

3 Star Freestyle Assessment Notes

Technical Syllabus

The 3 Star Freestyle Award provides an introduction to the fundamental skills of freestyle paddlesport, from which it is possible to build more advanced skills.

The Freestyle Star Awards have been designed in a way that allows them to develop in-line with the sport. They encompass a wide view of what freestyle is, having both a recreational and competitive emphasis.

A successful paddler will not be expected to perform all elements perfectly but will need a basic understanding of how using the core elements will allow further progression.

Part A1 – Core Elements

The following core elements are integral to the execution of the core skills. The paddler needs to show evidence of the following core elements within the demonstration of the core skills (A2).

A1.1 Warm up and warm down

Warm-up is about the ability to prepare both body and mind for the activity to be undertaken. This may take place a number of times during the session.

Warm-down is about the ability to effectively aid muscle recovery and reduce sport-related injuries.

Paddlers must have an awareness of why and when they should undertake a warm-up and warm-down. The provider will provide an opportunity for paddlers to warm-up/down. The paddler should have an understanding of dynamic and static stretching (minimising injury) as well as psychological preparation. Through questioning and observation the provider will gain an understanding of why the paddler has chosen the types of warm-up and warm-down they have selected.

A1.2 Posture and connectivity

Posture is about the ability to adopt a sitting position that allows a greater and more powerful range of movement. This also helps prevent sports injuries and fatigue.

Connectivity is about the ability to efficiently transfer the paddler's energy to and from the boat in order to perform freestyle manoeuvres.

Paddlers need to demonstrate posture that allows the full range of movement and creates optimum power potential. The provider will take into account the paddler's genetic make-up.

A1.3 Rotation and synchronicity

Rotation is about the ability to wind up and unwind the torso to generate rotational momentum and torque through a pivot point.

Synchronicity is about the ability to move the upper and lower body independently yet co-operatively to perform freestyle manoeuvres.

Paddlers need to demonstrate upper and lower body separation that leads to synchronicity. The provider will also be looking for the ability to use appropriate head rotation and visual focus points.

A1.4 Intensity and relaxation

Intensity is about the amount of energy being transmitted. Maximum intensity is not necessarily the optimal level for performance.

Relaxation is not necessarily the opposite of intensity: relaxation and intensity work together in complementary ways to bring out the best in the paddler and their performance.

Together they are about the ability to free the body to perform in a powerful yet flowing way.

Paddlers must demonstrate the ability to efficiently use intensity and relaxation appropriate to the environment and manoeuvre.

For example accelerate, they should change pace at appropriate moments and show evidence of techniques which make best use of the flat or moving water environment, and using the correct power to enter, maintain and exit river features.

A1.5 Control, balance, paddle dexterity

Control is about the ability to use the core muscles to control the boat's edge and trim.

Balance is about the ability to maintain static and dynamic stability both proactively and reactively.

Paddle dexterity is about the ability to adapt the use of the paddle to meet the demands of the environment whether proactively or during reactive measures.

At the time of assessment paddlers may still be developing these core elements. The provider will be looking to see demonstrations including varied strokes when manoeuvring and non-paddle assisted edging, the ability to carve and skid the craft, to do cross bow and non cross bow strokes (for drive and turning), the ability to maintain upright body posture without relying on the paddle for total support, and spatial awareness.

Typically the provider may use breaking in and out as tools to see the required skills.

A1.6 Methods of position and set-up

Position is about the ability to manoeuvre to a pre-determined point on the feature.

Set-up is about the ability to set-up with the correct position and angle required to initiate the desired manoeuvre.

At the time of assessment paddlers may still be developing the ability to read a play feature's characteristics and make the necessary adaptations. Taking this into consideration, the provider must see the paddler demonstrate the beginnings of being able to read the play feature and make adaptations to appropriately set-up for a given manoeuvre.

The difference in position and set-up required in different features will be discussed and where possible demonstrated. The paddler will also be asked about their understanding of the clock concept for setting angles in relation to current vectors whilst positioning the boat.

Part A2 – Core Skills

All core elements need to be demonstrated within the core skills. It is expected that paddlers perform all of the core skills where possible, and unless otherwise stated these should be performed on both sides.

A2.1 Rolling

The ability to roll is of key importance at 3 Star. At the time of assessment paddlers will be required to roll on moving water with consistency, but 100% rolling success is not expected.

Environment: Grade 1-2 white water.

