

*leapfrogging:*

- 1 the lead paddler signals down tail end Charlie to the next safe eddy below, becoming the lead paddler.
- 2 the new back marker makes the eddy in the bottom right, becoming the lead paddler.
- 3 + repeat.

Photo: Dino Heald



**LEAPFROGGING**

Works well on with small groups on rivers where there are lots of small eddies that only take one boat at a time. A large group would have to break into small groups.

Often this technique (and eddyhopping) is only used for short technical sections – the group reverting to moving together, or one at a time, as the river becomes easier or harder.

With this method every paddler in the group takes it in turn to be lead paddler and back marker. The lead paddler signals the back marker, who leapfrogs the whole group, becoming the new lead paddler and so on.

eddy hopping:

- 1 the lead paddler breaks out in the next safe eddy below.
- 2 the next paddler moves to occupy the eddy left by the lead paddler.
- 2 the back marker moves to occupy the eddy left by the paddler in front.
- 3 + repeat.

Photo: Dino Heald



## EDDY HOPPING

This works in similar situations to leapfrogging with the possible advantage that the order of descent doesn't change. It can be harder to keep control of the group though this can be eased if the group splits into semi independent pairs.

The lead paddler moves down to the next eddy that he is confident that all the other members of the group can paddle into. On the lead paddler's signal, the rest of the team move down one eddy.

**It is essential that paddlers do not set off until the paddler downstream of them is well clear of the eddy that they want to move down to.**



Small groups of experienced paddlers often have no need for a leader as such. Each paddler assumes a position or role they are happy with and, should a decision be necessary or a rescue need dealing with, whoever is in the best position to do so temporarily assumes the role of leader.

Any group that wishes to paddle safely will need to organize to some extent. As a minimum each member needs to know:

- The role of each team member
- The way in which the group is going to tackle the river
- The order of descent

**Team Members-** all members of a team must have the safety and well being of the whole group as their top priority – if our selfish reasons for paddling come before our concern for the safety of the other members we become a liability. All team members need to be honest about what they have to offer and their limitations. It is better to refuse a certain role rather than to accept it and foul up through lack of skill or confidence.

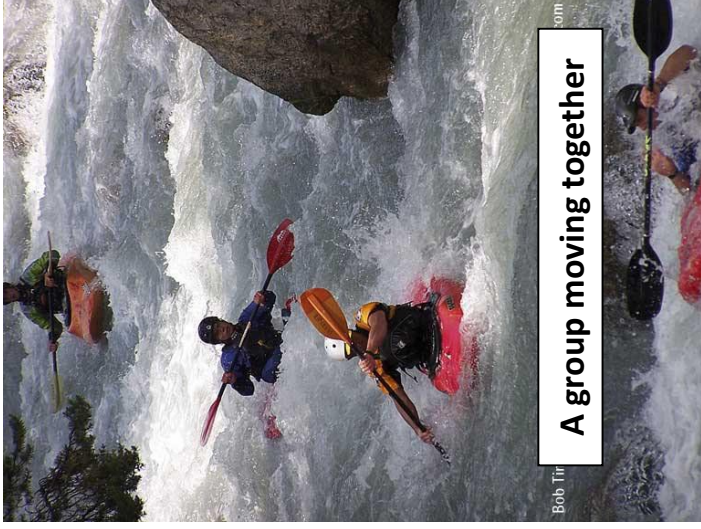
**Buddy System** - involves every member of the party pairing up with another and, as well as their responsibility to the group, each person is particularly concerned for the welfare of their buddy. This is particularly useful in large groups where someone could “go missing” without anyone realizing.

**Lead Paddler** – **not necessarily the leader**, this role is often taken by the more experienced and skilled paddlers or is the person who has paddled the river before. The person out front has these responsibilities; **choosing a line, spotting and avoiding hazards, deciding when to bank inspect, getting the group off the water well above any portage.**

**Back Marker** – again usually taken by one of the more experienced paddlers because this person has to pick up the pieces and may therefore have to act as “chase boater”. The back marker may be at extra risk because other team members have their attention downstream, it can be worth having 2 back markers working as a pair with a buddy system operating between them.

