



16 SURFING

Coaching surfing can be as frustrating as it is exciting and rewarding. The environment is such that trying to organise structured practise can be a nightmare. However when you find that perfect spot, or wait for the tide to change, and a clean shouldering wave is produced, all the doubts and disbeliefs are dispelled. That environment can also challenge your observation and feedback skills, calling on you to draw on more imagination skills than knowledge (thanks Einstein). But the thrill of watching someone emerge from a first run with a beaming, 'I'm hooked' smile makes it all worthwhile.

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we will look at the coaching of surfing. We will try and keep terms generic to kayak/ski collectively known as craft or boat and primarily deal with coaching of manoeuvres on green waves. The soup or broken wave has its place as a coaching zone, however the range of skills that can be performed there are transferable from the freestyle chapter.

► THE ENVIRONMENT

The coach must have a good understanding of the environment he is working in both from a coaching and a safety perspective.

COACHING ZONES

The areas we have to consider can be divided into the following:

- Outside, flat water environment, e.g. to practise rolling.
- Green wave surfing.
- Inside of break, soup e.g. to practise edge control.
- Use of reforming waves for surfing.
- Beach - drawing pictures, mental rehearsal, sand dunes for modelling waves.

It is the quality of wave the coach should look for not the quantity. During the session the swell may decrease or increase in size and possibly character (e.g. dumping at

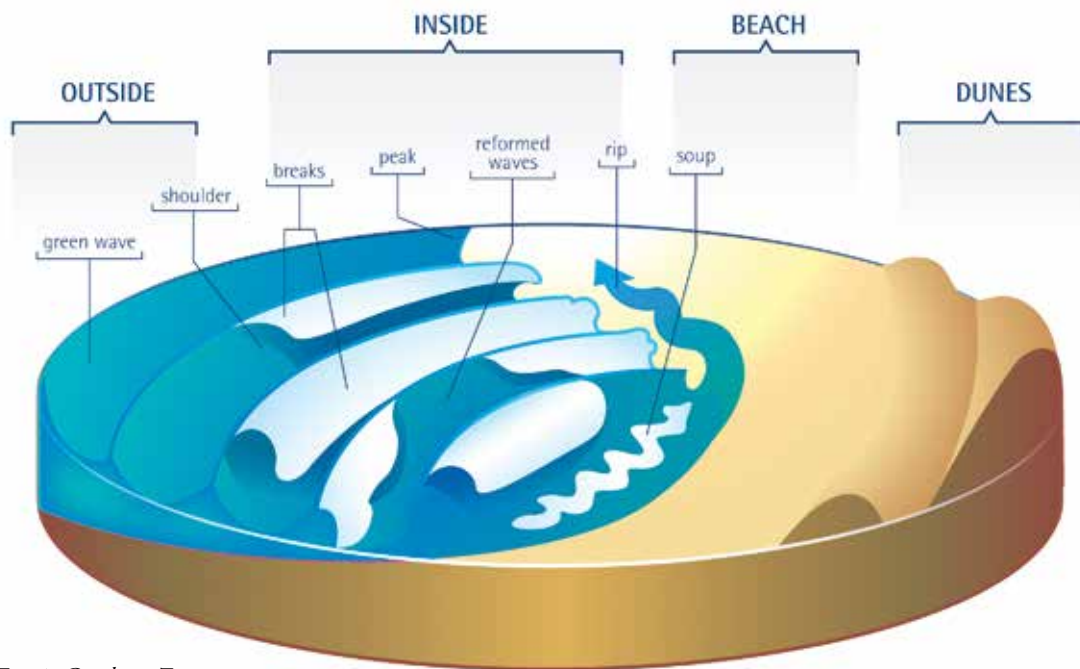


Fig. 1 Coaching Zones

low water) and this can have a catastrophic effect on the student's performance if not taken into consideration.

Surf is a chaotic environment and that chaos easily transfers to the coach. Take your time, ensure your aims are achievable given the environment, students and time available. If it all goes belly up don't be afraid to bin the session and start again or even move sites.

► Session Aims

When considering the choice of site the aims of the session must go hand in hand. If you have decided that addressing your student's needs will be best met by setting them a goal of trying to accomplish this on 3 waves left 3 waves right, you will need to choose a site that gives right and left shouldering waves and good observation opportunities.

