

4 Star White Water Kayak Leader Training Notes

Technical Syllabus

The emphasis is on the application of strokes to achieve suitable techniques and boat control in real situations.

Part A – Personal Paddling Skills

The emphasis for the paddler is that they have a holistic approach to running the river. The manoeuvres and strokes should be blended as appropriate. The assessment should not be seen as a tick box of skills.

Paddlers are required to show all skills on both sides, and on grade 2(3) water.

A.1 Lifting, carrying, launching and landing

Paddlers should have a range of tactics for moving kayaks around on land, that follow safe lifting and handling principles.

During training paddlers should have a variety of strategies to launch and land in the white water environment. These should include areas where it is deep water, with paddlers keeping a hold of the kayak and paddle throughout.

A.2 Efficient and effective river running skills

These core white water skills aid the paddler in their competency and confidence on moving water. These should be trained for in a variety of settings to aid the paddlers in their core river paddling.

Forward paddling: Paddlers should leave the training course with a good solid forward paddling stroke, as this is the key to successful river running. All other manoeuvres come from having the ability to forward paddle well.

Paddlers should leave with a clear understanding of how to sustain their efficiency in a variety of conditions, as well as being able to gain momentum during their paddling.

Breaking in and out: Paddlers should be trained how to choose a suitable technique to get into and out of eddies successfully. Training should cover positioning on the river and choice of where to cross the eddy line. The importance of using the appropriate speed, angle, edge, trim, timing, dynamic balance and good body rotation should be highlighted by the provider throughout. Paddlers should understand the concept of using and reading the water with the idea of looking for ‘future water’ should be understood and evident. Paddlers should leave with a clear understanding of the varying tactics for different types of eddies.

Ferry gliding: The provider should highlight the importance of being able to read the water and use it the paddler’s advantage throughout the training course. Paddlers should leave the training course with a consistent performance when crossing a consistent grade 2 flow; without any major loss of

momentum, maintaining the appropriate ferry angle and making adjustments as required. Paddlers should also have strategies for being able to adapt this and cross grade 3 flows.

S-turns: Often the eddies are not opposite each other and therefore the white water kayaker needs to link different turns together and complete an 'S-turn'. Paddlers should leave the training course understanding the importance of how to open up a ferry angle to allow the kayak to move across and down the river to gain the new eddy. Training should cover this in a variety of locations where the blend of skills will be tested to allow the paddlers to become more adaptable. As with ferry gliding providers should highlight the importance of reading and using the water to aid the manoeuvre.

Providers should be looking to blend the river skills throughout the training; blending breaking in/out, ferry gliding and S-turns would allow the paddler to appreciate the flow and rhythm required in white water kayaking.

Surf small waves: Paddlers should leave the training course being able to catch small surf waves in a variety of ways. This will include from the side and above. Training should cover appropriate balance of edge control and trim, as well as strokes that maintain a surf, control a surf and regain a surf.

Paddlers should be aiming to look smooth and in control throughout. Providers should highlight the importance of using these waves to cross the river.

Paddle into and out of small stoppers: The first important skill for the paddler is to be able to identify what a suitable stopper is. Providers should facilitate this as part of the training.

Paddlers should gain an understanding in the advantage of using a dynamic edge, correct posture and active core, and blade throughout. The paddlers should leave with an understanding of how to do this in a relaxed and controlled manner without relying on the blade for constant support.

Moving sideways on the move: This should be blended throughout training, with the paddlers understanding how to blend their strokes so that they can draw their kayak sideways in a variety of locations. Paddlers should also understand the importance of blending forward momentum before and after the draw.

Supporting: Remaining in balance is an important part of white water kayaking. Therefore paddlers should have a range of ways to remain in balance and then regain balance once it has been lost. A range of tactics for this should be explored during the training course. These would include how to use active posture and positive connections with the kayak as well as a range of ways to use the paddle. Paddlers should understand that support can be gained from the blade in many ways.

A.3 Rolling

The ability to roll at this level is a vital river skill and one that paddlers need to be able to complete on both sides in moving water.

A.4 Tactical understanding

As well as the core technical skills white water kayaking is about the tactics of river running and the ability to select the appropriate skill at the correct time.

Training should look at a range of tactical considerations while river running. This could cover a range of options and the provider should give consideration to choice of strokes, direction of travel i.e. lateral momentum, and use of river features.

A.5 Environmental considerations

Training should cover environmental considerations such as: topography of the river, its personality, run off (steepness of ground) and gradient of river bed, as well as all the considerations that need to be taken into account as a leader, not only in the planning stage and selection of river to suit the individuals, but also the approach on the river that is adopted.

A.6 Maintaining direction

Paddlers should leave the training course with a range of ways to maintain their direction while travelling on the river. Training should look at ways to maintain direction while travelling through areas of disturbed water including eddy lines, waves, stoppers and boils.

While exploring these tactics forward paddling should be high on the agenda.

A.7 Changing direction

Paddlers should leave training with a range of ways to change their direction while travelling on the river. Training should look at ways to change direction and should highlight the importance of using the river to aid this.

Part B – Rescue Skills

The emphasis for the paddler is that they can be an effective member of a team; this includes being able to look after themselves and others while paddling on grade 2(3) white water.

