



15 SEA KAYAKING

The wonderful thing about coaching sea kayaking is the rich diversity of both physical and cognitive skills we have to teach our clients in order to enable them to paddle safely and efficiently... and all this in an ever-changing environment.

They need to have the paddling skills to cope with a vast array of sea conditions as well as planning skills, navigation skills and an awareness of what is going on around them.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter identifies the physical and cognitive skills you need to teach to your clients and provides you with session ideas, exercises and progressions that will help you in your coaching of sea kayaking.

► What Do You Need To Coach On The Sea?

Have a look at the flow chart overleaf, it summarises all the conditions and environments our sea kayakers have to be trained for. Before you delve into the rest of the chapter, consider which physical skills, i.e. strokes, combination of strokes, adaptation of strokes and which cognitive skills you use yourself, in these environments?



Photo 1 Penrhyn Mawr in tranquil conditions

Title Photo Penrhyn Mawr on a moderately rough day

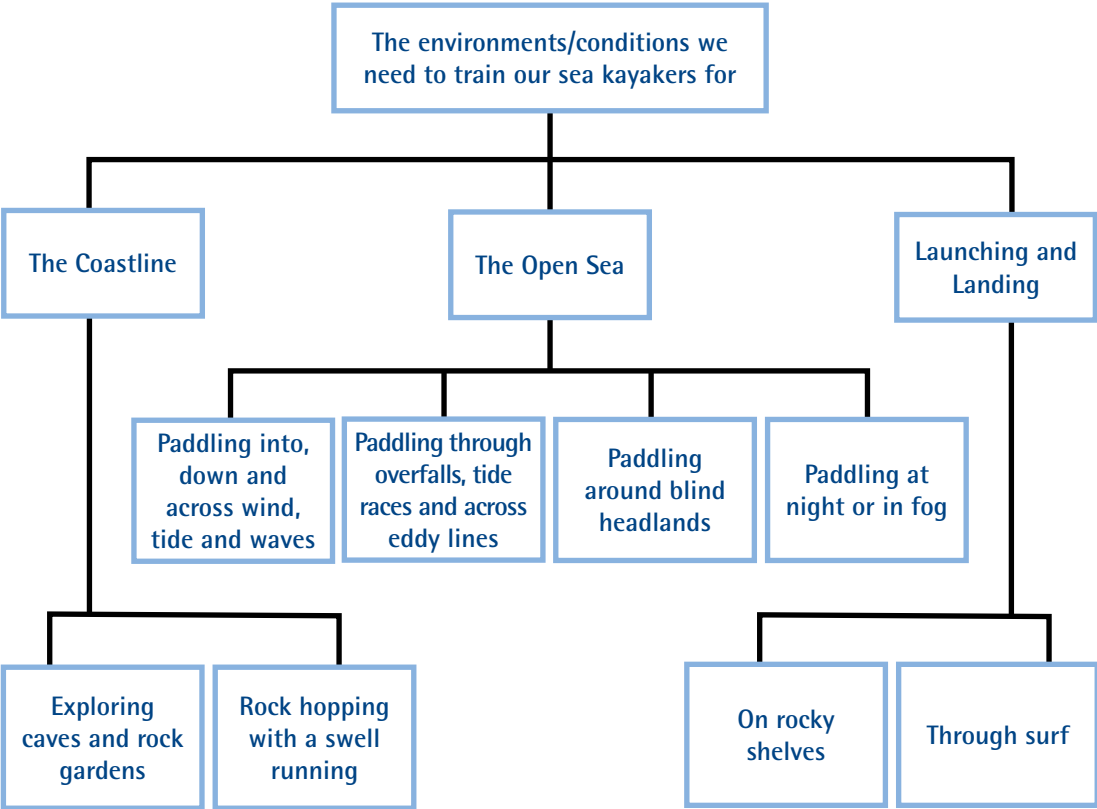


Fig. 1 The environments/conditions we need to train our sea kayakers for.

Physical skills required by sea kayakers:

- ✔ Good boat awareness
- ✔ Effective forward paddling in various conditions
- ✔ Close quarter manoeuvring skills
- ✔ Rough water handling skills
- ✔ Skills for launching and landing
- ✔ Skills to rescue others
- ✔ Rolling and self-rescue skills

Cognitive skills required by sea kayakers

- ✔ Group awareness
- ✔ Wind and water awareness
- ✔ Planning skills
- ✔ Deck top navigation skills
- ✔ Leadership skills
- ✔ Risk assessing and incident management skills
- ✔ Environmental awareness

The session ideas outlined are not in any strict coaching order, they are grouped together in the categories listed above. You may therefore need to pull out sessions described in later chapters before using those in earlier ones. For example, before trying out the forward paddling progressions in all the various conditions, ensure they have mastered (or at least tried) turning and manoeuvring in a calm bay.

Before we can start any coaching sessions we do need to consider our coaching strategy for the day. As mentioned in earlier chapters, a plan, whether it be in our heads, written down, a few scanty notes or a detailed scheme of work, is invaluable if we are to create a successful coaching session. Our plans, however, do need to be flexible and open-minded allowing for those unanticipated coaching opportunities, to be taken as they arise throughout the day. Nevertheless, we don't want any nasty surprises, so anticipating the effect of the predicted tides, weather and swell for the day is absolutely essential.

▶ PLANNING OUR STRATEGY

Having some sort of teaching strategy based around the client's needs and wishes, as well as the sea conditions for the day, is essential in order to give your clients a productive day. Of course you can just do things on the hoof, but if time is short and there are very specific needs to be addressed, more precise planning is required.

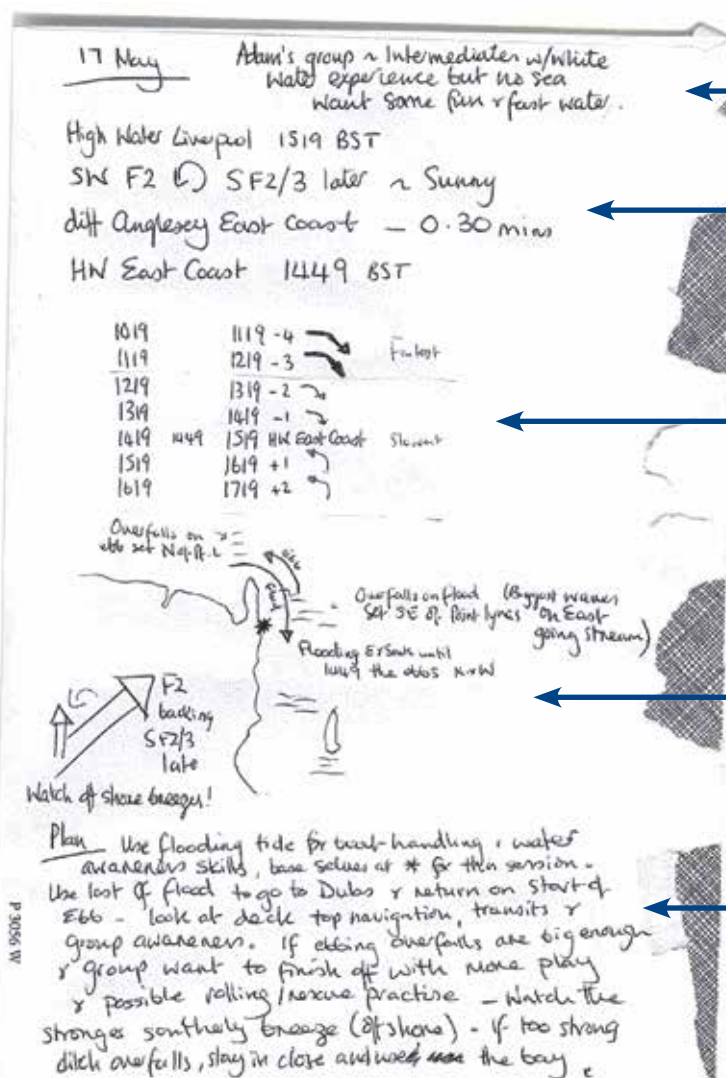
Below is an example of one of my coaching strategies, scribbled onto the back of an envelope. Not your typical well-presented lesson plan, but, nonetheless, it has all the necessary information on it, takes less than 10 minutes to prepare (with practice) and most important of all, ensures that I am prepared for whatever the day brings. Popping the envelope into a clear



TOP TIP

- Discussions with new clients prior to their day will help you identify what they wish to learn and will give you an idea of their ability. This will enable you to choose an appropriate location for them. 10 minutes of quiet observation of their actual ability once on the water will then tell you exactly what they need to learn, thus helping you decide on how best to use the location and tailor your initial coaching strategy to them.

plastic sleeve allows me to leave it on my deck and refer to it all day. Any such plan should include the following information:



Information regarding the group – their wishes and needs.

Tide times, weather and swell information for the day.

An outline of the day's tidal movement, in this case a Tidal Timing Matrix, allowing you to anticipate exactly what the water should be doing every moment of the day.

A diagram depicting this as well as highlighting any potential hazards facing you.

A summary of your coaching aims and progressions for the day.

Fig. 2 Sample session plan, scribbled on back of an envelope.



A NOTE ABOUT TIDAL TIMING MATRICES

I can't stress enough that this matrix is only one way of laying out tidal movement. There are lots of ways of laying out such tidal information for you to see at a glance and there are many excellent kayaking and yachting publications that give good step-by-step guidelines, so find one that works well for you. If you wish to try out the above matrix it's easy to construct.

- **one:** Look up the time for high water (or low water if appropriate) for the standard port nearest your chosen venue.
- **two:** Look up the difference in tide for the area you will be paddling in. This information can be found in an almanac, tide tables, pilot or worked from the tidal diamonds off a chart.
- **three:** Take 30 minutes either side of this time and write down the hours you envisage being on the water.
- **four:** Arrows will help you visualise the tidal flow for each of those hours at a glance, this may prove useful later if your plans need to change.
- **five:** Add in any other detail you feel is important to your lesson. For example, note when the race around

the headland begins, so that you have the opportunity to teach some initial water awareness skills before embarking on the overfall.

You will notice that the Timing Matrix does not refer to a specific time, but rather an hour of time. The reason for this is that the tide rarely turns at the exact time calculated. For example, a high-pressure system can exert so much pressure on the water's surface that it can make movement physically harder, thus the tide will turn later than predicted, or the wind can either make the tide turn earlier or later depending on its direction and strength in relation to the direction of the tide.

It's a good habit to always write BST or GMT after a time in order to remind yourself and others that you have taken into account the extra hour for British Summer Time – not taking it into account is a very common mistake likely to foil your day's coaching.

Finally, with your strategy prepared, ensure it's water-proofed and place it under the deck lines of your sea kayak, allowing you to anticipate and effectively use every teaching opportunity the sea has to offer you.

Prepared with this knowledge, you can really work a venue, gaining the optimum learning conditions for each of your students.



TOP TIP

- Encourage your intermediate students, in later sessions, to make a similar plan, regarding their journey and what they should expect, thus increasing their weather and water awareness (see Planning session later). Such planning abilities are invaluable to have and will begin the process of their independence from you.

Before moving on, it is important to consider introducing complete novice paddlers, especially young novices to the sea. Should we put complete beginners, especially children, on the sea without any prior paddling experience? Yes of course we should, but in

appropriate conditions and with a constant eye on changes in the weather and the sea state.

► What Constitutes Suitable Conditions?

The initial area needs to be contained, a natural or man-made harbour is good and any breezes should be onshore. The physical skills required by the novice paddlers when first on the sea are no different to those described in earlier chapters. Remember to anticipate sea breezes in the afternoon if the day has been hot. They may have a dramatic effect on your group as the day goes on. A beautiful windless day can within minutes turn into an environment your group is unable to cope with.

► Venturing From The Safe Bay Out Along The Coast

Once you have established the ability of your students and what they are potentially capable of, then it's time to leave the bay and venture out. Teach-



Photo 2 Sheltered bay with an onshore breeze

ing opportunities are plentiful along the coastline, especially rocky ones. See Close Quarter Manoeuvring Skills below for some games and exercise ideas amongst the rocks.



Photo 3 Student turning in an indent

Some days when the wind is too strong, it may be more appropriate to go surfing with your novice group rather than go for a journey. The chapter on Surfing describes how one can introduce beginners.



