

The Chesapeake Paddler



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Navigation Tips

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Most of the time when we paddle in the Chesapeake Bay we depend on visual landmarks, but there are times when distance or weather conditions might make it harder to recognize landmarks. Our shoreline tends to be flat and while a chart shows multiple bays, inlets, and landmarks, it's hard to get the same perspective while on the water. Here are some tips to help navigate.

1. Know where you want to go.

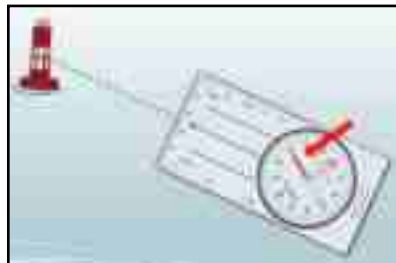
Your planned **Course** is the direction towards your destination. You can get this off of a chart, or you can look for a visible land mark when you start out and take a bearing towards that object.

A **Bearing** is the direction towards another object

Your **Heading** is the direction that your boat is pointing. Your heading may not always be directly towards your destination. Sometimes you need to compensate for wind and current.

2. Know how to take a bearing.

Identify an object to use for your bearing. Point your compass at that object. Identify the needle that points to magnetic north



Rotate the dial on the compass to align the arrow indicating North with the compass needle that points north. This aligns the scale of the compass with the real world.

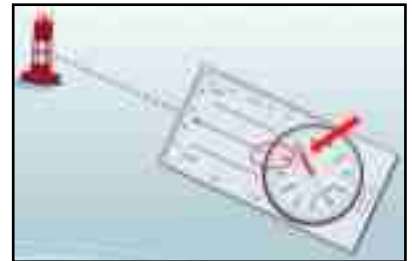
To remember this, think about putting 'Red in the Shed'.

Once the scale is aligned, read the direction toward the object in degrees magnetic.

A hand held compass works well when you are taking bearings from land, for example to determine your course before you get on the water. You can also carry one on in a pocket or tethered to your deck to use while paddling.

Another way to take a bearing while paddling is to use the deck mounted compass on your kayak. Point the bow of your boat toward the object and take your reading.

3. Practice reading charts and comparing them to your view from the water. Practice taking bearings. By comparing the chart to your environment, you will learn to transfer the information provided to what you see in the real world. 🗺️



Distant landmarks can be hard to see when sitting down in a kayak – a view of the bay paddling south from Beverly Triton Beach



Rain can rapidly decrease visibility – paddling out of Kent Narrows toward Eastern Neck