

5 Star Sea Kayak Leader Training Notes

Technical Syllabus

Part A – Personal Paddling Skills

Through the blending of their body, boat and blade positions, paddlers will be coached in their ability to skilfully control and manoeuvre their kayaks in a range of situations and conditions in advanced conditions.

Training will incorporate application of the practical techniques listed below.

The coach should encourage the paddler to keep their paddling actions within the 'safety box' and perform strokes on both sides.

A.1 Launching and landing

Training should include awareness of various boat-packing techniques appropriate to the conditions and the equipment to be carried.

Paddlers should be coached on how to perform launching and landing in a variety of situations including moderate surf and rocky shores. Whilst ensuring minimal damage to person and equipment as well as the safety of the group.

A.2 Efficient and effective forward and reverse paddling

Throughout training paddlers should be encouraged to work on their efficient and sustained forward paddling in a variety of advanced conditions, including sea state four and above. Paddlers should be trained in the selection of a variety of paddle shapes and sizes to enable efficient and sustained forward paddling applicable to the conditions.

Training should help to develop accurate and efficient reverse paddling in a range of environmental conditions.

A.3 Efficient and effective manoeuvring and control

The paddler should learn different methods of manoeuvring skills in relation to static and moving objects, and good control in moving water and in broken water.

Training should include a range of controlled techniques to demonstrate the ability to manoeuvre the kayak sideways using applicable strokes in waves and wind from all directions and at the interface between flow and eddy (caused by wind and tide).

During training a range of control techniques should be demonstrated, to enable the paddler to handle the kayak in waves and wind from all directions and at the interface between flow and eddy (caused by wind and tide).

Paddlers should be shown use of trim and skeg as appropriate.

During training paddlers should experience a range of realistic conditions, where the recovery stroke or brace is needed for support e.g. surf, rough water and waves.

A.4 Navigation on the water and in poor visibility

Training should include:

- Planning, by interpreting maps, charts and sources of tidal information for the purpose of navigation, including a variety of techniques to navigate accurately (avoiding danger areas) along complex and committing coastlines, in advanced tidal waters, in tidal streams, on open crossings (greater than 2 nautical miles) and in poor visibility, using a combination of techniques applicable to the journey being planned.
- Techniques such as keeping a course on open water, the use of transits, position fixes, poor visibility and darkness navigation, escape/alternative routes, navigation marks and buoyage.
- Developing an awareness of using a handheld GPS (Global Positioning System) receiver in an effective way to aid navigation and obtain a position fix. However, the coach needs to make paddlers aware that they must not rely on satellite based positioning systems during the navigation exercises when on assessment.

A.5 Roll in rough water

Training must move the paddler from prepared rolling to an effective roll performed in advanced conditions and rough water, and highlight the importance of being able to effect a roll no matter which side the capsize has happened.

Part B – Safety and Rescue

Training should provide paddlers with a broad awareness of the dangers and problems associated with paddling and leading on the sea.

Training should provide paddlers with simple solutions to common problems that they may encounter whilst paddling. This should include undertaking dynamic risk assessments for themselves and the group they are paddling with.

B.1 Have knowledge of, and demonstrate skilful application of, appropriate rescue skills

During training paddlers should work with a range of rescues and be shown how to adapt them to the prevailing conditions that are likely to be found in advanced environments. These should include tidal streams of more than three knots, winds above force 4 and sea states 4 and above. Training should also allow paddlers to manage situations that include dealing with incapacitated paddlers.

B.2 Self-rescue

Paddlers should be trained in a variety of methods to get back in their kayak from the water unaided, in conditions of sea state 4, and be able to empty their kayak without landing or accepting external assistance.

B.3 Be conversant with different methods of towing

During training a variety of towing techniques should be demonstrated and practised in advanced conditions on open water and in tidal stream conditions e.g. tandem tow, rafted tow, contact tow, anchored tow etc. Paddlers should also be shown how to drop and pick up a tow with ease. They should also be shown practically, single and multiple tows.

The variety of tows should be over a reasonable distance and include sections of following, head, beam and quartering seas and wind from all directions.

Training will include the use of the towline quick release mechanism that will be practised when under load.

The coach must make paddlers aware of the inherent dangers of towing to the casualty and themselves.

Part C – Safety, Leadership & Group Skills

C.1 Skilful application of leadership principles

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

C.3 Safety awareness and risk management

C.4 Exercise appropriate group control and management and show concern for the general welfare of other group members

Paddlers should be shown how to exercise appropriate group control whilst on the water and choose a position appropriate to the prevailing conditions during the journey.

Training must encourage paddlers to maintain leadership responsibility and not pass on the responsibility of decision making to a third party. At all times paddlers must be concerned for the comfort and welfare of the party throughout the whole journey. This duty of care must be practiced and extended to the journey both on and off the water. Through training paddlers must realise the importance of planning and adapting, as the ability of the weakest member of the group must always be taken into consideration.

Training should include:

- Various strategies for group control, including a range of communication, leadership styles and positioning.
- Managing groups where conditions are more challenging.
- Training should develop the ability to judge the conditions as well as the standard of the group, and make appropriate decisions about the planned route along with the need to modify plans as required.

Within training the importance of effective group control cannot be over-emphasised.

