

# Safety Alert - Lifejackets

If you are a cox, coach, launch driver or crew a lifejacket is your most important piece of equipment. To be effective, lifejackets must be worn, fitted properly and in good working order.

## What sort of lifejacket should you wear?

You should wear an inflatable lifejacket, minimum 150N buoyancy, fitted with crotch straps and, if you go afloat in the dark, a light. Coxes in bow-loaded boats should wear a manual inflation lifejacket, and so should coastal coxes who may get very wet during launch and recovery. If possible, everyone else should wear an automatic inflation lifejacket.

You will need a lifejacket with a higher buoyancy rating (275N or 290N) if you wear a flotation suit or jacket, or warm winter clothes. This will ensure that you float at the correct angle and that your face is out of the water.

## Fitting a lifejacket

First adjust the chest strap so that you can just get your fist between the strap and your chest. Then fasten and adjust the crotch straps. Your fitted lifejacket should feel “comfortably tight”. Tuck the ends of the straps in to prevent them getting snagged up on the boat; this is particularly important for coxes. Always wear your lifejacket over the top of all other clothing.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NNfXMLG5pl4> shows how to wear and adjust a lifejacket and shows the importance of crotch straps and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m-CmyKdy3MU> shows how you can lose your lifejacket if you are not wearing crotch straps.

Adjust your lifejacket every time you put it on. Even if you have your own lifejacket you will need to adjust it according to the clothes you are wearing.



## Checking and looking after a lifejacket

Before you put a lifejacket on check it for wear or damage and for signs that it could have been deployed. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h5-9wC-c9cw> has a section on how to make these checks. It starts about 2 minutes 30 seconds into the video.

After use, hang your lifejacket up in a dry place. If it is wet open it up so that it can dry. If it is damaged or has been deployed, give it to the person in your club who is responsible for lifejackets – do not put it back with other lifejackets.

An inflation test should be done on the bladder at least twice a year. Fully inflate the bladder with a bike or foot pump (not by mouth) and leave it inflated overnight. It should still be fully inflated in the morning.

If you need any help or have any doubts about how to maintain your lifejacket, take it to a service agent.

[http://www.transportsafety.vic.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0015/41901/Looking-after-your-inflatable-lifejacket.pdf](http://www.transportsafety.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0015/41901/Looking-after-your-inflatable-lifejacket.pdf) is a leaflet that shows how to check and look after lifejackets.

**Remember – to work, your lifejacket must be worn, fitted correctly and in good order.**

Stephen Worley  
Honorary Rowing Safety Advisor  
[safety@britishrowing.org](mailto:safety@britishrowing.org)

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