**Chase Boater** – the rescuer of swimmers and kit from the bank rather than the bank – requires skill and confidence, fast reflexes, high quality judgement all on the move.

**Team Leader** – a multitude of roles including organiser, motivator, risk assessor, communicator, counselor, psychologist, coach, pillar of strength and wisdom. Key role is as safety advisor and may have to veto an individual’s decision if poor judgement could put the welfare of the team at risk.



**A group moving together**

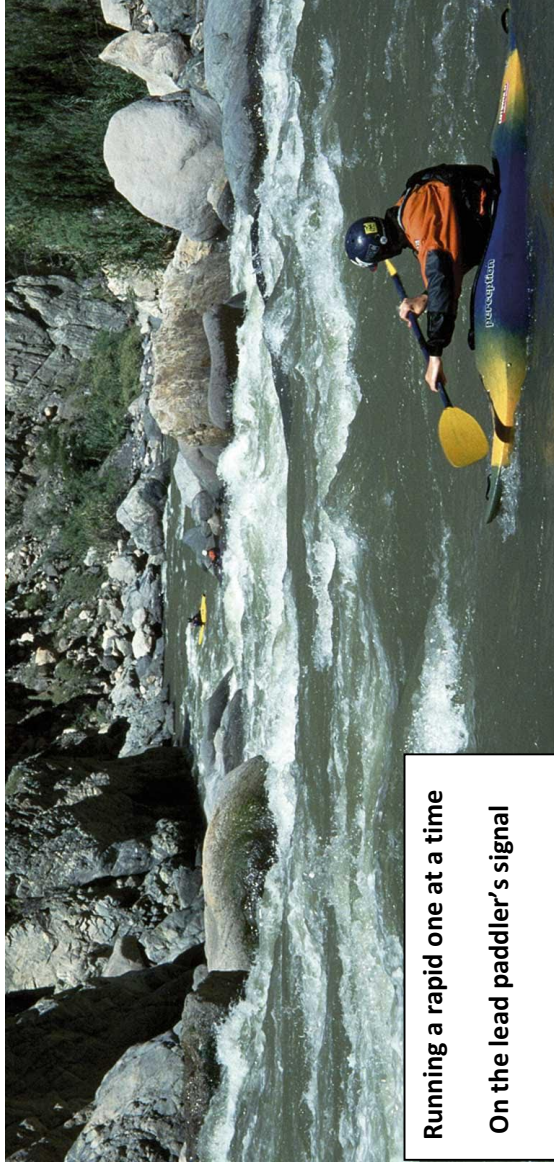
How a group is best organized will depend on **size of the group, nature of the river, nature of the group.**

Three is a good number of paddlers but four is probably better because a buddy system can operate within the larger group and can operate with a minimum of organization.

**Easy low and medium volume rivers:** best to travel as one small group, one behind the other and staying fairly close. Leader may position self in middle of the line so that they can see the lead paddler and back marker.

**High Volume Rivers:** distance between safe eddies and size of features favours semi independent buddy groups. Pair more experienced with less experienced. In these conditions it is difficult to see more than the buddy therefore it is essential that the front pair stops whenever there is an eddy large enough to regroup.

**Technical Rivers:** favour semi independent groups of two or three pairs, each obeying line of sight principles within the sub group. Whenever the back marker of the first group of pairs lost sight contact with the lead of the second group, the first group would stop and wait until the second group come back into view



**Running a rapid one at a time  
On the lead paddler's signal**

**One at a time:** in the simplest form the lead paddler runs the rapid first and then makes a signal. On seeing this, the second paddler runs the rapid, everyone else stays put until the lead paddler signals again, and so on.

On harder rapids, after bank inspection, other members of the team provide bank protection while one member runs the rapid. As soon as the paddler reaches the bottom they change places with one of the bank protectors. It is best to have 2 people out of bank protection duties so that whilst one paddler is running the rapid another is preparing.

**It is essential that all members of the group are all well briefed and the leader has clear signals.**