

How to Build your Raft

Basic Construction

The raft should be constructed from materials that provide sufficient buoyancy to support a crew of 4-8 members. The most common construction is of barrels of some kind attached to a frame. Whilst virtually any materials can be used, remember to clean away anything that may be an irritant, cause pollution or damage the environment. There is a lot of advice available on the internet.

Fixing can be by bolting or bonding or screwing or tying together, but if the barrels are cut open for easier fixing, or to sit in, remember they will sink unless the holes are filled and they have some additional flotation built or inserted into them as required by the rules.



Longer rafts go faster but can be harder to steer and transport. Wider rafts give greater speed and stability but are also more difficult to steer and transport. Lighter rafts go faster but can become more unstable, particularly if the crew outweigh the craft and are hit by waves. The lower the centre of gravity, the more stable the raft and the easier it is to paddle. However, more barrel in the water will create drag and slow the raft.

Seating of some sort will provide comfort but does add weight and will need to be fixed firmly. Some rafts are built so that the crew can kneel in the barrels. Whether or not you have a deck or sit astride the barrels is up to you, but you will need a superstructure to attach the raft number (see rules).

Steering

Although a tiller is allowed, it is normally fiddly to operate and it is easier to steer the raft by the back two paddlers steering with their paddles.

Paddling

When the crew all paddle together, the raft goes faster. Although this seems obvious, it is rarely achieved when the crew only use the raft once a year. Try to have a practice before the event. Have one person at the front who sets the pace and shouts the stroke out, the rest of the crew to copy the stroke apart from the back two, who's job is to steer when necessary.

Nose Cones

Anything to streamline the raft will ease the passage through the water and help the raft go faster.

Propulsion

Rowlocks, oars and sails are not permitted, so paddles need to be manageable but as big as possible.

Happy Rafting!