

Wild Water Racing

Wild Water Racing Explore Award

Award Description

This award is designed to develop the foundation in techniques and skills as you start your journey into Wild Water Racing.

Extended Award Description

Your Wild Water Racing Explore Award will give you the ability to apply your choices to an enjoyable paddling session on sheltered water, enabling you to create a proficient use of skills and equipment to be in control throughout your paddling session. You will develop your physical conditioning, harmony with the water and teamwork. Your confidence should be based on both proficiency of skills and through developing a deeper understanding of your surroundings; the external and environmental factors which affect your enjoyment on the water. You will expand your knowledge of dealing with challenges; your own or those of others. Your award should be seen as a sound basis for building the experience and knowledge associated with Wild Water Racing Perform Award holders.

Award Content

1. Location

In order to have an enjoyable paddling session we need to make some key decisions on our location.



Key factors influencing our decisions include the water levels, the grade of water, the weather, our fellow paddlers and features of the location we choose. We can take each of these factors into consideration and ask ourselves some questions to ensure the correct decisions are made:

Factor: Weather – wind speed and direction has a big impact on us as paddlers.

What we might observe: Which direction and how strong is the wind? Is it due to increase or decrease? Is it going to change direction? Are there enough daylight hours left for us to achieve our aims?

Factor: Water conditions

We may need to know: Has the venue got flow? How is this being generated? What time is high and low water? Will the flow increase or decrease? What potential dangers do we need to consider when choosing a location? Which types of water have the least potential issues for us?

Factor: Access and environment

What restrictions might there be on the water we are paddling on? Has the venue got a pontoon or other man-made surface? Where will we access/egress the water? What environmental factors might affect this decision? How would we direct support to us in an emergency situation? How can we reduce our impact on the environment and animals around us?

2. Getting Ready

Before getting to the water we must choose kit and equipment suitable to our location and have the correct knowledge to use it. Key points we may consider are:

What will we wear?

What are the clothing options available to us? Why might we choose one over another? Are we confident in the use of our chosen personal safety equipment?



What will we use?

What are the different equipment and boat options available and why might we choose one over the other? How might we set our boats up to get the best from our session? What type of paddle might we choose to gain boat control or power?

What will we take?

What additional equipment might be useful to carry on the river with us for our safety and communication? What safety kit would it be useful to have with us or available on the bank? What drink and nutrition might we need for our paddling session?

3. At the Water

Before we start our session we need to be confident in our ability to deal with the complications it might bring. A river is usually a shared space; we must also be aware of other users and consider how we will safely get on the water.

Consideration: Other users – some venues can be a very busy area. We may need to share the water with rowers and accompanying motor launches, swimmers, fishermen and paddlers, amongst others. To do this safely, an ‘etiquette’ amongst these users has developed to minimise conflict and help everyone enjoy the water.

We may need to consider: Who else is in the area? Are we using a managed or supervised venue? What is the etiquette here? How might this affect us? Who else is paddling with us? What is their current ability? Are we able, as individuals and as a group, to cope with the expected water and conditions? Do we have clear aims and focuses as a group? Are there any challenging areas of the paddle we need to consider and plan for?

Consideration: Safety and rescue

We may need to know: How can we protect ourselves from potential hazards? Can we paddle as a group and help each other if needed? What damage to our

health might repeated immersion in cold water cause? How can we help prevent this becoming an issue? What potential injuries might we need to treat? How might we do this?

Consideration: Getting to the water

We may need to determine: How are we going to get to the access point? What is the best way to carry, load and secure our craft to protect ourselves or others from injury and prevent unnecessary damage? How will we get our craft and additional equipment to the water? Is the weather and flow as expected? What signs do we need to look for to determine this? How can we adjust our plans if needed?

4. **Wild Water Skills**

When paddling a wild water racing kayak or canoe we should be in control. Key features of being in control include us staying relaxed, balanced and understanding the application of the fundamentals; including posture, connectivity, power transfer and feel.

Skill: Forward paddling

We may need to consider: What are the advantages of effective forward paddling in racing? What muscles can we engage to create more effective forward paddling in a kayak? What muscles can we engage to create more effective forward paddling in a canoe?

Skill: Steering and control

We may need to consider: What shapes of water do you look for when looking to turn the boat? How best can we use edge to turn the boat whilst maintaining stability and speed?

Skill: Using the wash

We may need to know: What advantages are there to using the wash from another boat? Where can we position ourselves to gain the best advantage from the wash? What skills can we use to match the pace of the lead boat?

How do we cross from one side wash to another? What observations can we make on water patterns to help us? What techniques and tactics can we employ to maintain the use of wash from other boats?

Skill: Dealing with mishaps

We may need to know: What recovery strokes and techniques can we use when we go off balance? How would we safely get ourselves or others back to shore or into the craft? How would we deal with loose kit? How would we swim safely in white water?

5. After the Session

Every paddling session is an opportunity for learning and improving. We can create a positive impact on our future experiences by performing a good post-paddling assessment.

Watching what others do: It might be useful to spend some time watching others. How are they forward paddling? How are they using another boats' wash? Do they seem to be able to maintain rhythm and pace?

Consider what you will take away: What have we learnt today? What can we focus on next time?

6. Future Development

Each day we spend in a wild water racing craft further expands our skills and knowledge, creating a more enjoyable experience on the water. With no two paddling sessions ever the same, we never stop learning. We must balance our training with the rest of our life and the need for our body to recover.

Continually evaluating the choices we make creates a natural evolution of decision making ability helping us to link training to racing. When we reach a certain point in this, it may be worth considering moving on to the Wild Water Racing Perform Award or enter a local competition.