Photo 4 Group surfing

► COACHING PHYSICAL SKILLS

Armed with our plan and thus all the information we need to know about the tide, weather, sea conditions and our client's wishes and needs, we are ready to begin coaching. The very first session should be one of familiarising the students with their sea kayak.

GOOD BOAT AWARENESS

Some clients may find sea kayaks strange, especially if they've only ever paddled kayaks of a more general purpose nature. Your first session therefore needs to involve transferring your client's skills from one craft to the other and building on what they already know. For clients who have only ever paddled sea kayaks this session will form an excellent revision of their basic skills.

Ideal Teaching Location

Calm bay or quiet area of a harbour with a beach or slipway available and no effect from the wind or tide.

Skills To Coach And Practise

Edging, leaning, edging to assist a turn and trim.

Session Progressions

When coaching boat awareness you are really trying to make your client aware of their kinaesphere (see earlier coaching theory chapters). You need to set exercises that encourage them to feel feedback coming from the water, through the kayak, through their joints and muscles and ultimately into their cognitive awareness.

► Edging And Leaning

The first element of this session involves exercises to learn edge control and the difference between edging and leaning.

Begin on the beach or slipway:

- 1 Ask your students to sit in a paddling position.
- 2 Next ask them to move all their weight onto their right buttock and hold that position for a short while. Explain that this is a right edge.
- 3 Do the same on the left, but this time after a short while ask them to move their head in line with their spine and then wait to see (rather, kinaesthetically feel) what happens next. (A demo of this will help.) They should go off balance and fall over. This, tell them, is leaning.



5

Photo 5 Leaning/edging exercise

✓ Have them practise edging and leaning on both sides again.

✓ For students who learn visually or audibly, do the exercise once more but give them markers to look out for (visual), e.g. “In the edging position, if you look down you will see your spraydeck, in the leaning position if you look down you will see the water or in this case the beach.” Explain what is actually happening and why (audio) i.e., “The weight of your head has made you go off balance.”

✓ Next have them work out 4 different amounts of edge for each side and label them numbers 1, 2, and 3, 3 being the hardest to maintain and 4 being off balance. Try to focus their attention on their muscles and joints, specifically differences in upper body shape, position of head, amount of foot and knee pressure exerted, as they perform each degree of edge. Ask them to remember these feelings which constitute intrinsic feedback from their bodies (their kinaesphere), which will prove useful to them later on.

✓ Now have the group get into their sea kayaks and try exactly the same exercise on the water. Pairing the students up during this exercise and having each take it in turns to practise edging will further increase their knowledge. For example, they will be able to observe each other and the kayaks for differences they can see as each amount of edge is applied. Using buddies in this way is allowing you to teach the person edging kinaesthetically and the person watching visually. Both are learning audibly and vicariously through what’s called collaborative coaching.

► Turning Using Edge

The next logical step is to explore edging as a means of assisting the sea kayak to turn. Firstly, edging



TOP TIP

- Numbering the various degrees of edge also provides you with an excellent referencing tool specific to each individual for use in later sessions. For example, when a student is trying a turn with edging, rather than just asking them to edge more you can say, “That’s a good number 1 edge, but I need to see at least a number 2.” By using their own reference you will be able to set specific individual targets that both you and they understand.

towards the paddle will give your client extra reach and thus leverage when turning their kayak, especially when turning on the spot or when making very tight turns. Secondly, using an outside edge (i.e. a right edge to go left) will greatly assist the paddler turning their sea kayak through a longer turn on the move. The effect of edging to the outside of a turn is similar to other sports, e.g. skiers put pressure on the outside (downhill) ski to perform a parallel turn; sailors weight the side of their dinghy, i.e. the right side to go left, when practising rudderless sailing drills.

Note that some sea kayaks with more rounded hulls can be turned as effectively using either inside or outside edge. Be aware of this especially if your teaching method for the session is experimentation or guided discovery, it can throw you awfully. An exercise to illustrate the effect of outside edge would be helpful here. Line the paddlers up, explain that as you gently push them they are to apply a right edge – their kayaks will turn left. Try the exercise on both sides.

Harbours and bays with moorings make the perfect classroom for teaching turning and edging to assist turning. In this environment your choice of exercises are endless: forward paddling using different edges, backwards paddling using edges, turning using a combination of edging and sweeps, turning using a combination of edging, leaning and support strokes or ruddering (bow and stern) strokes, etc.

Guided discovery and coaching by self or peer appraisal in buddy pairs is ideal for this very dynamic and active session. Set individual tasks, circuits, have them set tasks for one another. Provided all have clear directions as to what is expected, your students flourish. This method of coaching is so useful, it frees you up to act as monitor and trouble-shooter, whilst feedback and management is continued by being in the buddy pairs. Just be aware of other water users and keep a vigilant eye on the comings and goings of any other bay or harbour traffic.



Photo 6 Sheltered harbour with buoys

► Trim

When considering trim, unlike river kayaks, moving our weight forwards and aft will have less effect in a sea kayak because they are so long. Nonetheless, trim is still important especially for control in big water, or in heavy winds or just for comfort over long distances. Many sea kayaks come with a skeg or rudder to address this problem. (Rudders are used to turn the sea kayak, skegs to trim it.) Some sea kayaks don't have rudders or skegs, and invariably any mechanical device may break at some point. It's important therefore to increase your client's awareness of the effects of trim, not only by using a skeg or rudder but by load distribution and packing.

Ideal Teaching Location

Sheltered bay and open sea area affected by the wind.

Skills To Coach And Practise

Alerting trim using both a skeg and then load distribution.

Session Progression

Firstly practise with a skeg (if applicable). Get the student to experiment with their skeg up, down and part way down. Have them experiment again in windier conditions.

Set a square course in the teaching area (with or without markers), one leg paddling into the wind, the next paddling across the wind, then paddling downwind and the last back across the wind again.

- 🟡 On their first circuit have the group do nothing but paddle skeg up. You want them to consider, through their kinaesthesia, how the skeg alters their directional progress through the water. Do so by asking them to consider which leg required the least amount of correction strokes - this helps them to quantify the task.

- 🟡 Repeat the same exercise, this time skeg down.
- 🟡 Discuss their findings and reinforce effective use of the skeg by one final circuit, having their skeg up when paddling into wind, halfway down across the wind, and fully down with the wind on their backs. If necessary explain the theory of why this helps their paddling.

Afterwards, change the course from square to triangular, facilitating the use of a skeg in a quartering sea. Any course set out will need to be reasonably long, and in quite windy conditions to have any real opportunity to feel the different effects. Effects that are too subtle may get missed.

Your next session should address paddling without a skeg and the effect of load distribution. Armed with some full water bladders to weight your clients' sea kayaks appropriately, have your students repeat the above drills. Exaggerated distribution of equipment within the sea kayak will mimic the effect of a skeg reasonably well. Unfortunately, your students will have to land after each circuit to redistribute the load, unlike open canoes the load cannot be moved easily from one end of the kayak to the other whilst on the water.

Herein lies the danger of over-trimming the sea kayak for forecast wind conditions. Invariably conditions will change whilst you are miles out to sea! So encourage your clients to load their kayaks with the weight as near to them as possible and evenly distributed. Encourage them to really use their edges and foot pressure to make small corrections to their course. If a client has no skeg or rudder and is finding it hard to steer and keeps turning up into wind whilst you are journeying, attaching a short line to the back of their kayak will work wonders. If they keep turning downwind, place a full water bag as far forward in their cockpit as possible to ease the situation.

FORWARD PADDLING SKILLS

Different conditions require different adaptations of the forward paddling stroke. When paddling through big choppy water or through surf a powerful upright stroke is required providing that surge of speed at the crucial moment. A relaxed, less dynamic but more flowing stroke is required for cruising long distances.

Ideal Teaching Location

The best way to coach your students any such adaptations and more importantly, the timing of those adaptations, is in as wide a variety of conditions as possible. Golden opportunities could present themselves to you

at any time; a change in the weather or sea state could warrant a change in paddling style not yet tried by your students. Your client might be using a less effective forward paddling style for the present conditions and some polishing of their skills is called for.

Skills To Coach And Practise

Basic forward paddling in a variety of conditions.

Session Progression

Forward paddling is not something that can be taught in just one session. It will need to be revisited time and time again. The progression of this session and individual elements of it can be rerun in the various conditions outlined on the flow chart at the start of the chapter.



7a



7b



7c

Photo 7a Upright sprint style, top hand at eye height.
Photo 7b Long distance, top hand at shoulder height.
Photo 7c High winds, low paddle action.

Ideas for your first session should include observations of their current style on simple water. If their forward propulsion involves a lot of correction strokes, encourage them to alter their direction through the use of their edges and foot pressure or rudder rather than sweep strokes – this will instantly improve their paddling effectiveness.

Move out of the bay (preferably into onshore conditions) and look at paddling into wind, downwind and across gentle wind and wavelets.



KEY POINT

- A common theme you'll see throughout this chapter is to find:

Testing conditions with low consequences.

When working on the sea the above cannot be stressed enough. Your students will be relatively new to sea kayaking and the potential for capsizes is still high. If it all does start to go wrong you want to end up somewhere safe!

Gradually, over the next day(s), begin to introduce your students to windier and wavier conditions (Force 2, onshore is ample). Before heading out into the windier water revisit turning and introducing turning on waves, this skill will be very necessary for the remainder of this session. Once able to turn, buddy up more able paddlers with less able/less confident paddlers and have them paddle directly into the wind. Your clients will find this the easiest of the forward paddling skills to master. Follow close by and ask them to turn back; turning one at a time is safest (especially if paddlers are not confident). For a client new to windy, wavy water, turning completely downwind is something they will try to avoid at all costs and will often keep paddling further out to sea.

► Turning Downwind

For many students, turning downwind in a following sea is the scariest part of any paddling in windy conditions. More scary for you however, will be seeing most of the group able to turn downwind and one or two unable to, creating a sudden star-bursting effect within of the group. In this instance, bring those who have managed the turn back into wind with those who still have not turned. Now, go to the upwind side of the client(s) who can't turn and be slightly ahead of them. Coax the scared person around, forcing them to turn by practically blocking their way. Positioning yourself slightly ahead of them means their head and

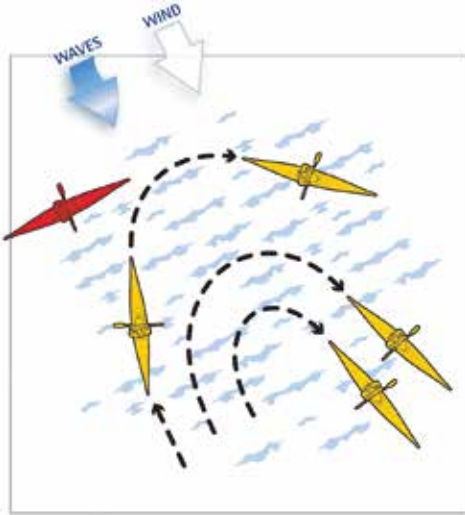


Fig. 3 Coach/buddy coaxing their partner around ready to paddle downwind.

body position will be in the most stable position as they go through the turn. Once round and paddling again they will relax a little.

It's important to encourage students to keep their momentum when turning or paddling down and especially across bigger waves. People tend to low brace, rather than paddle forwards, effectively killing the kayak's speed and leaving them marooned and at the mercy of the wind and waves. Encourage nervous clients, or better still ask their buddy to encourage them, to keep forward paddling. It is important for them to understand that stability comes from momentum; without that speed, they will stall and capsizing becomes more likely.

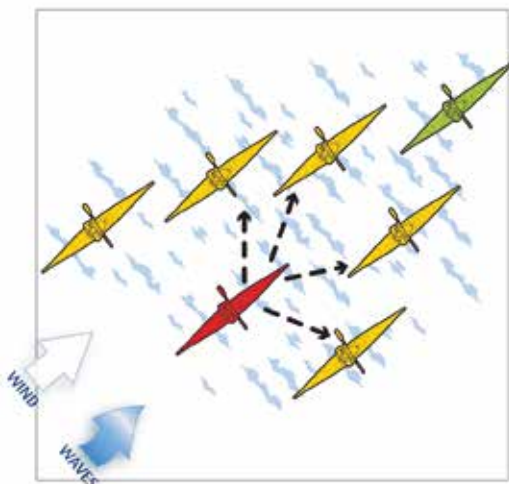


Fig. 4 Paddling downwind in a following sea - the group spread out in a 'V' shape to prevent collisions.