During this element of training paddlers should act as the rescuer; this includes taking responsibility for the rescue.

B.1 Demonstrate skilful application of appropriate boat and bank-based safety and rescue skills

- Swimming and self-rescue.
- Throwline rescue.
- Rescue a capsized, swimming paddler and their equipment.

These core white water safety skills are key to the successful rescues. Training should highlight the British Canoeing White Water Safety and Rescue Training (WWSR) course that is required for assessment. Paddlers need to be aware of these skills and how they apply to the river leader.

Paddlers should have a range of tactics for the grade 2(3) environment and should have skills that allow them to lead a group and provide appropriate rescue cover from both boat and bank. Training should cover skills such as use of equipment and where to stow it as well as what is appropriate equipment.

The British Canoeing WWSR course covers these core skills but not from the leadership element and therefore the training should include this.

B.2 Incident management and first aid in the moderate water environment

Paddlers need to be able to deal with first aid incidents within the moderate white water environment. Providers should focus on the practical application of first aid skills including what first aid supplies to carry and where to carry them.

B.3 Effective group leader

As river leaders paddlers need to be able to be effective group leaders. Training should cover practical skills in leadership tactics both on and off the water.

B.4 Group member in rescues and incidents

Paddlers need to be able to lead a group through a rescue incident. This should include the use of the group, positioning, and knowledge of equipment to solve the incident.

Part C – Safety, Leadership & Group Skills

During the assessment paddlers should show they have the ability to lead others on the successful descent of the grade 2(3) river. These skills will be blended throughout the assessment. These skills include:

C.1 Skilful application of leadership principles (e.g. CLAP)

C.2 Appropriate leadership strategies, positioning, judgement and decision-making

C.3 Safety awareness and risk management

C.4 Group control and management

All of the above are about paddlers being able to effectively lead a group down a grade 2(3) river. Paddlers should experience:

- Identifying hazards.
- Choosing suitable lines for the group.
- Being an active member of the team.
- Prompt and suitable decision-making.
- Positioning during communication and pre-empting issues.
- Use of signals for effective communication.
- It is important that paddlers learn how to add to the group dynamic, which enables swift decision-making, clear communications and positive outcomes.

C.5 Intervening strategies

Training should cover the following areas and ensure that paddlers understand their options, and how to intervene at the appropriate time to ensure that potential problems don't escalate.

This may include:

- The skilful application of the CLAP leadership model.
- The decision to rest/scout or portage.
- The decision to change tactics or techniques.
- The decision to change the pace and nature of the descent.

C.6 Controlling and managing outcomes

Training should cover the following areas and ensure that paddlers understand their options, as well as how to manage the outcome successfully during the trip to ensure the safety of all concerned.

This may include:

- Route planning and trip choice.
- Change of route plan.
- Use of emergency action plans.
- Use of safety briefs.

Part D – Theory

The emphasis of the assessment is that paddlers show the required knowledge of an intermediate white water kayaker. Training will blend the following subject areas:

D.1 Equipment

Paddlers should understand fully the equipment required for operating in the moderate water environment. Paddlers should understand what required equipment they should carry and why they should carry it.

D.2 Safety

Training should provide paddlers with the knowledge of up-to-date safety requirements for moderate water. Paddlers should be aware of the need to dynamic risk assess the moderate water environment and understand how to evaluate these risks.

D.3 Weather

Training should cover how to gain an up-to-date weather forecast and how the forecast affects the decision-making process.

D.4 Wellbeing, health and first aid

Training should ensure that paddlers have the right level of first aid training and understand how to apply this training to the moderate water environment.

D.5 Access

Paddlers should understand the range of access issues that can occur on rivers and where they can find additional information. They should leave the training course understanding how this will apply to them as a river leader.

D.6 Environment

An appreciation of the environment we paddle in is a key underpinning principle for many in paddlesport.

D.7 Planning

Paddlers should be trained in gaining an understanding of what is involved in planning a successful descent of a river. This should include the full range of skills from access and egress through to contingency plans and setting up shuttles.

D.8 Group awareness and management

Paddlers need to be aware of what constitutes being a productive member of a group. They need to be aware of what questions to ask of themselves and others, and show that they understand fully the roles required when organising a group both on and off the water.

D.9 Water features and hazards

Training should cover dynamic risk assessments as well as an understanding of hydrology and how to use this while river leading.

D.10 Navigation

Vital skills for river leaders include the ability to; use a guidebook, find where they are on a map, and direct outside agencies to their location. Training should ensure that paddlers understand this.

D.11 Etiquette

Paddlers should be aware of the British Canoeing Code of Conduct.

Paddlers should have an understanding of river etiquette and/or other users.

Paddlers should have a general awareness of others coming into eddies and their own positioning.

D.12 General knowledge

Paddlers should gain an understanding of the types of paddlesport that they are involved in as well as the range of options available to those who they will be leading.

D.13 Leadership responsibilities

Paddlers should understand their roles and responsibilities as a river leader.

D.14 Personal paddling skills

Training should ensure that paddlers have an understanding of the skills required and why they need to keep them up to date.