

Downwind Checklist

1. Personal Safety Gear (You)

- Life jacket / PFD on and fitted properly
- Leash attached (ankle or waist) and checked for wear
- Whistle / communication device
- Phone or tracker in waterproof pouch
- Hydration (and nutrition if long paddle)
- Appropriate clothing for water + air temperature

Ask yourself: If I fall in repeatedly, can I survive and remount in these conditions?

2. Conditions & Capability Check

- Weather forecast checked (wind, gusts, squalls, temperature)
- Sea state checked (swell size, direction, period, chop)
- Tides and currents considered
- Visibility acceptable (fog, rain, daylight left)
- Conditions match my skill level today (not just my best day)
- Energy levels & health good enough for the run

3. Surfski & Gear Check

- Surf ski in good condition
- Leash attachment points secure
- Paddle in good condition

4. Risk Assessment

- Route planned (start, finish, bailout points)
- Boat traffic / shipping lanes considered
- Offshore vs onshore wind risk understood
- Rescue options realistic (self-rescue vs external help)
- Distance and exposure time appropriate for today

5. Buddy System & Communication

- Agree a buddy system (2-3 paddlers, similar ability, agreed regroup points or based on time)
- Group knows the plan and route
- Agree on what to do if someone breaks or loses gear
- At least one person tracking the group (Garmin, phone, etc.)

Final Go / No-Go Check

- I have the right gear
- The conditions are within my limits
- My ski is reliable
- The risks are understood and manageable
- I have a plan and people who know it If any box feels sketchy → change the plan or don't go.

Surf Ski Safety Guidelines Before You Go

Assess conditions & plan: Check weather, wind (direction & strength), swell and tide before launching. Conditions can change rapidly. Only paddle within your ability — if in doubt, don't go.

Tell someone your plan: Leave a float plan with a friend or family member (route, launch point, expected return time).

Be a competent swimmer: You should be able to swim confidently in surf and open water, remount your ski, and handle self-rescue.

Mandatory & Recommended Safety Gear Personal Flotation Device (PFD): Wear a bright, high-visibility lifejacket or buoyancy aid at all times — it's non-negotiable.

Leashes: Use a leg leash to stay connected to your ski if you capsize.

Note: In very heavy surf (e.g., crossing surf-line), a leash can be hazardous, so adjust usage according to conditions and skill.

Communication & signalling: Carry a fully charged mobile phone in a waterproof pouch with the NSRI SafeTrx app installed — it allows tracking and emergency alerts. A VHF marine radio or Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) is highly recommended for offshore paddling.

Visual signals: flares & whistle, help in low-visibility or rescue scenarios.

Clothing & protection: Dress for water temperature to prevent hypothermia or sunstroke — thermal layers or paddling jackets are useful. Bright, reflective clothing improves visibility at sea.

Hydration & nutrition: For longer paddles, take water and energy snacks.

Safe Paddling Practices Buddy system: Paddle with a partner or group whenever possible.

Know self-rescue skills: Practice remounting your ski in deep water, especially in wind and waves.

Maintain your gear: Check your rudder cables, hull integrity, flotation, paddle function, and attach reflective markings and your contact details to your ski.

Check the weather and paddle within limits: Offshore or downwind paddling can be significantly riskier than inshore; ensure you're prepared for changing seas and fatigue.

Identify risks prior to paddling: Identify all risks prior to starting your paddle from leisure motor & sail craft, commercial Ferry's and Tankers. Be aware of their direction and speed. Stay out of their way.

If Something Goes Wrong Call for help early: Use SafeTrx emergency button or voice/SOS functions before the situation gets critical.

Stay with your ski: The ski greatly improves visibility and flotation compared with being alone in the water. Signal rescuers: Use your whistle, paddle or flares to attract attention from boats or shore.

Hypothermia & fatigue: Recognize signs early and take action — cold water quickly impairs judgment and physical ability.

Useful Local Resources • SafeTrx App — for trip logging and emergency monitoring. • VHF Channel 16 for distress calls at sea • Emergency Number: 111