Downwind and downwave work essentially turns into an awesome surf session for some and a tense ride for others. Ensure your group is spread out either in a line or in a V-shape, so no kayaks will run into one another. Get your clients to feel the waves pass under them, help them to identify that moment when they need to put in a couple of vertical and strong power strokes and when to stern rudder down the wave. Again be ever watchful. Some people will love this, 'whooping' and 'yahooing' for hundreds of metres, whilst others will feel totally unstable, and will low brace or reverse paddle, stalling the flow each time a wave passes under them, thus spreading your group. Choice of venue (onshore wind into a gently shelving sandy bay), good group management, positioning and communication are paramount.

► Paddling Across The Wind

When paddling across the wind some of your clients will find their kayak doing something very different compared to their buddy's. Some little tips that will help you remedy these minor problems include:

For students paddling across the wind, finding their kayaks constantly turn up into the wind:

1. Ask them to edge towards the wind (i.e. almost leaning on it as they paddle forwards).
2. At the same time they should push firmly with their upwind foot, the effect of these two actions will be to cause the kayak to turn downwind.
3. If using their body and boat to counteract the effect of the wind is not enough, they can also use their paddle, either by extending the upwind side and paddling normally, or by using a keyhole stroke (half sweep from bow to centre, finished with a forward power stroke on the windward side) or maybe a sweep stroke on the windward side followed by a regular forwards stroke on the downwind side.

All 3 actions have the effect of counteracting the kayak's desire to turn upwind. Combining the body, boat and blade actions will have the greatest effect.

For those whose kayaks track downwind, life will not be so easy and to be honest without a skeg can be positively painful, with constant sweeps or keyhole strokes applied to the downwind side. In this instance, it might be prudent to follow a course whereby the affected kayak's trim is neutral allowing all to hold a single course en route for the shore. You will invariably land downwind of your intended target but with far less pain and greater ease. A quick paddle back up the coast will soon bring you to your original target.

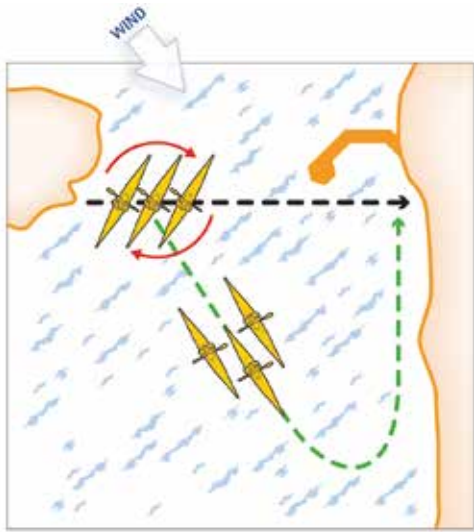


Fig. 5 Going with rather than fighting the wind.

As previously mentioned, the forward paddling skills need to be revisited with every new environment your students come into contact with. Most will adapt naturally, others may need a little coaching, even coaxing, as fear of the conditions prevents their bodies from paddling effectively.

CLOSE QUARTER HANDLING SKILLS

Close quarter handling amongst the rocks or during rescues requires a combination of manoeuvring skills and techniques, such as:

- Edging
- Power strokes
- Vertical turning strokes - such as the bow rudder and hanging draw.
- Horizontal turning strokes - such as low brace turns or stern rudders.

A close quarter handling session will involve being close to the rocks, and as students' skill level increases, close to the rocks in larger swell. Positioning yourself effectively with regards to coaching and rescuing students during the session is crucial for the success and safety of it (see effective leadership below). It is advised that helmets are used throughout the session and that the wind is gentle and offshore.

Ideal Teaching Location

Rock gardens, caves, arches and general rock hopping exploration of the coastline. You will need some sheer vertical sections of coast as well as some sloping

ones. Conditions need to be calm to start with, but a little swell further along on a more exposed section of coastline will facilitate really good progressions and skill development, as well as increase the student's boat handling confidence.

Skills You Need To Coach And Practise:

Revisit some of the vertical and horizontal turning and correction strokes, bow rudders, low brace turns, stern rudders, etc. Adapt them, to create such strokes as bow draws, stern draws, bow and stern pries, sculling draws, sculling pries, etc and put all into practice within the rock gardens.

Session Progression

The following exercises do follow a progression, getting harder as you work through them with the increasing demands of the environments used. Please note that these exercises are the foundation exercises for Rough Water Handling Skills and Incident Management sessions later.

► Tight Turning Exercises

You may have already revisited low brace turns, using a combination of edging, leaning and sweep strokes on the move in the earlier sessions where you used edging to assist turning. If so... great, if not take the time to look at them now. Due to the combination of strokes the low brace turn lends itself well to the whole-part-whole method of coaching.

Once mastered in the bay, vary the practice and move to a more restricted location, increasing the challenge of the stroke efficiency by using ever-harder environments - narrowing coves or indentations in the coastline are ideal. Repeat the same low brace turns in here. Remember keep the practice bilateral and consider when and how you are giving your feedback (see earlier chapters).

Again we need to vary the practice, this time remaining in the same environment but experimenting with other types of turn, stroke combination or adaptations. Try switching your coach-led style of session to one that is more student-led in nature. As an example, ask them to create 3 different types of turn using all the strokes in their collective repertoire. Really encourage ideas from other paddling disciplines. It's a terrific opportunity to give the group the chance to create a whole new range of strokes, adapting all their old favourites and naming new strokes they have concocted.

Once again step back and observe, feed in if asked, cut in if necessary, but let them have the space and time



Photo 8 *Turning in a tight cove*

to come up with their ideas. Once everyone has finished, have a member of each team demonstrate a turn, encourage the other team to identify the combination of strokes used and facilitate any discussions that ensue. Take care to highlight elements of the demo or discussion you consider important coaching points.

Journeying along the coastline, dodging in and out of small spaces, playing follow my leader and giving the students the opportunity to lead various sections is terrific fun and very engaging. The desire to explore takes over their minds allowing their bodies to get on and perform the necessary strokes (see Inner Game theory).



Photo 9 *Rock hopping*

Try progressing now from boat awareness to water awareness. Take your students to an indent that is subject to a little swell (beware of onshore breezes) and allow them plenty of time to practise timing their turns to coincide with the rise of the swell for optimum manoeuvrability.

As you paddle along the coastline look out for any other potential teaching opportunities. Such opportunities constantly occur. For example, consider the following: your students are just ahead of you exploring the coastline's nooks and crannies. As they do, it becomes apparent to you that a weakness in their manoeuvring skills or possibly a lack of awareness of

the risks associated with a particular feature they're exploring needs desperately to be addressed. Let's use the example of them paddling forwards into a cave.

You may wish to stop them and say it's better to go in backwards, but try to wait (unless they are in danger of course). Once they're outside again, build on the experience they have just had. Suggest they paddle in again, this time backwards. Afterwards, see if they consider that paddling in backwards has any advantages over paddling in forwards. If the answer you want doesn't come immediately, you could just tell them or better still take them to an appropriate venue such as a cave with surging swell running into it. (Remember testing conditions/low consequences. Do choose an appropriate amount of surging swell.) Here they can experience the advantages both kinaesthetically and visually for themselves.



Photo 10 *Paddling backwards into a cave means you can come out forwards... Useful if a wave is coming!*

Undoubtedly, whilst at the same venue, other necessary skills will become apparent, for example, holding position in swell, cognitive skills such as group management and communication. Address the cognitive skills by scenario role playing, demonstrating the need for a person sat outside watching for rogue waves, ready to rescue as one or two others explore inside. "Ah, management of rescues! Maybe now would be a good time to practise some of those incident management drills we learned earlier in the week?" Teaching opportunities will just keep throwing themselves at you. After a while, the hardest thing about your session will be deciding on what not to teach!

Anticipation of the 'What if' factor, especially when managing exploration through rock gardens makes up a large part of the cognitive skills needed by our trainee sea kayakers. All of these close quarter manoeuvring ideas and exercises help you to coach anticipation of the 'what if' and 'what to expect'.

► Paddle Dexterity Exercises

Being able to move your paddle around with ease and dexterity is invaluable when handling a sea kayak in close quarter conditions.

☛ Firstly, warm and wake up your clients' wrists. Have them sit static in their sea kayaks and place their paddle in a bow rudder position, then do it on the other side. Reach around and place the bow rudder towards the right stern of the kayak, followed by crossing to the left bow of the kayak... and so on. This will help limber up their bodies and minds and begin to speed up the reflexes with respect to general paddle dexterity.

☛ Next ask the students to draw a rectangle in the water by the side of their kayak with their paddle. To begin with let them experiment with the combination of strokes required (kinaesthetic learning). If any student doesn't understand, switch to a different style and either show them (addressing any visual learners) or talk them through the paddle sequence (addressing any auditory learners). Remember to work bilaterally, doing the exercise on both sides. Increase the challenge by asking the students to maintain the paddle under the surface of the water at all times.

☛ Vary the practice by changing from a rectangle to an oval, to a figure of eight and for any very able students, finding it really easy, have them try to etch out their names. Differentiation between abilities in the group is easily achieved with this exercise, as group members get to grips with one or other of the shapes.

Now give their wrists a well-earned break, by paddling to another venue that will allow you to do the next part of the exercise. Ideally you need to paddle a short distance to a vertical cliff or harbour wall. The aim of the next part of the exercise is to paddle



11

Photo 11 The exercise requires concentration.

along the cliff or wall using a combination of any strokes on one side only – the really hard bit is that their paddle must stay in the water.

☛ Have them come back the other way thus using the other side and completing the bilateral work.

Finish the exercise by switching off the mind again, and continuing the journeying, allowing your students to experiment with all sorts of weird and wonderful combinations of strokes as they continue through the rock gardens more skilfully.

► Swell Positioning Exercises (Riding The Bronco)

Swell moving up and down the face of a steep cliff is necessary for this exercise. Definitely steer clear of breaking swell on a sloping cliff. Point out to your students the hallmarks of breaking swell, white foam (due to the sideways moving water) compared to brown foam (dead plankton brought to the surface after a storm).



12

Photo 12 Riding the Bronco.

☛ Buddy up your clients and have them number themselves.

☛ Clients number 1 should position themselves between a wide cleft in the rocks. Ask them to identify a mark on the walls either side of them and explain that the surging water will try to move them back and forth, but that they are to remain central between these two markers, using a combination of forwards and reverse strokes. Leave them in there for a short while with their buddy, client number 2 encouraging them to 'ride the bucking bronco'.

☛ After a time swap over; second time around suggest they go as deep as they dare into the cleft. Don't allow them to go so deep that any surge in the swell will break on them and push them to the back of the cleft - it won't make for the easiest of rescues and all their hard-earned confidence will be dashed.



13

Photo 13 Riding a wave through a gap in the rocks.

You may consider, after a quick risk assessment of the venue and water, that helmets are necessary for this exercise.

► Timing Exercises Through The Rocks

Small amounts of swell will help focus people's attention on timing their ride through any gaps in the rocks. Too much swell and anxiety will override any learning opportunities so choose your rock hops carefully. Avoid areas where any surge in the swell will push your client onto other rocks rather than into an open space and only allow one student through at a time. Ensure all are wearing helmets. To begin with signal the correct time for a student to come through the gap.

Afterwards have your students determine when to go through the gap themselves and finally have them determine when their buddy goes through. To further develop your client's water awareness and build their confidence, move to narrower gaps, or areas of increased swell or complexity.

Exercises of a similar ilk are easy to come up with. Any rock garden or area creating vertical or horizontal movement of water will provide you with ideal teaching opportunities and one really cannot do enough of such water awareness and boat handling exercises. These simple exercises form the foundations of your students' boat handling skills in the big water found with overfalls and tidal races and are the initial warm-up exercises to an introduction to overfall surfing.

