

Coaching Freestyle from the Bank

When coaching Freestyle, it can be really beneficial to be able to move between the water and the bank. Being on the bank can give you a great viewpoint to observe your paddlers and also to give input and feedback.

The following guidance includes some helpful hints and reminders when coaching freestyle from the bank.

Looking after your students on the water

If you are moving between coaching from your boat and coaching from the bank, make sure that you have your boat readily available downstream of you so that you can jump into it quickly if you need to. You must also consider whether the skills of the team allow the paddlers to support each other in the event of a rescue. If your students are not able to perform a rescue, you may wish to consider gaining the assistance from a more experienced paddler if you plan to be bank based for prolonged periods of time.

Have your safety tools available

If someone swims, you may need to perform a rescue from the bank, so have your throwline available. Do bear in mind that some white water courses prohibit the use of ropes/tape in the course (as they can damage the water pumps) so always check first. If throwing a rope, consider things like slalom poles, other course users and places where a rope could become snagged. It can be really helpful at some white water courses to have a paddle to reach with, as getting out at the sides of a concrete course can be difficult. Of course if using a rope, make sure you are carrying a knife.

Your emergency kit

Many freestyle coaches choose to place a bag with emergency equipment nearby to the spot you are coaching from. While many freestyle locations have facilities nearby, it is worthwhile making sure that you have the ability to deal with a situation should something happen. Carrying a phone when you are coaching will also allow you to call for help quickly, should you need to.



What are you wearing?

Wearing decent shoes that allow you to move up and down the bank quickly are essential. Many banks at white water courses can be slippery so good footwear is a must. When you are around the water, it is essential to wear a PFD and some white water facilities may require you to wear a helmet when you are coaching.

Your coaching tools

Consider how you will carry any equipment with you when you are coaching and how you will avoid this falling in the water. A simple drybag or rucksack is often all that is needed, but it is worthwhile making sure that you can keep the contents dry if using any technology for your coaching. Having some paddles available and a mini kayak to demonstrate with and show rotations can be really useful.

Consider other course users

At most white water venues, there will be other paddlers using the water. Consider how you will manage this as many people will simply want to pass through or stop in the eddy. Giving clear signals to other course users will be helpful if the site is busy.

Towing back on?

At some venues, some of the best features cannot be attained easily from downstream. If you are towing paddlers back up and onto the feature from the bank, consider the serious safety implications of doing this. It may actually be beneficial for less experienced paddlers to simply walk back around and paddle on from above. If you are using a rope based system to tow paddlers on, the rope should be as short as possible with no loops or snapping points in the system. This should not be your throwline that you would use for a rescue and of course, make sure your knife is close to hand and available.

