

Technical Syllabus

Paddlers may have been awarded the Paddlesport Start Award and now be moving on in their paddling career. The training should be focused on developing the foundation skills and enabling progression towards the blending of the body, boat and blade required to be efficient and effective. Coaches should place an emphasis on developing an active posture.

Coaches must aim to develop the skills of the paddler in the paddler's choice of boat. Though not compulsory coaches should encourage paddlers to try both single and double blade craft.

Canoeists should experiment with paddling on both sides, and have experience of acting as both a bow and stern paddler.

Part A - Personal Paddling Skills

A.1 Lifting, carrying and launching

Training should cover aspects of the impact that paddlesport activities have on the bank side environment, it should look at safe moving & handling, and introduce the concept of dynamic risk assessment including environmental considerations such as wind strength and direction, bank type and other traffic.

The paddler needs to be aware of how to adjust their boat and equipment referencing the fundamentals as appropriate.

The paddler should be introduced to a range of tactics to leave the bank that will include planning ahead, positioning of the boat and desired direction of travel. Techniques to develop will include draws, ruddering and short power strokes.

A.2 Forward paddling over a distance of 100m

Training should help the paddlers understand the need to work on achieving an upright posture and on gaining appropriate stroke length. The paddler should be given an understanding of the application of dynamic rotation and connectivity in order to engage foot/knee pressure and the use of steering sweep strokes at the back of the boat to maintain direction. Looking ahead and focusing on where they are going should be developed.

Single blade paddlers may wish to look at the advantages and disadvantages of switching sides to gain momentum.

An introduction to other steering solutions while under momentum may be appropriate for the paddler depending on the boat they are using.

A.3 Steering and controlling

Training should help paddlers with their turns to the left and right with the boat tracking a course and maintaining forward movement. Paddlers should use a combination of sweeps and forward strokes or a rudder to affect these controlled turns.

When reversing the paddler should understand the use of the non-drive face.

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Coaches should aim to develop a paddler's ability to reverse paddle over a distance of approximately 5m, to a fixed point. Rotating at the waist and looking over shoulder(s) should be developed.

When stopping, short dynamic strokes on alternate sides should be introduced and paddlers should affect a stop within 4 strokes. The ability to stop both forwards and backwards should be developed.

The paddlers ability to rotate the boat 180 degrees in both directions should be developed using a combination of forward and reverse sweep strokes. Body rotation and connectivity should be emphasised.

A.4 Return to the bank and get out

The paddler should have an understanding of the tactics used to return to the bank that will include planning ahead, approach direction and velocity, and techniques used which will include draws, rudders and short power strokes.

The paddler should be introduced to a variety of relevant tactics and techniques to safely get out of the boat and onto the bank whilst maintaining contact with the boat.

Part B – Rescue Skills

B.1 Capsize and be rescued or capsize and swim to the shore (whichever is most appropriate to the craft and conditions)

Paddlers should be introduced to the procedure for during and after a capsize.

Closed cockpit paddlers and paddlers using spray decks or straps are encouraged to perform a full capsize.

Training should aim to develop a calm and relaxed exit procedure, with paddlers carefully collecting the boat and paddle and then swimming back to the shore.

Coaches should note that the use of a swimming pool is ideal for developing this, particularly if a practical session cannot take place outside due to low temperature, polluted water or disinclination to capsize. Where this is not possible then a discussion of what to do is vital and should be covered in some detail.

The process of how to be rescued in deep water should be also introduced if the style of boat allows it.

It is not necessary at this level to develop the paddler's ability to conduct a rescue of another paddler, just how to be a proactive part of being rescued themselves.

B.2 Emptying boats

Coaches should revisit safe lifting and carrying of boats as well as introducing a variety of emptying techniques. They should not be emptying excessive amounts of water, though knowledge of how to safely empty a swamped boat at the bank/shore should be understood. Coaches should highlight where further training is required.

Part C - Safety, Leadership & Group Skills

The coach should develop the paddler's awareness of their individual responsibilities on the trip, being aware of other members of the group, and bringing problems to the attention of the leader, what to do in the event of a capsize and understanding of basic communication methods.

C.1 Personal risk management

Paddlers should be trained in how to look after themselves in the environment. This could include choice of boat, clothing, float plans and weather.

C.2 Awareness of others

Training should ensure that paddlers have an awareness of others while on the water.

C.3 Provide evidence of one journey of about 1 hour (3 km) duration

(This could take place during the training)

At assessment paddlers are expected to show that they have been out for a small journey. Coaches can help with this during training and combine some of the skills with a small journey.

Part D – Theory

The coach should develop the paddler's theoretical knowledge of the topics appropriate to the type of paddling undertaken by the paddler. The theory elements should not generally be seen as classroom-based sessions; the topics lend themselves to being delivered at a bank side venue.

D.1 Equipment

Sample training areas: choice of kit, where and how to stow it, looking after kit.

D.2 Safety

Sample training areas: type of safety equipment to carry, what to do in the event of a capsize.

D.3 Wellbeing, health and first aid

Sample training areas: importance of first aid knowledge, hydration and nutrition.

D.4 Access

Sample training areas: where to go paddling in the local area.

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D.5 Environment

Sample training areas: looking after the environment, Leave No Trace.

Even at this entry level it is appropriate for coaches to have discussions about what impacts paddlers can have in their chosen location/environment. The key message is to encourage paddlers to begin to or further consider their possible impacts.

Key topics might include: farm animals and wildlife, litter and human waste, local people, landowners and other users.

Paddlers also need to be made aware of their responsibility for biosecurity, i.e. how to avoid the spread of invasive non-native species, parasites and diseases. The basic message is to avoid transporting water, which may contain some form of living creature or plant material, from one watercourse to another. The simple act of always draining your boat as you leave the water, and removing any pieces of twig or leaves are the most important biosecurity habits you can get into and could go a long way towards ensuring you make a valuable contribution to protecting our rich native biodiversity. Paddlers should also be signposted to where they can find out more information (i.e. home nation websites, or Check, Clean, Dry campaign).

D.6 General

Sample training areas: paddling skills awareness, water features, types of paddlesport