The exercise also develops self-awareness on the moving water, encouraging them to look around and stay observant whilst they are being moved and tossed around by the water. Additionally, awareness of themselves responding to the water, awareness of what the water is doing around them and to them, anticipation of what it might do in a few moments, as well as developing patience to sit and wait for the right moment to make their move, and anticipation of what it will do around similar features elsewhere are all learned during these sessions.

Rock gardens are great for exploring and whether you purposely go into rock gardens to facilitate any of the above learning opportunities or just go in to explore, be assured some student-led learning will be taking place all the time with every stroke. So when there is an opportunity to explore some rocks, caves or arches, take it.

SKILLS FOR LAUNCHING AND LANDINGS

Below is a list of typical launching and landing sites that our sea kayakers will have to deal with at one time or another in their paddling careers. Each requires a variety of skills ranging from surfing and swimming skills right through to skills better suited to a gymnast. The best way to teach these skills is to go out and experience all sorts of launchings and landings in a safe and constructive manner. Remember, testing conditions, low consequences. Here are some launching and landing sites used by sea kayakers:

- Floating pontoons
- Slipway
- Shallow sheltered beach
- Shallow exposed beach
- Steep beach
- Rocky beach
- Sloping rock shelves
- Steep rock ledge (or quay at low tide)

There are many good sea kayaking texts outlining suggestions on the physical techniques you could employ for each of the above launches and landings. Have a good look through them, try them out and work hard at identifying the key elements you need to teach your students.

When first coaching anything but the easiest of these landing or launches on the water, choose windless days. A small amount of ground swell is OK, even useful, but ensure there is an area of calmer water available close by to shelter from the full force of the wind and waves and facilitate your discussions before and after each launch or landing. This is a good habit for your students to get in to, as they will need to discuss similar landing strategies before any serious landing with their own peers.

✓ Firstly, demonstrate the landing (or launch) with you managing it, run through the whole thing with no interruption or discussion. Like the concept of the first demo being silent to show the flow of the whole thing from start to finish in real time, this is in effect your 'silent demo', with any talking being that which is only necessary to the management of the landing.

✓ Once landed, use questioning to draw from the group any key points, with specific reference to which physical skills were involved, what risk assessments they felt you made (see SAFE later) and lastly what group management/leadership strategies they felt you employed (see CLAP later).

Ensure they understand there is no single solution to any one landing or launch and that the variables of weather, sea state, group and individual ability and condition, all make it impossible to allow for a single solution. Insight into your thinking in such conditions is really helpful to your students' learning. Even little things like why you choose a specific venue to discuss your landing, prior to the landing,



Photo 14 Talking through a landing before doing it.

will help your trainee sea kayakers make their own assessments later.

Now that you have landed, you will soon need to demo a launch and repeat the above before you can work through a group-led landing.

Variety of practice will occur with every new landing or launch you try. Be aware that if wet, especially their heads, the students will get cold fast and their window for learning will drop quickly. Any really wet landing or launches should be left to last and any that require a person in the water would best be done by someone with a dry-suit. Helmets are essential during these exercises. Finally, with every new landing or launch, more and more of the decision making should be theirs, moving away from your earlier coach-led session and into a far greater student-led scenario. Always bear in mind testing conditions/low consequence when choosing a site.

Due to the numerous variables caused by the sea environment, rarely will there be one correct way to approach a specific landing or launching. The key principle to put across is to approach all landings and launches with safety in mind and ultimately, if it's not safe don't land. Stay out and find a better spot.



Photo 15 Group undertake landing while coach observes.

ROUGH WATER HANDLING SKILLS

Once again whole-part-whole teaching lends itself well to rough water training. Its important that the student experiences the whole first, e.g. being led through an overfall as part of a journey with no intention to go back and play, not yet anyway! If you have students who have the skills from other disciplines to play then sure, their first experience of an overfall can be one of playing almost immediately. However for those with little or no big volume moving water experience a more progressive approach is needed. An opportunity to see a race running from the top of a cliff and pointing out all of the water features visible below is very useful, especially if the weather that day prevents you getting anywhere near it.

Arriving at an overfall or tidal race when it's at its biggest gives a student insight into what the feature actually is but is not conducive to learning. Ideally you want to be there as it builds. So our first rough water handling session may involve a water awareness revision session using more challenging conditions/environments for the general manoeuvring skill exercises listed earlier, followed by a run or two through the race. It could be that you are fortunate enough to teach in an area where races occur on the flood and ebb, in



Photo 16 Dealing with rough seas.

which case you can stop for lunch after this first session and then after lunch as the race builds in the other direction, start your second rough water handling session. The tidal plans you made for the day are crucial if this level of learning opportunity is to be gained. Some days the tide will not allow for this and the second session may need to be run at another time.

The second session requires you being there as the overfall develops. At what point during the development of the race you time your arrival depends on the confidence and ability levels of your clients. For less able or confident clients arrive early, more able or confident arrive later.



Photo 17 Anatomy of a tide race/overfall - please feel free to photocopy and use this for your students.

- A Start of the overfall, more of a tidal race at A, as the water is squeezed vertically sideways around the headland.
- B The smooth run in to the main section of overfall.
- C The front wave of the overfall. As the flow of water is forced up over the shallower ground it breaks on the surface.
- D The wave train.
- E,F Dissipating wave train, that in this instance runs parallel to the coast, making it a safe overfall to train intermediate paddlers. Many other overfalls can run up to 2kms or more offshore. When using such an overfall it is important to work with small groups who are able to at least attempt to roll and are able to rescue one another quickly and confidently, whilst being towed perpendicular to the flow, back towards the coast.
- G Strong eddy, nearest the headland.
- H Weaker eddies further away from the headland.

►First Overfall Session

Begin your session with some ferry glides, breaking in and out of the race, exercises paddling up to the front of the race and even into the area of calm water beyond, whilst the race is still weak, building confidence, boat handling skills and water awareness.

Next, buddy the students up and create circuits for the students to follow. Initially, give each student a target or goal, afterwards let them choose their own targets within the circuit and later encourage buddies to set suitable goals for one another. This will allow the student to begin to identify suitable circuits and thus water features for others, beginning to encourage them as leaders in their own right, responsible for their friend.

This sort of strategy again encourages awareness, this time group awareness, in determining the levels of flow their buddy is comfortable in, and what individual needs their buddy has, for instance feeling they ought to follow their buddy around the circuit to provide psychological support. Don't force these things to happen, just facilitate the opportunity for them to happen. As a coach it is so wonderful to step further and further back, seeing your sea kayakers grow in independence and begin to look out for one another. At this stage the less talking you do the more learning they experience and the better a coach you are.

Do keep your eye on the speed of the race, remember it's building all the time and you want your students confident with their use of edge, their ability to look around for eddies/calm water, each other, before it builds too much. There will come a point when the teaching stops and management of the playing (and rescues) begins – the learning won't stop though, it will continue whatever, you just need to make sure it's positive learning they are experiencing and not negative.

Finally, once it has built to a level where the waves are surfable, have them paddle to the front of the overfall again. By this stage only those with arms of Popeye, or those who have mastered surfing will be able to move up the overfall.

Wait a while and then call everyone back into the eddy. They should ferry glide back to you.

Regroup the buddies according to how well they are doing; put more able with less able. Set them off again with the goal of remaining together at all times.

This has 3 effects:

- Firstly, for you – the buddy pairs stick together making management of the session easier for you.
- Secondly, for the more able buddy – he or she will have to move up and down the overfall to stay with their buddy. They will have to look over their shoulder for them, staying aware of them at all times, they will encourage and 'coach' the less able student thus increasing their own knowledge of the physical skills they are using to surf.
- Finally, for the less able buddy – he or she does not feel alone out there and thus their anxiety is reduced (self 1) allowing their muscles to relax and the body (self 2) to concentrate on surfing rather than being scared (Inner Game).

With all this collaborative coaching going on you can continue monitoring people's progress, feeding in where necessary, rescuing when required and when the first rescue is required, take advantage of yet another great teaching opportunity. Whistle everyone down to you. As you perform the rescue, talk the students through the other factors you are considering whilst you're rescuing, factors other than the rescue itself, e.g., observation of location within the race, observation of other group members, search for slack water, management of any tows required, etc. I teach people to tow and do flat water rescues on day one of any course, even if it's 'intro sea kayak'. Having people familiar with capsizing and towing, seeing it as a fundamental part of sea kayaking is important for them and for me (see Rescuing Others below).

By the end of your rough water handling session, people will have enough skill and confidence to turn around and play, the next time you go through an overfall.

RESCUING OTHERS

This is a particularly useful session to run at the start of any 2 day or 5 day course. Rescue skills save lives. Paddling skill will prevent rescues from being needed, but these take time to develop. So as a coach and guide I have thanked my lucky stars I've covered basic rescue techniques and towing early, as time after time I have needed client help in the swift management of a situation, even if all they know is how to be rescued on the sea.

Ideal Teaching Location

Session 1 - in warm water or in a pool (if possible). If a pool is not available, calm sheltered water.

Session 2 - revision in calm water, followed by rougher water as appropriate, e.g. a small tidal race or flow or increased sea state (only ever use onshore wind conditions for rescue work – testing conditions, low consequences).

Skills You Need To Coach And Practise

To learn a variety of rescues and tows (physical skills) and manage an incident (cognitive skills) involving a selection of appropriate rescue and towing techniques are the key points for this session.

Session Progressions

► Session 1 – Rescues

In the pool revisit or teach safe capsized drills, eskimo rescues. The paddle presentation eskimo rescue is particularly useful on the sea, also look at turning an upturned kayak from another kayak and finally revisit or teach a deep water rescue and casualty re-entry.

Providing your students with a basic model from which to adapt other techniques for use with different crafts is very useful. The X rescue is recognised as a good

basic model and within sea kayaking has been modified to the TX for use with sea kayaks that have bulkheads. (If a boat has no bulkheads a full X rescue will be necessary.) With respect to re-entering the kayak with assistance, a side-on re-entry is easy to execute and is less prone to causing injury to the person in choppy water compared to coming up between the two kayaks.

Experiential learning is not the most appropriate teaching method for this session. A lot of information needs to be put across in a very short space of time. 'IDEAS', with a very big 'A' is perfect. Learning all the different rescues is very engaging and can be a lot of fun with the opportunities for mini-races and games in a warm pool. Furthermore, operating in buddy pairs, even 3's is a necessity for the rescues to work and also facilitates plenty of opportunity for lots of collaborative teaching and all its benefits.

► Session 2 – Revision Plus Towing

Once the techniques have been mastered in a nice warm environment head outside. It would be wise in



KEY POINT – TESTING CONDITIONS / LOW CONSEQUENCES

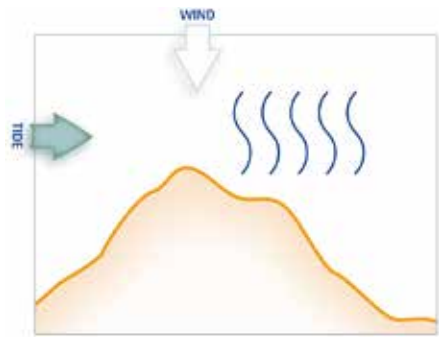
Your choice of tidal race is paramount, not just to your students' learning but also their safety and thus your group control. Remember you are looking for:

Testing Conditions/Low Consequences

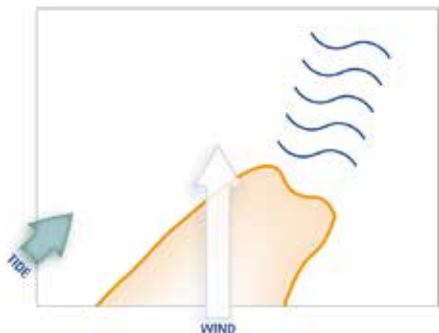
Consider these two scenarios:

- Consider the direction the tidal stream flows – does it go along shore or out to sea? If your group is at the level where they can quickly rescue their buddies then (b) is fine (given the weather conditions are favourable too), otherwise consider using (a).
- Also consider the wind strength and direction – will it flatten the waves or increase them?
- Consider whether it is springs or neaps – how big do your clients need the waves to be?

You may not get a choice and can only use what there is in certain weather and tidal conditions.



a) Testing Conditions/Low Consequences



b) Testing Conditions/High Consequences!