Behaviour: Effective roll on one side and beginnings of the roll on the less preferred side.

Capability: Synchronicity, posture and connectivity.

A2.2 Supporting

Paddlers need to demonstrate a support stroke that is part of their overall paddling, with a view to being proactive rather than reactive. This means they should work from the back of the blade and take support from power strokes thus showing evidence of an active blade, demonstrating the paddlers overall balance.

At 3 Star, whilst rolling may still be a relatively new skill, the paddler should not need to be supporting constantly to avoid rolling.

The paddler should be comfortably able to demonstrate a range of ways of supporting on the flat water, and have an awareness and beginnings of a range of support techniques in a variety of situations

Environment: Flat water

Behaviour: Active blade whilst maintaining a balanced upright posture

Capability: Paddle dexterity, control and balance

A2.3 Flat-water manoeuvres

Paddlers will be required to perform flat water exercises that demonstrate they can effectively use edges, trim and speed whilst allowing the boat's continued momentum.

Providers will be looking for movements to flow and not stall. The paddler will be expected to execute flat water stern dips, low angle lean cleans and an effective double pump leading to the first end of a cartwheel.

Stern dips

Environment: Flat water.
Behaviour: Front end elevating at least 20°
Capability: Intensity and relaxation, posture (rotation), and set-up.

Lean clean

Environment: Flat water.
Behaviour: Bow and stern submersing.
Capability: Synchronicity, rotation, and control.

Double pump

Environment: Flat water.
Behaviour: Front end going under craft with minimum 20° angle.
Capability: Connectivity, control, synchronicity.

A2.4 Entering and exiting play features

Paddlers will be required to demonstrate the ability to cross eddy lines and simple flows to catch waves and stoppers. Providers would expect paddlers to get on and off the feature as required.

Exiting should be carried out so that the paddler regains an appropriate eddy.

Environment: Up to grade 3 but where possible grade 2.
Behaviour: Cross eddy lines, catch features.
Capability: Position, control and posture

A2.5 Wave surfing

Paddlers must demonstrate the ability to front surf and perform simple manoeuvring from left to right.

Environment: Up to grade 3 but where possible grade 2.
Behaviour: Hold boat in a straight surf and move right and left on wave.
Capability: Synchronicity, posture and set-up.

A2.6 Hole surfing

Paddlers need to demonstrate a positive posture whilst being able to move the boat around the feature using both paddle and trim techniques, showing their ability to be dynamic within the feature. A stable static side surf on both sides, with the ability to switch from facing one direction to the other must be demonstrated.

Environment: Up to grade 3 but where possible grade 2.
Behaviour: Sit stable and in one position in the hole and move around hole to exit.
Capability: Posture, control and dexterity.

A2.7 Shuivits

A shuivit is a manoeuvre that allows the boat to go from a front or side surf position to back surf position and back again using the same active blade throughout the movement. The movement should be continuous.

Paddlers must be able to initiate the move from a front or side surf. Paddlers will be required to keep on the same blade.

Environment: Wave or hole up to grade 3 but where possible grade 2.

Behaviour: Boat movement from bow at 12 o'clock (front surf) to at least 4 and back (or vice versa for other side) or boat movement from 3 o'clock (side surf) to at least 6 o'clock (or vice versa for other side).

Capability: Position, set-up and paddle dexterity.

A2.8 Flat spins

The flat spin involves performing a 360° rotation through a front and back surf finishing back in a front surf position whilst on the wave or hole.

Environment: Wave or hole up to grade 3 but where possible grade 2.

Behaviour: Boat to do full spin so that it ends with the bow within 30° of the start position, if the spin continues past this point this is acceptable.

Capability: Position, control and posture.

A2.9 Stern dips on moving water

The stern dip involves slicing the stern of the boat underwater and elevating the bow into the air whilst rotating around the stern.

Environment: Grade 1 or 2 flow.

Behaviour: Bow of boat to rise 45° or more from the surface.

Capability: Intensity and relaxation, posture (rotation), and set-up.

A2.10 Bow ender and pirouettes

The bow ender is a near vertical manoeuvre where the boat's stern reaches an elevation of more than 45°. Pirouette adds at least a 45° spin on the bow whilst in this elevated position.

Paddlers need to demonstrate the ability to correctly present the bow of their boat to the flow, so that the flow makes the boat lift to an elevation of 45° or greater. Once the boat has lifted the paddler must then be able to proactively control the boat and either spin or land back on the hull of the boat.

