

Coaching from the beach

Beaches provide amazing coaching venues, with each one offering environmental gems, that with a little creativity, can really anchor the learning offered in meaningful ways. When coaching, try to see the journey from the car park to out back as moving through a series of zones, with each one lending itself to different coaching interventions. From professional discussions about background in the car park, to a warm up at the water's edge, all the way to a flat water input out back way past the surf zone and everything in between, the possibilities are limitless.

Below are some top tips to try and ensure you get the best from your coaching sessions.

- **Check to ensure it's suitable to coach at your planned beach.** Some beaches have user agreements e.g. National Trust beaches. You need to check beforehand for access rights to use with a commercial group.
- **Make sure that the beach has a phone signal.** If it doesn't, have some other means of communication (e.g. VHF), or know where your closest point of phone signal is (to run to), or landline is.
- If coaching for a long period of time on a beach - **ensure you have the right clothing for you to keep warm and hydrated.** Or if it is hot, a good hat and sunscreen with lots of water. Ensure your clients do too.
- Ideally pick a place on the beach, with the tide in mind, to **keep a mountain of equipment safe** - you have then marked your spot where you clients know to go if necessary, and you can use it as a marker so that your clients can check where they are whilst surfing.
- Talk and **make friends with the lifeguards** if the beach has them. Tell them how you plan to manage your group and what you plan to be doing (including any swimming exercises), the group's overall experience, where you plan to operate, and if there is anything they need to share with you.
- If there are any other group of beach users, do the same with them, as you would with the lifeguards on duty.
- **Establish simple and easy recognisable signals with your group.** These can be used in a basic form to manage the group on the water, but also through discussion, you can develop a language of signals with your performers to offer extrinsic feedback as required.
- **Find a system that works for you to make some notational analysis,** as trying to remember all the students' individual learning points between coaching interventions can be quite the challenge with larger groups.
- **Never underestimate the healing power of sweets.** It's amazing how the simple things can change how a person is feeling to either reinforce something great, or to console something that's not gone so well.