Photo 18 Anchored tow. To prevent him being blown onto the rocks the rescuer is towed off as he performs the rescue.

cold-water areas to do other drier sessions, a strokes session for example, followed by the towing session. Leave yourself an hour at the end to try each rescue learned in the pool.

The towing session lends itself to some careful use of guided discovery. There are many different methods of towing. Ultimately, your sea kayakers need to affect an emergency tow over a short distance, a close quarter contact tow and a long distance tow. Key coaching points must include emphasising the need for releasable systems, how and when to release, an ability to tow a buddy and be towed safely, the value of rafted tows and anchored tows and the advantages and disadvantages of the various towing techniques.



Photo 19 Rafted tow. The person being towed is supported by another and the pair of them are towed.

Have a variety of lines available for use and encourage people to try different systems. Introduce them to waist, boat and contact towing systems and facilitate a variety of simple scenarios that allow for their use. Discuss issues in feedback sessions after the tow.

Begin to make the scenarios involve more people. More people means more management and so the group begin to learn about incident management, communication, etc.

Finally reintroduce the earlier rescue session. Allow the group to try each rescue in turn, allow them only one or two goes.

They must not get so cold that their concentration goes before you have had the chance to finish your session. If rescue attempts continue to fail suggest they wait until the very end before trying again and/or practise later in the pool. Once they have tried all the rescues learned earlier, set them a new scenario involving a multiple rescue and tow to finish off the day.

The analysis of this final scenario may be best left until everyone is back in the warm again.

► Session 3 - Practice In Rough Conditions

The next session involves moving to rougher conditions, a sea state of Force 2-3 (onshore) would be ample for this session. A consolidation session practising these skills for real occurs by default on any rough water handling day. Throughout the rest of the course rescue opportunities between buddies will arise naturally and build perfectly on the foundations you have laid.

Before venturing into rougher water and looking more at the application of the various rescues and tows through the incident management of various scenarios you will be setting, take time to have a brief theory session on Risk Assessment (see Risk Assessment and Incident Management skills section below.)



INCIDENT MANAGEMENT SESSION

On the sea begin with simple scenarios requiring simple rescues and tows and progress on to ever-harder ones. (The following progression is based on incident management sessions run by Aled Williams of Rock Pool Kayaks). Students will begin in buddy pairs and progress through a series of typical incidents, which progressively get harder and require more group members to affect a rescue. Set each

scene and ask the group to consider each of the questions below before rescuing the casualty (the casualty should wait in their kayak until everyone is ready to begin). Once each group has a plan ask the casualty to hop in, which signals the start of the rescue.

Questions that should be asked as each scenario unfolds:



‘Can I rescue in situ without damage to myself?’

Typical incidents might include: Capsizes in deep water, where there are no rocks, no overfalls or tidal races.

- Yes – should warrant an X rescue (or assisted X rescue).
- No – and the students need to ask a new question.



‘Do I need to relocate?’

Typical incident might include: Rocks e.g. a narrow cleft, no swell, no or light offshore winds.

- Yes – A contact tow or bow/stern carry or tow to a ‘safe’ area then X rescue (or assisted X rescue)
- Yes – But I can’t manage it by myself!



‘Do I need help to relocate?’

Typical example incident includes: Overfalls, tidal races, rocks and/or onshore winds.

- Yes – An anchored bow or stern contact tow/carry, then an X rescue (or assisted X rescue)
- Yes – but could still hurt myself getting into position to rescue!



INCIDENT MANAGEMENT SESSION – CONTINUED



‘Do I need help getting into new location?’

Typical examples include: Hideous shelving rocks, onshore winds and swell. Set this one up with a lot of care. If you are remotely unsure that you can pull back the rescue if all begins to go wrong, just discuss this scenario. (I’m often the casualty for this one, so that if it comes to it I can re-enter my kayak and get myself out.)

- Yes – attach a tow line before you go in, then use towed bow or stern contact tow followed by an X rescue.
- Yes – but still too big and scary!



‘SHOULD I BE HERE?’

At the end of each scenario discuss the effectiveness and risk management of the rescue. If necessary, repeat it. Each new scenario should be exercised with

different members of the group taking on different roles, rescuer, casualty, communicator and leader’s eyes, tower(s), others.

ROLLING AND SELF-RESCUE

It is not often that a sea kayaker will need to roll, however the ability to roll or at least perform a self-rescue would be the difference between life and death if a situation required such measures.

There are many good texts on learning to roll, especially in some of the playboat books, and on performing self-rescues in a sea kayak. Become familiar with a variety of different rolls and self-rescues. Not every student will be able to perform the same type of roll or rescue and certain conditions, injuries or events may preclude a person from rolling altogether and necessitate another form of self-rescue. When coaching a rolling and self-rescue session, suggest everyone wears a dry suit. This is not always possible, but very useful from a training point of view. If

they are only in wet suits or the temperature is not conducive, limit the amount of getting wet everyone has to do and take advantage of any local swimming pools. If dry suit or warm seas are available then this session is a lot of fun.



Working on the whole-part-whole and the silent demo principles, begin the session by demonstrating all the self-rescues you want them to try such as emptying their kayaks and climbing in over the stern, paddle float rescue, re-entry and paddle float roll, half roll or full roll. This shows the flow and timing of each technique and provides everyone with an overview of the self-rescues available to them as sea kayakers. Later, more demos will be needed in order to coach each individual rescue.



21a



21b



21c

Photo 21a Emptying the kayak

Photo 21b Crawling up the back deck

Photo 21c Getting into the cockpit. A good sense of balance and a fairly stable kayak is required for this particular technique to succeed. There are others.



22

Photo 22 Hopping out, keeping one's head dry

Next, buddy up your students and ask the students to take it in turns jumping in and out of their kayaks, have them empty their kayaks, scramble up over the backs to start with. Their buddies may assist by gently steadying the kayaks – set the challenge of aiming for no help from the buddy.

Stop the fun and gather everyone around to observe a second demonstration of the next self-rescue, if necessary. Firstly silent, then again focusing people's attention on key points that will help them succeed, e.g. maintaining a low centre of gravity, keeping the kayak flat. Stress not every method suits everyone's body type and that they might find variations on the same theme work better for them.

Send them away again to practise further and experiment with what works best for them.

Work your way through each of the self-rescues in this way, including the rolling. When getting them to practise rolling have them work in buddy pairs, a rolling buddy and a rescuing buddy.

► Eskimo Rescues

Briefly revisit Eskimo rescues if necessary, they will need to do a lot of these during the next session. Ultimately have the rescuing buddy position themselves in such a way that they Eskimo rescue their friend on the side they anticipated them rolling up on.

Even if the roll fails, an Eskimo rescue on this side reinforces the correct messages to the brain about the rolling sequence. Taking students to an area with some tidal flow next helps them to consolidate the timing of the roll and helps them feel for that all-important water pressure on the blade.

Demonstrate the roll focusing the group's attention on your front blade and your head.



23

Photo 23 Eskimo rescue

🟡 Do a second demo, this time demonstrating the job of the rescuing buddy during the practise. You will need a volunteer roller (ask them to try a roll, fail, bang on their kayak and await Eskimo rescue from you). Encourage everyone to look at you, the rescuer, and not the roller. Specifically highlight your position in relation to the roller.

► Rolling

You need to train them to the stage where they are aware of water pressure on the blade. Feeling that water pressure signifies the moment to pull/brace on the pressure and initiate their hip flick. It is the 'command word' or rather sensation (i.e., intrinsic feedback through one's kinaesthesia) that triggers the roll.

Making your students aware of that pressure to pull against, coupled with keeping their head down on the way up will benefit their roll no end. Some sort of mantra, (I use 'This side over to the other side' as a mantra for 'C to C' rolls) or the deliberate focusing of one's mind on feeling for that pressure spot to trigger the roll by the body (self 2) also helps to block out any anxiety rising in the mind (self 1) from being upside down. This is another example of using the principles of the inner game.

At the beginning of your session your students may have known they couldn't roll too well - they were consciously incompetent. The above progression moves the students from being consciously incompetent to consciously competent to varying degrees, but the final aim is to make them unconsciously competent - responding with reflex-like reactions to being upside down.

Reflex reactions do not come from the brain, but the spine; the information required would take far too long if it had to come from the brain. We need to make our sea kayaker's roll a reflex and as such we need to get them into water where capsize opportunities are plentiful. The surf zone, overfalls and tide races that form big waves are perfect for such practice, creating depth to their understanding and permanently writing the muscle memory for the reflexes.

Much of the sea we paddle on does not involve fast flowing tidal streams and so ultimately we must train our sea kayakers to roll without the assistance of water flow. Their final progression therefore must be to practise their rolling in a variety of non-tidal conditions, for example, in short chop, in clapotis, in long swell, in rough seas generated by the wind only. However remember whichever location you choose, ensure testing conditions but low consequences; risk assess every venue you choose.



24

Photo 24 Long boat surfing, a great way to sort out your rolling reactions.

► COACHING COGNITIVE SKILLS

Coaching cognitive skills requires you to bring to a conscious level all those seamanship decisions made by you at an unconscious level every time you go out on the sea. Look at the following list of cognitive skills needed by your sea kayakers. Reflect for a moment on what you think about when considering these items whilst you are out paddling.

Consider:

- 🟡 Group awareness
- 🟡 Wind and water awareness
- 🟡 Planning skills
- 🟡 Navigation skills
- 🟡 Leadership skills
- 🟡 Risk assessing skills and incident management

Raising awareness in your students of how and when you are applying these cognitive skills to your paddling, leading and coaching, can be very tricky. The balance between talk and activity is very fine and there is a tendency to talk far too much and not allow enough time for the students to experience conditions in which the awareness can be developed.

Nevertheless, cognitive skills do require quiet time off the water to assimilate theory with practise. As such all the above require an introductory classroom session, followed by a practical, and then another classroom or dry land review session, consolidated with more practical work in a variety of conditions (see flow chart at start of the chapter for other conditions).

Ultimately if your students are still unsure of what to look for or be aware of after your training sessions,

encourage them to look for change or be aware of changes in conditions, people, etc.

GROUP AWARENESS

Making your students work, almost all of the time, in buddies on the sea encourages awareness of one another more than any other teaching method. Furthermore, experience and positive reviewing of the consequences of any poor group awareness occurring during the day is invaluable. The rescue work and especially the incident management sessions begin to encourage awareness of a much larger body of people as well as awareness of how the weather and water are affecting the rescue. Reinforcing any good group awareness behaviour after scenarios are dealt with also forms part of the acquisition of this skill. The section on Leadership Skills – (CLAP) is as important for friends paddling as peers, as it is for those training to lead, guide or coach.

WIND AND WATER AWARENESS

Being able to react to the wind and water takes physical skill, but being able to read the water ahead or wind above and anticipate what the effect will be doing around the corner, is a cognitive skill primarily learned from experiencing the sea physically. However, cognitively being able to understand why the water does what it does, helps them to know when it is necessary for them to avoid conditions beyond their capabilities.

Many texts have excellent sections describing the effects of wind and water. Study these and choose those that will help you to explain in the classroom:

- How moving water is affected by rocks, the seabed and other topographical features.
- How the tide works.
- How the weather affects the sea state.
- How the wind is affected by topography.

Ideal Teaching Locale

Classroom for planning, followed by complicated piece of tidal or wind affected water.

Skills You Need To Identify, Coach And Practise

Finding out what sea conditions are expected (from your tide table, weather forecast, tidal diamonds, atlases, etc); anticipating the effect of these conditions on the stretch of coast to be paddled (using maps and charts to see what topographical features are in the area).

Session Progressions

A wind and water awareness session works well once your students have seen water features and experienced them first hand in the close quarter manoeuvring session.

Begin by nurturing the group's awareness of the effects of wind and water by introducing it into their planning session (i.e. as part of their risk assessment of what to expect on the water for the day - see Planning and Risk Assessing sessions below). From their own tidal timing matrix and from weather and swell forecasts they will be able to draw a picture of what the sea will be doing at any time during the day.

As the day unfolds, and providing there have been no delays affecting your student's timing, they will be able to see the anticipated water and wind features just as they expected from their planning. As always review the day's events in the warmth of a minibus or classroom. Other trips your students make whilst with you should be planned by them, and include an assessment of how the wind and tide will affect the sea that day. Do make your own plans, so should things not work out as they expect, you have your notes to work out why. If the reasons why are not noticeable immediately, don't bluff, but work it out later, even at home and give the students the answer the next day.

