

# Methods for Choosing Paddle Length

Excerpt from the article “Kayak Paddle Length – How to Pick the Right Size Paddle by Tom Watson  
(Liberties were taken to remove most of the technical aspects, leaving in the simpler practical ones.)

## On-Water Method

By far, the best and ultimate method for determining that ideal length is to get out on the water and paddle using proper techniques in a kayak you will be using with your paddle. Demo days are a great way to help you test paddle a kayak. Most reps will be able to suggest a starting length of paddle for you to try. Once you find a boat you like, you may want to try a few different lengths of paddles as well.

## Quick-Pick Method

Two quick and fairly accurate on-shore methods for determining a proper paddle length are:

1. Hold your arms out, elbows bent at about right angles in normal paddling posture and grasping the paddle as you would normally. Your hands should be about  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the way from the center of the shaft to the shoulder of the blade.



2. Select a paddle you think is about the right length and stand it upright (vertically) alongside you. Reach up with your arm fully extended, hooking your first finger joints over the top edge (tip) of the paddle. If you can reach further/completely around the top edge or, conversely, if your fingers don't even reach the top, choose a different length accordingly.



Approximating  
Proper Paddle  
Length

First joint of fingers  
should just hook  
over top edge of  
the blade as shown.