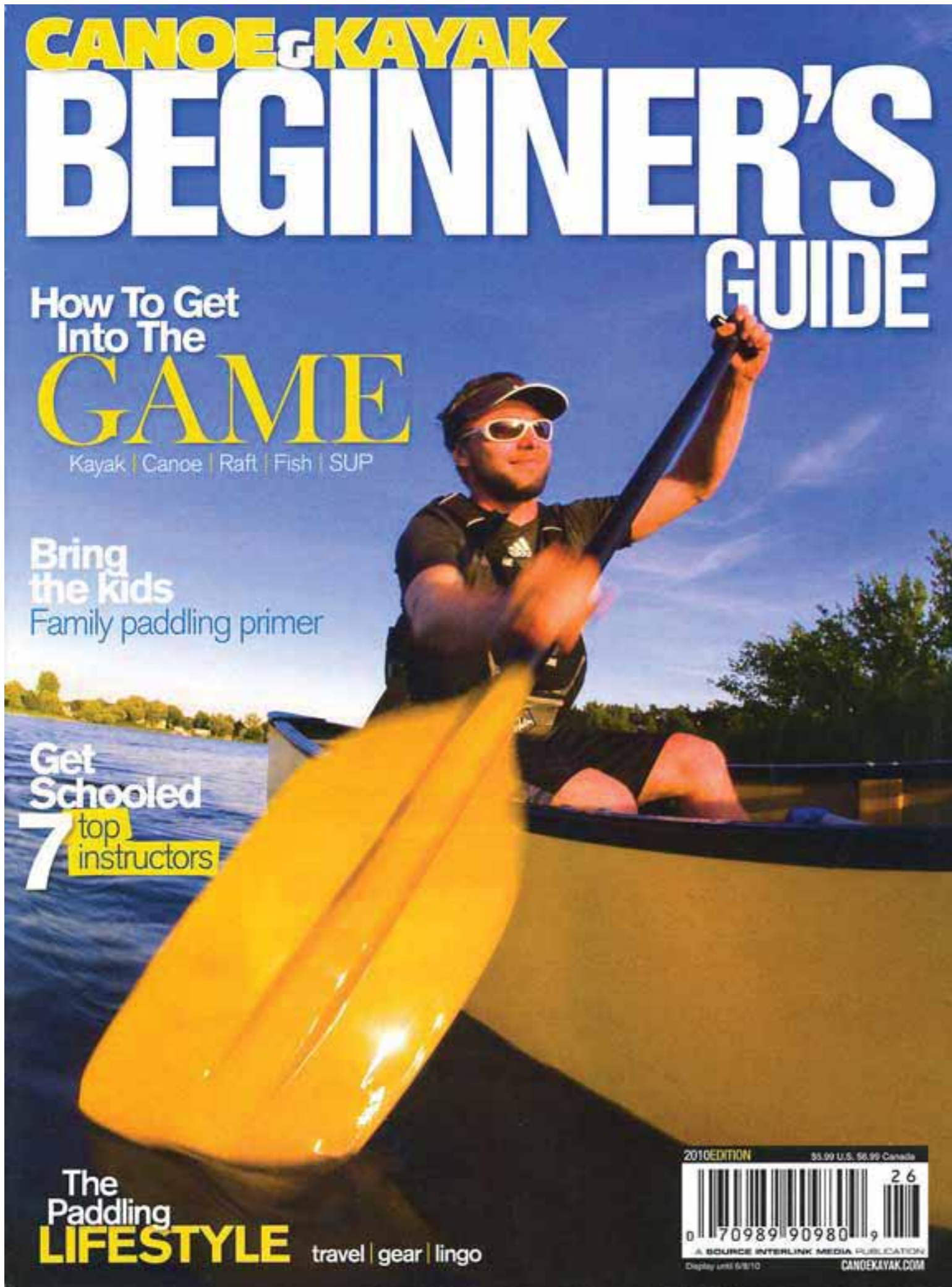


# Spring 2010 Canoe & Kayak Beginner's Guide

## Featuring NRS Pilot Knife.



Pictured: The sleek NRS Pilot knife has a cutting edge with both smooth and serrated sections, and a blunt tip that guards against unintentional gear punctures, and doubles as a flathead screwdriver (\$40, nrsweb.com).

### GEAR

**\*RAPID READY**

If there was ever a paddling discipline in which to pick your gear battles, that would be whitewater. You can get more than a little bogged down with everything you need to pack. But don't get lost in the paddle pogie and nose plugs. Make sure you fit snugly in your kayak with enough padding for your feet, thighs and hips. Then prioritize your needs with the essential items for running the river. Think about buying and borrowing these items first (and don't forget about that PFD, see p. 65). Later on, you can swap your wool socks and old Converse sneakers for a slick pair of booties.

**\*THE ESSENTIALS**

Balancing value and performance is the trick when choosing your first whitewater kayak paddle. **Pictured:** To strengthen the blades of the super-light Splat paddle, Aqua-Bound uses its own T700 carbon, an uber-lightweight material similar to the stuff used in Boeing Aircraft and capable of taking the worst beginner beatings. (\$185, AQUABOUND.COM)

Wearing a helmet on any river is a no-brainer. Even though kayaking helmets are designed to take multiple impacts before breaking, don't settle for a hand-me-down. A new, fully protective helmet won't break the bank, and will ensure that you don't break your noggin. **Pictured:** Because rocks hurt, Shred Ready makes one bomber helmet with an ABS-molded shell, nylon straps and HOG 2.0 Occipital Lock for a streamlined fit that protects your most valuable asset. (\$70, SHREDREADY.COM)

You need a neoprene sprayskirt that fits tightly over the cockpit rim to seal water out. **Pictured:** The Langer Basic's one-piece plate construction is designed to grip tenaciously, yet release quickly

and easily for wet exits. The oval tunnel means a comfy, dry fit and is offered in five sizes, so no excuses. (\$48, HARMONYGEAR.COM)

Once you're ready to start running rapids, have some simple pieces of easily accessible rescue equipment. Tying a whistle to a PFD zipper or strap is about as easy as it gets. A one-handed river knife, with its sheath secured to the outside of your PFD on a plastic lash tab (which most have) is preferable to a pocketed folding knife in an emergency situation. **Pictured:** The sleek NRS Pilot knife has a cutting edge with both smooth and serrated sections, and a blunt tip that guards against unintentional gear punctures, and doubles as a flathead screwdriver (\$40, nrsweb.com). The last piece would be a throwbag. As you advance to more difficult rapids, an accessible bag of rope worn around the waist is preferable, but a basic throwbag remains essential for any kayaker or rafter. **Pictured:** North Water's Sea Tec has a teardrop shape and comes loaded with 55 feet of rope so you can drop perfect rainbow tosses on your paddling partners if they're in need. (\$40, NORTHWATER.COM)