

River signals

The universal signals can all be shown either empty-handed (especially useful; when you've lost your grip and need to stop the group) or with a paddle in hand. They are designed for high-visibility on the river, so always be sure to extend them as far over your head as possible so everyone can see. And, as with most backcountry communication, once you see a signal pass it on so paddlers behind will get the message.



Stop: raise your paddle overhead, parallel to the water, and pump up and down. This can also be done by holding your arms out to your sides to form a "T" and waving them up and down slightly.

All clear: raise your paddle blade (or a single finger) directly overhead, perpendicular to the water.



Directions: Lower the previously vertical 'all clear' by 45 degrees toward the side of the river with the preferred route. Never point toward the obstacle you wish to avoid.

OK: repeatedly pat the top of your head to let the rest of the group know that you're OK and ready to continue.



Help/emergency: To signal distress on the water, you can either hold your paddle vertically and wave it back and forth; or do the same with a helmet, PFD, or a hand

An understanding of river signals is important. The main situation where these could be used on race day is for Officials to direct competitors where they are wanted on the river, either for counting of for avoidance or hazards.