Environment: Wave or hole up to grade 3 but where possible grade 2.

Behaviour: Bow to bury, lifting boat to at least 45° (in a feature or flow).

Capability: Balance, position and set-up.

A2.11 The beginning of a routine

During training paddlers partake in a 45 second ride to explore their new skills. This starts to introduce the ability to link moves into a routine and provide a taste of competition paddling. The emphasis here is on fun and effectively utilising time within rides. At the time of assessment paddlers will perform a 45 second ride demonstrating 3 different moves of their choice.

Environment: Any used for the above moves.

Behaviour: 3 different moves (left and right count as 2).

Capability: All.

Part B – Rescue Skills

The emphasis is that the paddler can be an effective member of a group. This includes being able to look after themselves and others while paddling white water.

Paddlers will act as the rescuer, and be rescued.

B.1 Deep-water rescue

Paddlers will perform a safe, timely and appropriate deep water rescue on moving water. They must use appropriate dialogue with the swimmer whilst maintaining control of the rescue. Paddlers must be aware of the importance of safe lifting techniques and how to best use the person in the water to assist in their own rescue.

B.2 Throwline

Paddlers should understand how to use a throwline, both as a rescuer and a swimmer. The paddler should throw a line to a swimmer around 10 metres from the bank and the line should ideally reach the swimmer first time. A safe and dynamic stance should be demonstrated when the swimmer takes hold of the line.

B.3 Capsize, swim and self-rescue

Paddlers must show good defensive and aggressive swimming techniques down a small section of moving water. Paddlers must show they can rescue themselves if they swim out of their boat using safe and dynamic defensive swimming.

Part C – Safety and Group Skills

Paddlers must show confidence and the ability to operate safely and effectively in the environment throughout the assessment.

C.1 Personal risk management

Paddlers need to work together and help each other in achieving a safe, fun freestyle session. Paddlers must show their ability to identify potential risks. Providers may use discussion of the suitability of various river features for playing if the venue allows.

C.2 Awareness of others

Paddlers should be aware of others around them. They do not need to be responsible for others but they should work together and help each other. Paddlers should be aware of upstream traffic and not obstruct other water users.

Part D – Theory

Paddlers must demonstrate a good level of general knowledge of freestyle paddlesport. Demonstration of this knowledge should be incorporated throughout the assessment.

D.1 Equipment

Paddlers should have knowledge and experience of using a range of equipment. Know how and why equipment has evolved and how best to use it.

Sample subject areas:

- Choosing an appropriate freestyle paddle.
- Important considerations when fitting and adjusting a K1/C1 freestyle boat.

D.2 Safety

Paddlers should have a sound safety framework with use of practical, dynamic risk assessments.

Sample subject areas:

- Choice of clothing for a short freestyle session on white water.
- Hydrology and river features (and choosing appropriate play features).

D.3 Weather

Paddlers should know how to understand and interpret weather forecast information from a variety of sources.

Sample subject areas:

- Where to gain up to date weather information.
- Important elements of a forecast with regards to safety on the river.

D.4 Wellbeing, health and first-aid

Paddlers should understand the factors that contribute to hypothermia or hyperthermia and have strategies to avoid them. They should be able to deal with the most likely paddlesport injuries.

Sample subject areas:

- Prevention, signs and treatment of hypothermia & hyperthermia.
- Importance of first aid for the white water paddler.

D.5 Freestyle environment

An appreciation of the environment we paddle in should be a key underpinning principle for paddlers. Paddlers should be aware of their environmental impact and be proactive in minimising this impact.

Sample subject areas:

- Our role in protecting the white water environment.
- Leave No Trace principles.

D.6 Competition

Paddlers should have an understanding the basics of UK competition structure and rules.

Sample subject areas:

- The basic considerations of a freestyle run.
- Different disciplines within freestyle.

D.7 General

Paddlers should have a wide general knowledge of all aspects of the sport.

Sample subject areas:

- The importance of remaining hydrated while paddling.
- Popular locations for freestyle paddling in the UK.
- The importance of earplugs and other PPE for freestyle paddling.

D.8 Etiquette

Paddlers should promote a positive image for paddlesport with other river users and local residents.

Sample subject areas:

- Understanding river etiquette and how this applies to the paddler and other users.
- General awareness of others coming into eddies and the paddler's own positioning.