Practical coaching of wind and water awareness can occur in many of the sessions above. However, a journey forming part of the planning skills sessions is best.

Working out tactics for:

- ✓ Going against wind and tide using eddies, staying under cliffs.
- ✓ Going against the tide around headlands.
- ✓ Going across tidal streams or wind funnelled areas.
- ✓ Going with a following or beam sea.

All these and others can be anticipated, planned for, and then experienced on the trip.

PLANNING SKILLS

There are many sea kayaking and yachting texts on passage planning that will supply you with lots of excellent teaching tools, pictures, diagrams and ideas for use when teaching your students to plan their day. The Royal Yachting Association also has many texts on and tools for specifically teaching navigation. Any good chandlery will have a selection of publications for you to buy. If you don't understand any of the terms used here, refer to those publications.

Identify the elements you use in your own journey planning and deliver only those that are necessary for your client's present needs. Ensure you pitch your planning sessions at an appropriate level. There are 2 distinct levels: Introductory planning for linear trips and more advanced planning involving tidal open crossings. At any level the 'What if' factor(s) should always be part of the plan. Most people will need to plan and do several trips before moving up to the next level of planning.

► Introduction To Planning Linear (Coastal) Trips

Ideal Teaching Locale

The classroom for the planning, the water to implement the plan.

Skills You Need To Identify, Coach And Practise

You need to be able to:

- Read charts, OS maps, pilots, tide tables, weather forecasts.
- Use a compass, plotter, dividers, sliding rule (not essential), other available navigation tools.
- Make risk assessments, predict conditions.
- *Create flexibility within the plan.*

Session Progressions

Firstly, spend time introducing the students to the various pilots, charts, forecasts and tide tables they need to become familiar with. Demonstrate how the information is gained and interpreted from each, and set your students exercises to find relevant pieces of information.

Sourcing information from:

- Maps and Charts
- Tide Tables
- Pilots
- Tidal Atlases
- Almanacs
- Weather and Swell Forecasts

Reading charts and maps:

- Symbols
- Features

- Latitude and Longitude (Charts)
- Grid references (Maps)

Making estimations of:

- Direction
- Distance
- Time
- Tide, Weather, Swell and Topographical effects

Secondly, have your students brainstorm what information they consider important in making their plans. Encourage them collectively to come up with a proforma of questions to use when planning. This will invariably be a guided discovery session by you as there are key pieces of information that they would not necessarily consider necessary. The way I have my students plan is the same as that outlined at the beginning of the chapter. I can't stress enough that it is only one way of planning, especially my tidal timing matrix. There are lots of ways of passage planning and lots of kayaking and yachting publications that give good step-by-step templates, so find one that you like, but above all one that is simple for you to teach to your students.



Photo 25 *The necessary items for the planning exercise*

Thirdly, work through a simple linear route with your students. Ensure you have enough copies of the relevant information for each student. Everyone should have a coloured copy of the section of the chart and the OS map required together with a pencil, ruler and eraser.

Next some homework. Ask each student to plan, on their own, tomorrow's linear trip. This 'homework' will allow them time and space to revise all that you have taught in the classroom. This time spent alone to think and work through the theory is very important, especially for those not used to maths or more cognitive work.

Hour from	Hour to	HW +/-	Tidal Diamond D		Tidal Diamond E		Way Points	Notes
			Direction	Rate	Direction	Rate	Tick off features	
0919	1019	-5						
1019	1119	-4						
1119	1219	-3						
1219	1319	-2						
1319	1419	-1						
1419	1519	HW						
1519	1619	+1						
1619	1719	+2						
1719	1819	+3						

Fig. 6 Tidal Timing Matrix

In the morning, as a class, review their plans and ensure that the students are all saying the same thing and if not, correct where necessary. Have them pop their plans into a waterproof case ready for use later. Throughout the journey refer back to the student plans and work through any anomalies with them should they occur.

Finally, encourage your students to plan all the paddles for the remaining days of their course. Continue to do your own plans so anomalies can be ironed out and so you are still prepared for what the day's sea is likely to bring.

► Planning Open Crossings

Ideal Teaching Locale

The classroom for the planning, tidal section of open water, involving a crossing of sorts to implement the plan.

Skills You Need To Identify, Coach And Practise

As above plus understanding the use of tidal diamonds or tidal atlas to construct vector diagram.

Session Progressions

This theory session should not be done before your students have physically experienced the effect of the tide.

Firstly, review how the tide affects their progress when paddling with the tide, against it and whilst crossing it. Refer them back to their earlier practical session on water awareness. Remind your students how they used transits to cross a particular piece of tidal flow or current.

Through questioning technique, draw from them the following information:

- How did they know what ferry glide angle to set off on? (Answer - transit)

Did they have to change that angle at all as they crossed the tidal flow in order to maintain the transit? (Answer - yes)

What made them have to change their angle? (Answer - The current changing rate and direction as we crossed from one side to the other.)

Next ask:

How would they know what ferry glide angle to use as they set off to reach the other side, with no transits to help, i.e. it is too foggy or the other side is too far away to see transits. (Answer - a vector diagram).

Again many publications give excellent step-by-step accounts of creating a vector diagram; choose one that is clear and concise and that you consider you can teach your students effectively.

For me it is important that the method I use can be built into what I have already taught them. For example my tidal timing matrix is expanded thus to include tidal diamond information that I need to draw on my vector diagram.

As with coaching linear trip planning, go through a worked example together and then provide homework once more for the following day's trip.

One very important factor to note when teaching planning for crossings is that vector diagrams are hard to do unless your crossing point happens to coincide with tidal information given on a chart or tidal atlas. You can use information from a pilot book and estimate the flow using the 'Rule of Thirds' though the resulting information is less accurate than that provided by a tidal diamond. In fact vector diagrams are more often than not actually not necessary.

For example, crossing with an equal amount of time either side of High or Low Water will enable you to

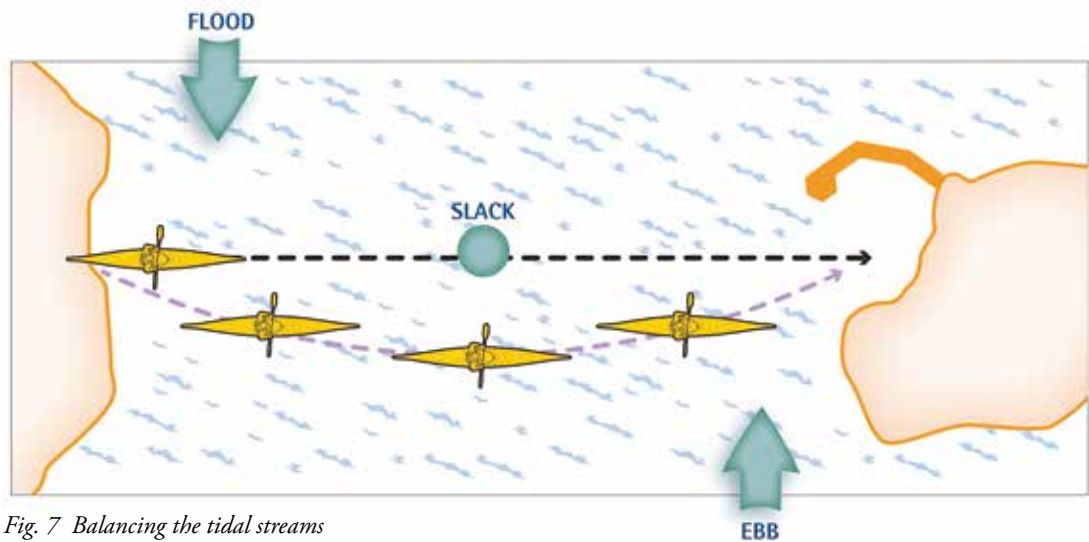


Fig. 7 Balancing the tidal streams

cross directly from A to B, if the tidal stream is evenly balanced either side of High or Low Water (Fig. 8).

A crossing that begins a long way uptide, requiring a gentle ferry glide out until at 90° with the desired island for example, followed by literally ‘drifting’ onto the island, works very well and makes for an exceptionally comfortable paddle (Fig. 9).

Next day, head out and do the trip you set for homework. Make sure the weather and conditions are appropriate before you give them the planning to do, otherwise the potential benefit is lost, if plans cannot be practically tested. As and when anomalies arise work through them, using your own plans.

Do vary their practice in planning crossings. Vector diagrams are not always practical or possible and more often than not ‘crossing equi-time either side of HW

or LW’ or ‘drifting onto an island’ will be far more appropriate, so do ensure that other trips during a course employ other such strategies.

Finally, the first open crossing day should be a dedicated planning and deck-top navigation day and should not involve leadership or incident management. A dedicated leadership day, however, should definitely involve planning and navigation as part of that day, where any planning or navigation anomalies are dealt with by the students themselves. Such a session should form the final teaching progression/the culmination for this planning module.

► Deck Top Navigation Skills

Many of your sea kayakers’ navigation skills will be used when planning their trips. Nevertheless simple deck top navigation skills will also be required whilst



Fig. 8 Drifting onto your target

paddling. A day deck top navigation session on the water should follow an introductory planning session. The two could be designed to form a complete day dedicated to planning and navigation.

Ideal Teaching Locale

Initial session in the classroom, with a follow-up practical session involving some tidal movement or wind funnelled area and a very short crossing of the tide or wind.

Skills You Need To Identify, Coach And Practise

Simple deck-top navigation skills as listed below.

Session Progressions

Begin in the classroom following the introductory planning session outlined above. Take the plans with you on the sea and ensure that every student has a copy of the chart and OS map, a chinagraph pencil on elastic, a compass on some string (to prevent loss, but more importantly to provide a measuring tool on the water), a watch.

Your practical session should include:

- Isolating the various navigation strategies
 - a. Timing
 - b. Hand-railing the coastline
 - c. Simple fixes
 - d. Transits
 - e. Following a bearing
 - f. Using a transit and bearing fix
 - g. Resections
 - h. Maintaining awareness of position during an incident.
- Demonstrating and practising these skills in isolation.
- Applying the learned navigational skills to a variety of situations. (Do this during other sessions, e.g. wind and water awareness journey, rough water handling and incident management days.)

Many of your students may already have a range of land or yachting navigational skills so try to build on what they already know, shaping that knowledge and adapting it for use in a sea kayak. Keep it simple and follow a logical progression.

The example session below looks at a few of the navigation skills above, but all can be taught in a similar manner.

Firstly, on the beach prior to getting on, split the group into smaller groups of 3. Buddy groups will encourage further collaborative teaching, freeing you up to give extra tuition as needed and your students more independence. The first exercise revises the fundamentals: Position given by lat and long and grid references, timing, hand-railing and simple fixes. This will set the base line from which references can be built upon later and allows you to see what skills your students do have compared to what skills they still need to learn.

Look at the section of map overleaf, circled are some typical exercises for students to do during a deck top navigation session:

✓ Exercise 1 (A) - 'What's my location?'

Before getting on the water, ask each student to give you the grid reference of their current location on their OS maps. Then ask them to give you the lat and long of the same position on their charts. Next ask them to take it in turns to give one another the lat and long of a feature the other must identify.

✓ Exercise 2 (A to B) - How fast do I paddle?

For this exercise the students would ideally set themselves a distance of 1nm and time how long it will take to paddle. The area available to them above, which is unaffected by the tide, is quite small and your students would have to choose a distance over a fraction of a nm and multiply it up in order to work out how fast they had paddled.

✓ Exercise 3 (B-C) - Find the feature on the map.

Once the average speed has been worked out, ask one of the buddies to pick a point (giving lat and long rather than pointing to it) for their buddies to paddle to. The two buddies should work out how to get there, its distance and suggest how long it will take. The two should paddle to the point whilst the first paddles behind. Once on arrival at the point the first buddy should feedback to the other the level of their success. Each buddy should take it in turns to pick a point.

✓ Exercise 4 (C-D) - Transits

Explain what a transit is and demonstrate the use of one to the group by identifying a transit that everyone sets off for 'en masse'. Next have the students take it in turns to guess the transit their buddy leader is using.

