

## INFORMATION SHEET

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Subject	<b>Stand Up Paddleboard (SUP) Safety Choosing the right leash</b>
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The leash is a key source of safety when Paddle boarding. It keeps you and your paddleboard together when things don't go to plan.

However:

**To stay safe it is essential to choose the right kind of leash for the environment and conditions you are paddling in.**

**Failure to do so could put your safety at risk.**

If you end up in the water wearing the wrong leash on moving water i.e. flowing rivers, tidal rivers or in tidal races, this can cause the leash to become snagged or caught on obstacles and to become entangled. This presents a danger that is difficult to extract yourself from. In these conditions a quick release waist leash is the best option and could be essential if you are in danger.

The following appraises and gives advice on which leashes suit different environment.

### 1. Ankle and Calf (knee) leashes

Suitable environments for use:

*Lakes, canals, sea / coastal bays, surf and slow moving deepwater rivers*

#### a. Ankle Cuff leashes

These are the most common leash, they often comes with your board if you buy a package. They are easy to wear and to fit. Always attach them to the same leg each time you paddle, that way you will always know where to release them if needed.

#### b. Calf Cuff (knee) leashes

These are similar to an ankle leash but the cuff attachment is slightly larger and fits just below your knee. Some people may prefer this type of leash for ease of attachment but the environments in which they should be used are similar.



*A curly leash is normally preferred for General SUP use*



*A Straight leash is mainly used for surfing*

## 2. Quick release waist belt.

Suitable environments for use:

Moving/flowing water including, rivers, tidal rivers and estuaries, tidal races, white water rivers.

A waist leash is connected to a waist belt with a quick release buckle or fastening. It can be easily reached if you come off your board and are caught or held by the force of the water. When fitted and used correctly it releases you from your board and leash attachments freeing you from any dangerous entanglement.

It is normally worn around your waist and below the level of your buoyancy aid or pfd.

It can also be worn on top of your buoyancy aid if fitted high on the chest.



It is common practise to attach the cuff from a curly leash, which would normally attach to your ankle or calf, to the waist belt.

The following video uses a white water setting to demonstrate the potential problems that an ankle and calf leash can cause in flowing water and the advantage of a quick release waist leash in freeing the paddler. [Click here to view](#)

### Case study

The need for a quick release waist leash has been illustrated on the tidal section of the river Thames below Teddington. Tidal rivers can be deceptive with slack water around high and low tide being followed by very fast flowing water on the incoming and outgoing tides.

On this section of the Thames it has led to paddlers colliding with fixed obstacles such as, pontoons, moored boats and buoys where the paddler and paddleboard have been swept either side of the obstacle and have been unable to free themselves. Through this experience the Port of London Authority (PLA), who manage the Thames Tideway; now require all SUP paddlers to use quick release waist belts rather than ankle leashes. The PLA have published safety guidance for SUP paddlers click [here](#) to view.

### Safety check list for SUP paddlers

As well as choosing the right leash, remember to prepare properly for any trip on the water. British Canoeing have produced some tips on how to enjoy your paddling and staying safe, click [here](#) to view.