Training needs to develop:

- A familiarity with the characteristic features of swift moving water on the sea. This requires experience and understanding of the behaviour of the flow of the moving water and associated eddies and flow boundaries.
- An appreciation of wave shape in relation to the power and energy in the wave (whether swell, surf or standing wave) and not just size, which is required for safe judgement.

C.5 Demonstrate the capability to manage a range of incidents

Training should look at a wide variety of incidents and enable paddlers to work on the practical aspects of dealing with the situations, with various pieces of equipment that are likely to be carried. Training should also prepared paddlers to manage any incidents that could occur during the course of a journey in advanced conditions.

Important aspects that should be introduced during training include:

- The process of maintaining an overview of the situation so that the safety and wellbeing of the whole group is never forgotten.
- Incidents that involve people e.g. seasickness, hypothermia, injuries etc.
- Incidents that involve equipment e.g. boat repair, paddle repair, lost hatch etc.
- Incidents that involve rescue in different circumstances and conditions thereby requiring a working knowledge of a variety of approaches.
- The necessity of carrying and having easily accessible a suitable means of summoning help in an emergency e.g. a range of flares, mobile phone, VHF etc.
- The first aid kit and familiarity with the use of its contents whilst afloat as well as being able to deal with more substantial problems whilst ashore.
- Hypothermia/first aid; training should complement any other first aid. Paddlers should be encouraged to hold a current recognised two day first aid certificate. Providers should ensure paddlers are trained to deal with the most likely injuries that may occur as part of paddlesport activities on the sea. It should be evident that they can deal with an incident and see it through to its conclusion, including evacuations, dealing with the emergency services and group care.
- The repair kit. It should be possible to carry out a repair on a kayak whilst afloat as well as being able to deal with more substantial damage to the equipment whilst ashore.

C.6 Provide guidance through top tips and handy hints

Although the 5 Star Award is not a coaching award it should be recognised that paddlers must be made aware of the importance of being able to communicate effectively and pass on relevant information and advice to the group as required.

This could mean having the ability and skill to pass on tips to improve the group members overall paddling ability, confidence and sufficient information in order to achieve the day's proposed objectives. For example, the paddler may need to guide and encourage group members around a headland if the conditions are challenging.

Part D – Theory

Training should provide paddlers with an awareness of potential risks, safety precautions and safety thresholds pertinent to leading groups on advanced tidal waters.

D.1 Equipment and design

Paddlers should show an understanding of the variety of technology which is available including VHF and GPS (to include latitude and longitude, speed and distance and entering a waypoint).

D.2 Safety (includes Coastguard and rescue services)

Training should develop knowledge of the role and responsibilities of the Coastguard Service and the various rescue services. Training should cover operation of marine band VHF transceivers and familiarity with good operating procedures for radio traffic. UK residents should be made aware of the VHF radio licensing requirements.

D.3 Weather

Paddlers should know where to obtain relevant shipping and weather forecasts. They should also understand the probable sequence of weather which occurs during the passage of a depression.

Paddlers should have an understanding of the following:

- The formation of fog, onshore and offshore winds, the effect of relief and line squalls.
- The relationship between the pattern of isobars on a synoptic chart and the probable resultant wind speed and direction.
- The relationship between physical signs and the actual forecast.

Paddlers must have a good understanding of the behaviour of the sea and the effect the past, present and future weather may have.

D.4 Wellbeing, health and first aid

Linked with sound judgement, providers should ensure paddlers are trained to deal with the most likely injuries that may occur as part of paddlesport activities on the sea. It should be evident that paddlers can deal with an incident and see it through to its conclusion (including simple evacuations, dealing with emergency services and group care). This training should complement any other first aid training where it exists. Paddlers should be encouraged to hold a current recognised two day first aid certificate.

D.5 Access

Providers need to make paddlers aware of the range of access issues that exist throughout the UK and where they can find additional information as well as our basic freedom to paddle on the sea.

D.6 Environment

Training should cover the likely effect and interaction of tide, tidal stream wind and swell, as well as undersea features creating features such as overfalls and eddies. Time should be given to identify potential hazards both environmental and other water users.

The paddler should also be encouraged to acquire knowledge of the wildlife which is likely to be encountered on the sea and be aware of times and areas when special consideration should be given.

D.7 Planning

Paddlers must be able to plan a two-day journey in an unfamiliar area, which includes an open crossing.

D.8 Group awareness and management

Training should develop an awareness of potential risks, safety precautions and safety thresholds pertinent to leading groups on moderate tidal waters. Training should cover:

- The likely effect and interaction of tide, tidal stream and wind.
- National Coastguard Organisations and rescue services.
- Potential hazards (environmental and other water users).
- Personal, legal and ethical responsibilities.

D.9 General knowledge

Paddlers should have a knowledge and awareness of the history of sea kayaking and current developments.

D.10 Navigation

Paddlers should be able to navigate accurately on journeys in the advanced tidal water environment using appropriate pilotage skills. For example:

- Understand buoyage
- Identify position by using a variety of methods
- Maintain a course, calculate distance and estimate paddling time

D.11 Show basic knowledge of collision regulations and sound signals

D.12 Leadership responsibilities

Paddlers should understand their roles and responsibilities as a leader on the sea.

D.13 Water features and hazards

Training should cover dynamic risk assessments as well as an understanding of hydrology and how to use this while leading on the sea. This will include for example, understanding the characteristics of swell, tidal flow, and surf.