✓ Exercise 5 (D-E) - Following a bearing (with or against the flow only)

Take a break and land. Introduce the compass; explain what it is used for, describe what features it has, and explain how it works. Have each student try and take a bearing from the chart (or map). Help anyone who is having difficulties or needs a little extra tuition, regroup the students if necessary so more able can assist less able, etc. Ask the buddies to work out a simple circuit between them to 3 points up and/or down tide of them. Once they have worked out the 3 bearings required they can set off. If you make the 3rd point a set point on the chart (e.g. Point E) all the teams will arrive back at the same point ready for the last exercise. Check no one is working on points across the tidal flow.

✓ Exercise 6 (A to F) - Use a compass bearing (across the flow)

Back at Point A have the buddy teams take a bearing that goes directly across the tidal flow. Ask what they anticipate will happen. Insist they must paddle on the bearing at all times and not switch to transits, and that they must stay together. Set off. Once on the far side, invariably with the buddy groups strung out, bring those furthest downstream and highest upstream to those in the centre. Ask them to locate this position they were in and mark it and the time, on their charts for use later.

✓ Exercise 7 - Lastly have them cross to another point across the flow using any method they wish,

e.g. straight across on a guessed ferry glide, straight across on a transit, up the eddy and across, drifting down, etc. Exercise 6 and 7 form the ground-work for methods of planning open crossings, but there is no need to mention that at this stage.

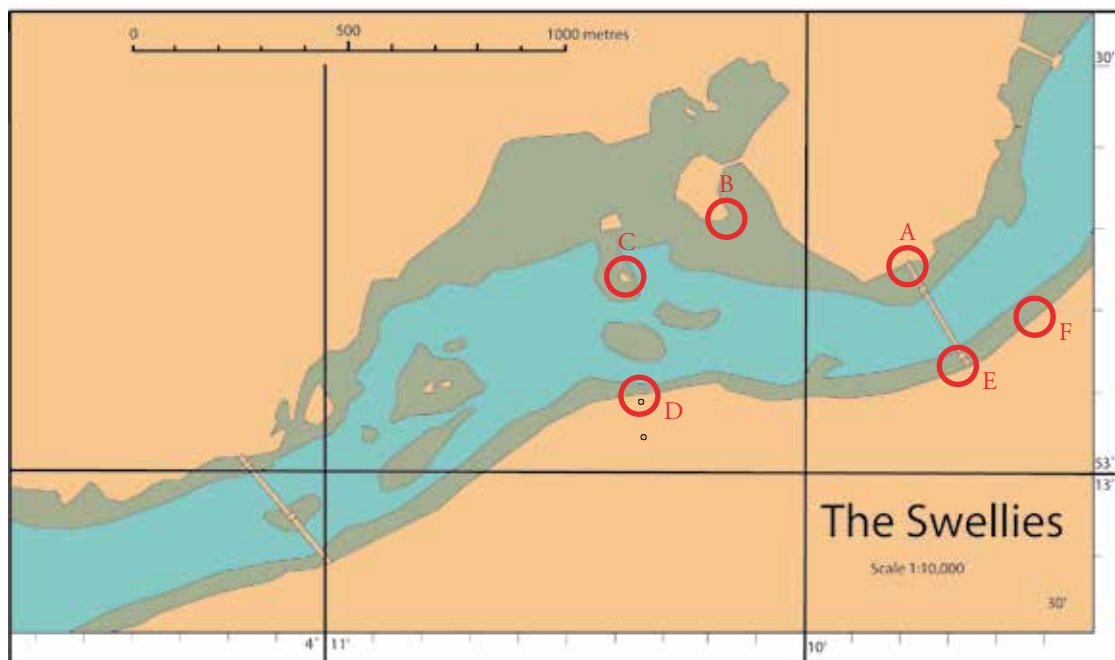
After a day dedicated to planning and deck top navigation skills, build on this by planning a day trip, doing it and en-route reinforce the lessons learned from the previous navigation session, by asking simple questions such as: 'Can you give me the lat and long for where are you now?' 'What is that building on the cliff?' etc.

► Poor Visibility Or Night Navigation Skills

Getting back late off a trip and paddling into the twilight hours is not uncommon. Teaching your students to paddle safely and look after one another at night could be very useful to them in the future.

Ideal Teaching Locale

The classroom initially, then a section of coastline that has some interesting features to find. If windy at all choose an onshore venue. If very rough conditions persist use a sheltered harbour or estuary. Beware of other users in such venues and ensure you have a white light available and a VHF. Inform the coast-guard you are in the harbour on a night navigation exercise if appropriate.



Skills You Need To Identify, Coach And Practise

Desktop navigation at night, group management and leadership considerations at night. Ensure everyone has a light stick attached to their body rather than kayak, just in case they capsize and become parted from their kayak.

Session Progressions

Introduce the session inside.

Before setting out ensure everyone has a map, large-scale 1:25,000 OS maps are the best for this exercise. During the day you would have had your students using the coastline as a handrail, checking off features as they went. The process is the same now, except they need to really concentrate. Distance will be covered far quicker than they expect and water lapping over the rocks will make things sound far closer than they really are. Give your students time to study their route and mark on the map key features they hope to see.

Look at the section of map below, circled are some typical points for students to find during a night navigation exercise:

- A. The mouth of the stream.
- B. The gap between the island and mainland.
- C. The small island in the bay.
- D. The island of rock off the larger island.

E. This harder inlet can be verified by lining oneself up with the 2 sailing markers on the land and West Mouse in transit.

F. This small inlet.

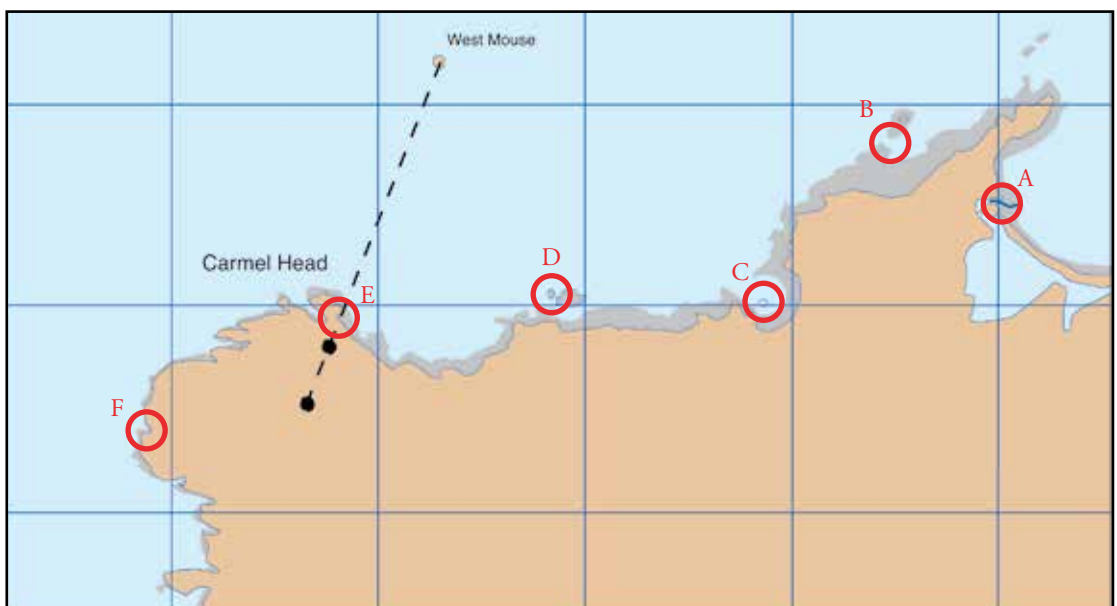
On route ask individuals or buddy pairs to find specific locations. These can be features along the coastline which students can handrail to or features that require a bit of transit work or compass relocation work to get a fix on their position, using a resection.

During this exercise it's best if students are given a point to find just before it's their turn to navigate, otherwise they spend too much time looking at their maps and don't concentrate on following the current leader and consequently get left behind.

Spend your time near to the navigator/leader ready to help them as required, yet remain vigilant of everyone else. It is easy to get stragglers engrossed in work-



Photo 26 Night navigation



ing something out on their deck. Keep count of light sticks and make sure everyone is there at all times. Giving everyone a number to call out, (you as leader begin as number one) may help in your management and should be encouraged when coaching trainee leaders to manage groups at night.

LEADERSHIP SKILLS

All of the above cognitive and physical skills are required if your student is to become an effective leader on the sea, but it is important that you address leadership skills within its own session at some stage. A day journeying through a variety of conditions requiring good planning and navigation and the opportunity for tactical use of wind and water as well as incidences to occur naturally, really works well for covering many leadership issues.

As with incident management it is dangerous to teach in such a way that students believe there is only one solution for type 'A' incident and another for type 'B', without realising in fact that one should be using a combination of the same techniques adapted to fit the new scenario facing them. To help in this matter and to help them remember in the future, give your students a generic incident management framework (see next session below) to follow and suggest rescues and towing skills to adapt as necessary. We need to provide a similar framework for leaders to follow and provide them with the rescue, navigation and planning skills they need to know in order to adapt to the conditions of the day and to the individuals on each trip.

The mnemonic CLAP often used in leadership coaching sessions on the river can be easily used on the sea too and provides us with an excellent framework on which students can hang their leadership of the day and you can hang your coaching strategy.

📌 Begin in the classroom looking at the CLAP mnemonic:

📌 Divide your class into small groups and go through the above written exercise. This will allow your students to brainstorm their ideas, drawing from their own experiences and knowledge. This discussion time amongst the group will affect their learning far more positively than if you just told them or worse, went out with no framework at all.

📌 Make the session even more effective by using their solutions once you are on the water. On the water, work through as many of the above as you can, taking advantage of any other opportunities that arise. However, do leave time at the end to



CLAP – THE ART OF GOOD LEADERSHIP

Communication

- Voice, whistle, hand(s), paddle, eyes.
- There should only be a few signals and all must be clear, simple and discussed before leaving the shore.

Line of Sight

- Ideally everyone, but definitely through using other group members, if headlands, rocks, etc are in the way.
- Line of sight ensures line of communication.

Avoidance is Better than Cure

- Appropriate group control.
- The teaching of group awareness.
- Buddy system.
- Leader's awareness of water ahead, weather all around and group's psychological/emotional state on the water - teaching this in others can only help.
- Teaching those capable to assist in rescues, do rescues themselves and to tow will pay dividends should things go wrong.

Position of Most Effectiveness/Usefulness

- Position yourself to enable the most effective communication.
- Position yourself to manage/prevent any likely incident. Best to be positioned for the most likely incident rather than the most disastrous, bearing in mind that most major incidents occur following a series of unmanaged minor incidents. Managing minor ones prevents the major one occurring.
- You are most effective if you are safe, then your group and finally the casualty.

come back to the classroom and review the day relating the principles of CLAP back to the practical session they have just had.

After you have spent time with them encourage them to go on trips with peers or others with less experience than themselves. Consolidation is the next level of progression and that can only come from trips in which they have to make all the decisions, do all the planning, manage any rescues. This injection of 'sharp end' kinaesthetic input is what they need now.

Using the principles of CLAP

How can I communicate, maintain line of sight, anticipate problems and position myself with most effectiveness in the following situations?

