour provides more-than-ample wet weather protection with HyproTex 2.5-layer waterproof/breathable nylon fabric, fleece-lined chin, and urethane hook-and-loop wrist closures. (\$195, NRSWEB.COM)

Pictured Right: The NRS Sea Tour provides more-than-ample wet weather protection with HyproTex 2.5-layer waterproof / breathable nylon fabric, fleece-lined chin, and urethane hook-and-loop wrist closures. (\$195, NRSWEB.COM)