

Canoe Terminology

Astern	Behind the boat.
Ballast	Weight concentrated on the bottom of the canoe to increase stability.
Blade	Flat section of a paddle.
Bow	Front end of a canoe.
Bow Deck	Top of canoe at the front end.
Bowseat	Seat in the bow; it is wider than the sternseat.
Check	Term used when asking someone to stop a boat, e.g., “check your boat”.
Deck	Covering over hull to keep water from coming in.
Dock	A platform built on the shore or out from shore to permit easier access to water craft.
Flatwater	Lake water where no rapids exist; quiet water.
Grip	The end of a canoe paddle opposite the blade; fits in a paddler’s hand.
Gunwale	(Or gunnel) Strip of wood or aluminum that runs from end to end of the hull.
Hull	Body of a boat.
Keel	A strip running from stern along the bottom of a canoe to protect the bottom of the craft.
Knee Pads	Used to protect knees while paddling a canoe. Type use by gardeners or roofers, preferably with two straps to hold them on.
Lee (or Leeward)	Area sheltered from the wind.
PFD	Personal Flotation Devices; lifejackets.
Rib	Strips of wood that run across the canoe and form the frame of the hull.
Rudder	A steering device on a flatwater kayak.
Ruddering	To drag or trail the paddle in the water in order to slow down or stop a canoe.
Shaft	The handle of a paddle between the blade and the grip.
Solo	One person paddling a canoe.
Spray skirt	A waterproof fabric designed to close the space between the paddle and the cockpit of a kayak.
Starboard	Toward the right side of a boat, facing forward.
Stern	The back end of a boat.
Stern Deck	Top of canoe at the back of the canoe.
Sternseat	Seat in the stern, it is narrower than the bowseat.
Stow	To put out of the way.
Stroke – Back or Reverse	Used to move the canoe backwards in a straight direction. It is done by using the back face of the blade; the bottom hand pushes down and forward while the upper arm pulls up and back.

Stroke – Draw	Used to turn the canoe. It is done by pulling the paddle towards the canoe.
Stroke – Forward	Used to move canoe forward in a straight direction. It is the foundation or basic stroke. This stroke is made close to the canoe moving from the front of the canoe towards the back.
Stroke – Forward Sweep	Forward Sweep is a wide sweep of the paddle using the power face of the blade. It is used to maneuver among obstacles in a lake or river.
Stroke – J-Stroke	Used to keep the canoe on a straight course. When solo paddling, it is used continuously. With tandem paddling, the sternperson, uses it when required. The J-stroke is required because the basic forward stroke moves the canoe slightly off-course, i.e., in the direction opposite the side the paddler is on. To perform a J-stroke, the paddler gradually turns the power face of the blade outward during a basic forward stroke. This is done by flexing both wrists and rotating the thumb holding the paddle grip away from the body or downward.
Stroke – Pushaway	Used to push the canoe sideways in the direction opposite the paddler. It is done by starting with the paddle blade beside the canoe and then pushing the blade away from the canoe.
Stroke – Reverse Sweep	Reverse Sweep is a wide sweep of the paddle using the back face of the blade.
Tandem	Two people paddling a boat.
Throat	The section of a paddle shaft that goes out to form the blade.
Thwart	Three braces used to support the canoe. Thwarts run from gunwale to gunwale.
Tip	The end of a paddle blade.
Waterline	The line of the canoe that the water reaches.
Whitewater	Fast moving water, rapids.
Windward	Toward the wind, the direction the wind is coming from.