

5 Star Open Canoe Leader Training Notes

Technical Syllabus

The 5 Star Leader should be trained to perform all the tasks on both sides i.e. bilaterally. It is expected that the training course will also help the paddler to develop a range of effective cross-deck strokes, as well as a range of techniques suitable for paddling on the upstream and downstream side of their boat. As a result they should be able to select which of the available techniques is best suited to any given situation.

Training should also include paddling as part of a tandem crew as well as paddling solo. When paddling as part of a tandem crew the paddler is expected to be able to paddle at both bow and stern and it is expected that the other crewmember will be of a similar standard.

The essence of the requirement to be able to paddle solo and tandem is that tandem paddlers can cope if their partner becomes incapacitated, falls out, or is needed to join another crew. Whilst a solo paddler may need to be able to bring another paddler into their craft to help them. Paddlers would normally participate in their 5 Star course as per their normal paddling preference (i.e. solo or tandem), but would be required to spend a short amount of time dealing with 'what if' type incidents.

For example;

- For tandem paddlers, could they solo paddle a rapid of the appropriate grade and recover their swimming partner back into their canoe
- For solo paddlers, could they carry a passenger and paddle a rapid of the appropriate grade, to reunite them with their own craft, or manoeuvre into position to rescue a pinned boat

Candidates are also expected to lead/look after both solo and tandem crews, they therefore need to understand the differences between solo and tandem boats. One way this may be assessed is to have tandem and solo paddlers to lead on the assessments.

Part A – Personal Paddling Skills

Training should enable paddlers to develop a high level of ability and understanding of the strokes and techniques necessary to handle a canoe, both on white water and on exposed open water. Training should emphasise effective and efficient techniques, which underpin a smooth, controlled and consistent performance and not the reliance on strength.

A.1 Efficient and effective grade 3 river running skills

Paddlers should be working towards a solid performance of all the 4 Star moving water skills on grade 3 moving water. This includes the ability to adapt a manoeuvre during its execution in response to external forces. Paddlers should develop anticipation and control rather than just a reaction to events.

Paddlers should explore river running strategies for successfully descending difficult rapids. Paddlers should be working towards displaying and using controlled, effective manoeuvres incorporating a range of canoe control skills and techniques.

River running strategies may include appropriate use of lines on part of a rapid.

Paddling a loaded canoe: paddlers should learn to adapt their paddling style in response to a loaded boat. This will be evident in river running strategies and route choice.

A.2 Efficient and effective open water skills (wind up to force 5)

Paddlers should develop the ability to manoeuvre and control a canoe in a variety of wind & wave conditions, including the ability to launch into and negotiate waves created by force 5 winds over a large fetch. Paddlers should be aware of the importance of anticipation and control rather than just a reaction to events.

Paddling a loaded canoe: paddlers should learn to adapt their paddling style in response to a loaded boat.

Paddlers should be able to construct improvised sailing rigs to allow the group to journey on open water. They should also be able to safely manage the group on the water and be able to identify relevant safety issues in both theirs and their group's rigs.

A.3 Lining and tracking

Paddlers should develop varied strategies for travelling up and downstream on a river and up wind on an exposed shoreline environment.

A.4 Poling and snubbing

Paddlers should develop varied strategies for travelling up and downstream on a river and up wind on an exposed shoreline environment.

A.5 Navigation

Training should further develop the paddler's ability to navigate on open water in adverse conditions.

Part B – Rescue Skills

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

Training should include various strategies for releasing pinned canoes, including 3:1 mechanical advantage system.

B.2 Incident management and first aid in the 5 Star environment

B.3 Effective group leader and group member in rescues and incidents

Paddlers should gain knowledge of a range of rescue techniques suitable for any conditions that they may encounter, this should include retrieval of any separated equipment as a result of an incident.

Part C – Safety, Leadership & Group Skills

The following skills should be developed for use in leading both experienced and inexperienced advanced environment paddlers:

C.1 Skilful application of leadership principles (e.g. C.L.A.P.)

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

C.3 Safety awareness and risk management

Training should further develop the paddler's ability to effectively identify and manage risk.

C.4 Group control and management

Training should encourage the paddler to foster an organised performance both on and off the water. Training will need to build on the paddler's experience and judgment so that they have an effective approach to safely lead groups on class 3 water and on open water, both during the day and at night. Paddlers should learn to effectively identify hazards as well as understand how to evaluate suitable lines for different designs of craft e.g. white water and touring boats. Paddlers should gain awareness of the need for an effective communication system and the maintenance of line of sight.

C.5 Equipment

Paddlers should establish appropriate personal equipment, plus any additional equipment deemed to be appropriate to support a group in their charge. Any such equipment should reflect such things as the season, the ability of their companions, and the difficulty of the waters to be paddled. Paddlers should be aware that on the level of water being paddled, having too much equipment could be nearly as hazardous as having too little.

C.6 Structured evaluation of groups paddling abilities with regard to proposed trip

Training should include how to structure a practical observation that enables the leader to evaluate the suitability of the group members for the proposed advanced trip. This observation would need to establish a group member's ability to enter and exit the flow effectively, to ferry glide across an even grade 3 current without losing ground and their ability to paddle in winds above force 4 wind applicable.

C.7 Provide guidance through top tips and handy hints

Part D – Theory

Training should aim to enhance knowledge to a high level on a wide range of topics. The range of topics should include:

D.1 Equipment

Boat design and its relevance to white water and open water paddling. Equipment for use on advanced rivers and exposed open waters.

D.2 Safety

D.3 Weather

D.4 Wellbeing, health and first aid

D.5 Access

D.6 Environment

D.7 Planning

D.8 Group awareness and management

D.9 Navigation

D.10 Etiquette

D.11 General knowledge

D.12 Leadership responsibilities

D.13 Water features and hazards

D.14 Injury prevention