

Topic: Navigation Aids

QC-0508

Resource: **Basics:** All boaters should take a USCG approved [Safe Boating Course](#) in order to develop basic navigation and safety skills on the water. Paddlers, especially kayakers have special considerations since they are not quickly maneuverable, present low visibility and poor radar detection. Paddlers should always observe the "Tonnage" rule and give way to larger craft!

[USCG
Nav-Aids](#)

Question: *What are "Primary" Navigation Aids?*

Answer Beacons and buoys are primary Nav-aids. Beacons are fixed structures on land or in water and may or may not be lighted. Buoys are floating aids, moored to the seabed and convey information by shape, color and visible or audible signals.

Question: *What is the basic rule of "channel navigation"?*

Answer: In the USA, the "3R" rule "Red-Right-Returning" describes the buoy color rule for safe passage when moving from a large body of water into a smaller, travelling up stream, or navigating clockwise around a land mass. Boating channels should be avoided by paddlers except when necessary and only crossed quickly, at right angles and preferably as a tight group or "pod".

Advanced Concepts: You may want to get more information on the following:

- What are "Lateral" aids to navigation?
- What are "Preferred" channel markers?
- How are "Range Marks" used?
- What do "Regulatory" and "Special" marks convey?
- How can I navigate from the deck of my kayak or canoe?

For more information contact

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