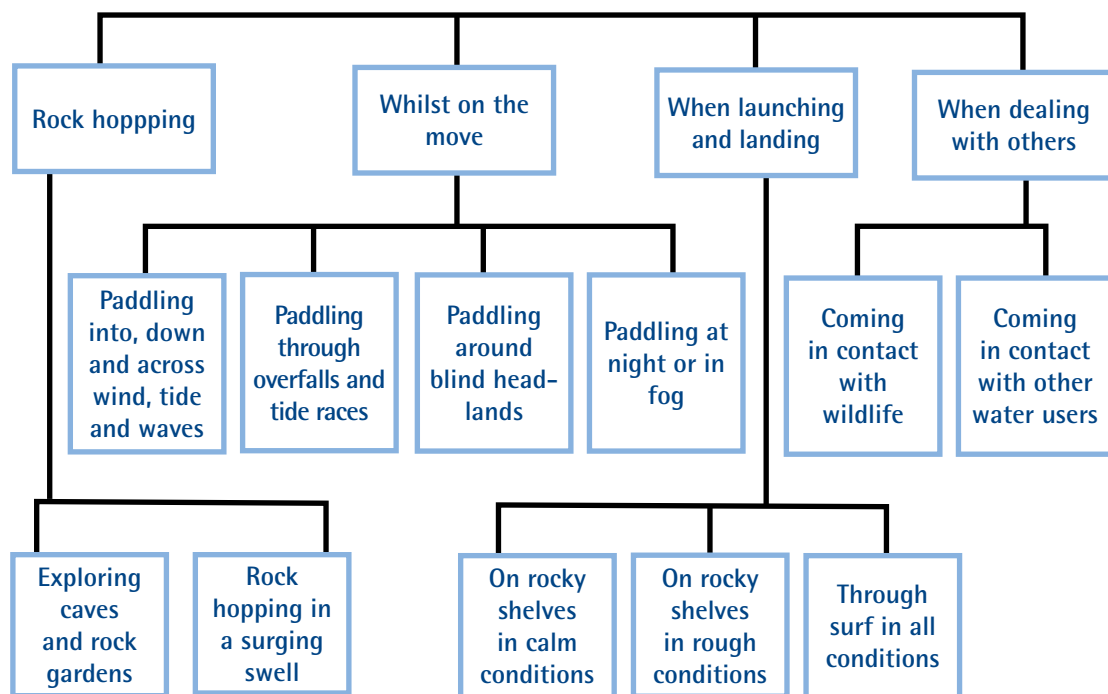


Fig. 9 Brainstorming exercise

It will provide them with valuable intrinsic feedback from their good and bad days, allowing them to build upon the solid foundations you have laid.

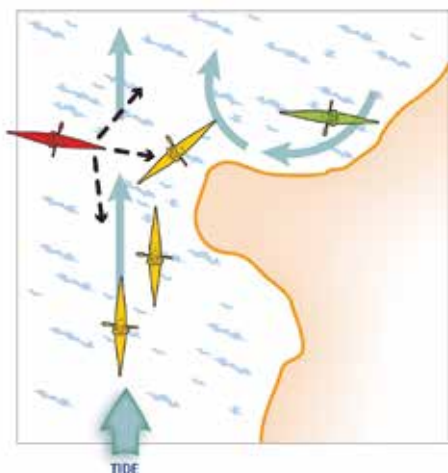


Fig. 10 By drifting sideways the leader is able to see all the paddlers and would be able to paddle to anywhere they are needed if someone got into difficulties.

►Risk Assessing And Incident Management

Risk assessment does form a big part of your planning and incident management sessions, but the skill of risk assessing and the techniques involved are so important I like to teach them as a sub-session on their own.

Ideal Teaching Locale

First session in the classroom, subsequent risk assessing on the water in a variety of conditions and situations including the handling of kayaks to and from the water.

Skills You Need To Identify, Coach And Practise

To make an assessment of the hazards and identify the risks involved. Prepare strategies to avoid and manage the risks.

Session Progressions

Initial classroom introductory session, subsequent sessions for part of planning, incident management and leadership days.

As previously said, frameworks to hang the session on work really well for you when structuring your sessions and for your students to have a proforma to follow and a means of remembering both the theoretical and practical input given.

Encourage your students to build the flow chart and mnemonics into their planning preparation, leadership considerations and incident management scenarios. Laminated versions for your students to refer to whilst being buffeted by the sea would be very helpful to them. Operating at this level requires one to think a lot about many things all at once and so any crib sheets or diagrams, mnemonics, plans they have will help them stay fully *aware* of the now very big picture. Feel free to copy the following flow chart to help you with this session.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

► Definition

Risk Assessment is all about recognition and avoidance of hazards and deciding whether the hazard constitutes an acceptable risk or unacceptable risk.

► Making An Assessment Of Risk

Look at the possible hazards that face you, consider the consequences of messing up if you have to paddle through any of these hazards. Then considering your group's abilities, the weather, the time of year, the amount you've paddled already, how you feel yourself about going in to rescue, estimate the likelihood of messing up.

If the consequences and the likelihood of messing up are high then your risk assessment is to avoid the

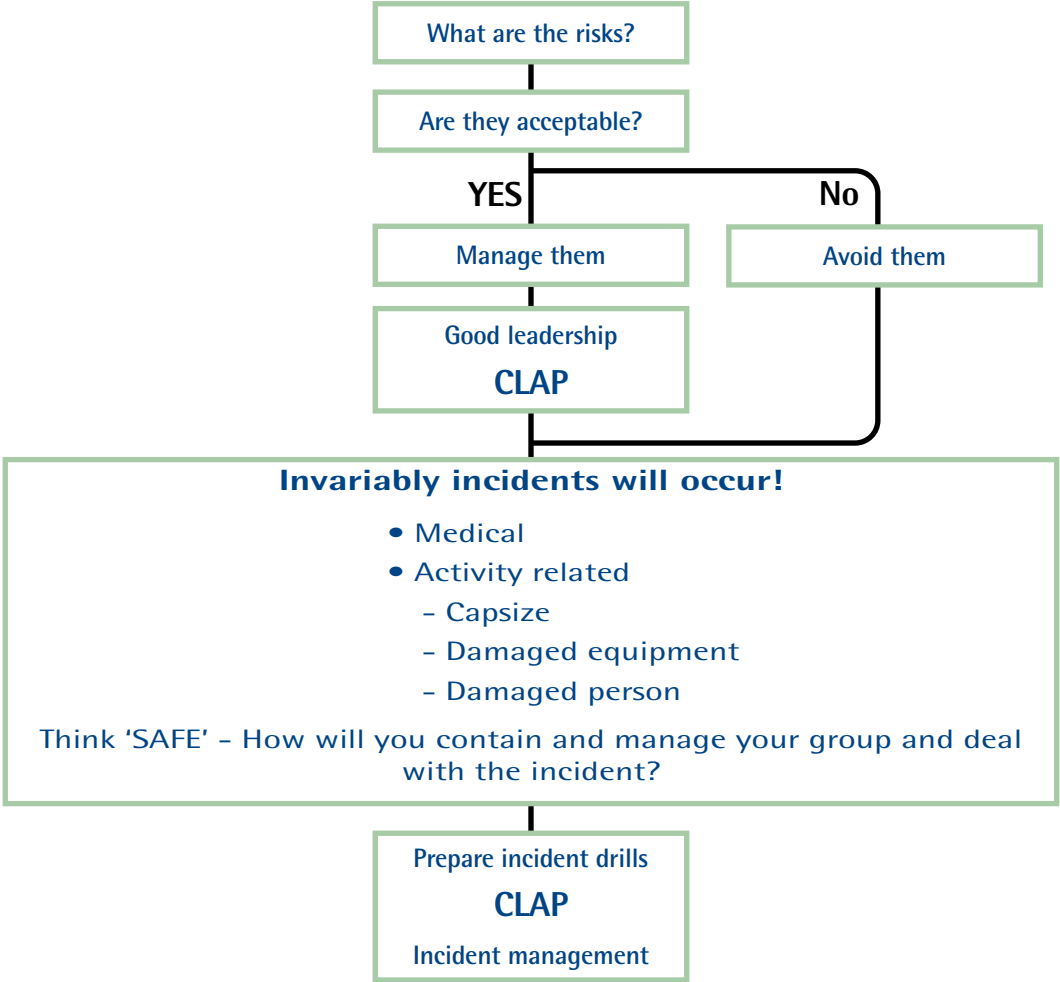


Fig. 11 Risk assessment and management flowchart

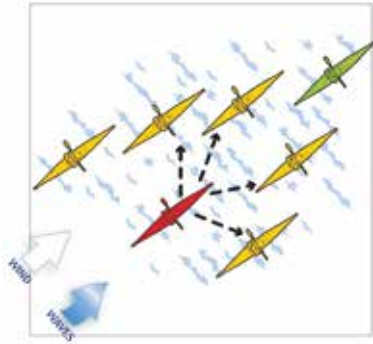


Fig. 12 By being at the centre/rear of the group the leader can see everyone and is in a position to reach anyone who gets into difficulties.

hazard. If the consequences are high, but the likelihood low then consider going ahead. If the consequences are low, and the likelihood high, it is probably an excellent teaching opportunity... go for it.

Remember, tomorrow's assessment of the same site, same group, different state of the tide could be any other issue and requires a new risk assessment.

► Manage Them (The Risks)

CLAP – The art of good leadership

See Leadership notes for more detail but in summary when managing an acceptable risk do so with the following in mind, ready for any incident that may occur as a result of taking the risk.

- Communication
- Line of Sight
- Avoidance better than Cure
- Position of most effectiveness/maximum usefulness

► Avoid Them (The Risks)

Not all risks are avoidable. In fact you may have to make a choice between 2 risks. Weighing up the greater and going with the lesser after considering all the options is the only solution. Managing it as best as you can, following your incident management drills (i.e. SAFE) is the best way to deal with an incident or hazard.

► Invariably Incidents Will Occur

Ensure your students know that invariably incidents will occur, through no fault of their own. As such they need to manage them as above and have ready some incident management drills based around the mnemonic SAFE.

SAFE - The art of successful incident management

✔ Stop

- Take a deep breath

✔ Assess the Situation

- What further risks are there:
 - To me
 - To the rest of the group
 - To the casualty

✔ Formulate a plan

- Which rescue is applicable in this situation
- Do I need to fix damages on land or at sea

✔ Execute & Evaluate the plan

- See the rescues and towing session for suggested scenarios

As before, ensure there is plenty of time at the end of the day to review the incidents. Any scenarios listed but not covered should be given as homework or discussed. On the sea incidents will invariably happen... make sure your sea kayakers have enough skill and know enough about the sea environment to avoid most problems, but enough skill and knowledge to deal with them, without you!

► ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

Being aware of the environmental factors that affect the sea, such as weather and topography, has already been covered. However, the sea environment contains a lot more than just salt water and weather and your sea kayakers will want to know about the many varied marine wildlife they encounter on their journeys. Learn what you can and carry with you laminated details of the wildlife less common to your area.

As a sea kayak coach you look to the sea for your living as do many other humans and wildlife. Knowing as much as possible about other nautical users and other creatures, and being aware of times and areas that require special consideration are very important. As the coach/guide, you are a role model and watched continuously by your students. Much of your environmental awareness coaching will be seen by your stu-

dents through your attitude and actions, so demonstrating a personal responsibility for the environment is essential if your livelihood is to continue.

CONCLUSION

Training others to become sea kayakers is a wonderful job. The rich diversity of both physical and cognitive skills a sea kayak coach has to teach their clients, in order to enable them to paddle safely and efficiently

in an ever-changing environment, is vast. Sea kayak coaches have an incredible classroom to work in and just the most fantastic array of natural teaching opportunities that they share with so many other extraordinary living things. I can't for one moment imagine ever tiring of coaching people to sea kayak. I hope this chapter helps you to understand a little more about what a sea kayak coach coaches, and inspires you and helps you to train others to paddle on the sea.

FURTHER READING

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DVDS

This is the Sea, by Justine Curgenven
This is the Sea II, by Justine Curgenven
Over and Out, by Gordon Brown
Sea Kayak Rescues, by Olly Sanders and Leo Hoare
The Kayak Roll, by Performance Video and Instruction Inc.

WEBSITES

There are several excellent websites on the tide and weather and provide excellent explanations and pictures for use in your teaching. The RNLI and Met Office also have excellent educational website, and e-safety DVDs available.

TRY'S MORRIS

Originally a river paddler, Trys was soon converted to the sea when she began university in North Wales, studying sports science. The vast array of wildlife and the unique tidal waters and weather of the Welsh coast provided a new and exciting playground for her to explore, learn about and develop skills in.

Trys is a Level 5 Coach Sea, Level 4 Inland and now divides her work time between freelance coaching and running an activity booking agency and coffee shop, Café Active. She formerly taught at Plas y Brenin and Plas Menai and still works the sea kayak symposium circuits in the UK, USA and Norway. She has done several expeditions, her most notable being an 8 month journey from the UK to Greece and more recently as one of three females to be the first to circumnavigate Tasmania.