If your choice of site is limited you may have to work the other way around. Decide what the environment will allow and address those aspects of your student's performance that are best tackled on that break.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

Remember, "the ultimate safety of the learner is the coach's responsibility".

- ✔ Get into the habit of carrying out risk assessments of the sites used. Do it with your students to allow them to learn the process. Factors to consider

include weather, onshore/offshore wind, tides, obstacles, rips, undertows and other water users. Dynamic risk assessments include what changes as the tide comes in and goes out, and the wind changes in direction/strength.

- ✔ Look after yourself. Dress appropriately, you may find yourself standing on a windswept beach or in the water for some time. Are you also dressed appropriately to effect a rescue?

- ✔ Are the students equipped appropriately. Air bags and end grabs?

- ✔ Emergency kit (should be close to hand).

Rescue kit, own boat, tow line, throw line and knife, swim fins, torpedo buoy.

(Certain rescue methods and equipment will be favoured by some and not others. Practise so that you are not drawn into attempting a rescue where you are ineffective and endanger yourself.)

First aid kit, simple repair kit, shelter, flask, spare clothes, means of recall or attracting attention, for example: paddle, whistle, air horn, flares, mobile phone, VHF.

- ✔ Session safety. Use paddle out, surf in zones. Ensure your students know surf etiquette, collision avoidance procedure (emergency capsize) and promote good relations on and off the water.



Photo 1 Beach whiteboard

✓ Mark out the beach to enable the surfers to gauge where they are and the surfing zone. Explain the use of transits to help them to maintain their position, (the change in view of a near and far fixed object, as the paddler drifts).

✓ Warm up and cool down exercises. See Chapter 2.

► Group Management

Group management in a surf environment is essential for a safe and effective coaching session. You and your students must be clear on what signals are to be used, how long you want individual sessions to last, (should they have a watch on?) and what to do in the event of an incident or a total recall.

► COACHING CONSIDERATIONS

In the following sections we will examine some of the key coaching behaviours and how they are affected when working in the surf environment.

DISCIPLINE AND PACE

As a coach you will need to be quite firm with your students to avoid them getting carried away. Ensure they concentrate on the task at hand; if you say only take 3 waves make sure they do.

► Avoiding Burn-Out

The surf environment is also very tiring. Often the coach will need to enforce frequent breaks and comfort stops to allow students to take on fluids and snacks to rehydrate and raise blood glucose levels and possibly get warm. There is also a tendency to over-coach, allow your students time to surf.

○ KEY POINTS

- An appropriate sequence for a paddlesport warm-up would begin with a pulse raiser and then light mobilising exercises before the lifting of any boats. Once on the beach/water a secondary boat specific pulse raiser and mobilising exercises can be carried out. All flexibility exercises should be carried out at the end of the session.
- Warm-ups are now frequently used as part of a training session for paddlers. The most appropriate are those that closely match the demands of the discipline and can be carried out in-boat. Cool-downs are less frequently carried out at the end of a session but can have a very positive impact upon recovery from training
- Flexibility exercises for paddlesport should focus on the shoulder, trunk rotation, flexion and extension, lateral flexion and extension, and hip flexion.



Photo 2 Supervising a session.

OBSERVATION

If you cannot observe you cannot give feedback based on observation.

► Position

Where you observe from will be decided by a combination of what aspect of your student's performance you are trying to observe and safety considerations.

✓ The beach allows a full picture to be seen. On some beaches headlands can be used to get a side view.

✓ In or on the water either paddle/swim out and sit in a useful position to observe; a boogie board may provide some support.

► Safety Considerations

Outside, beyond the line of breaking waves, the ultimate risk is being carried further out to sea by offshore winds. In this instance you may consider keeping paddlers within the break line or positioning yourself at the point of most usefulness, i.e. out back.

Inside the break line with minimal offshore wind any swimmers will be washed ashore. Remember to instruct paddlers to grab the seaward end of the boat. Rips and undertows can affect this and a risk assessment would prescribe where activity took place or appropriate instruction was given to paddlers. Within this zone effective rescuing is usually best carried out from the beach side.

► Use Of Video

This is covered in greater depth in Chapter 11. Given the restraints in observation in surf and the low prices of video equipment the video is a very useful tool.

- Try and use it to highlight specific points, remember it is giving feedback so don't overload!
- If you can afford it buy one with a flip out screen, thus allowing you to view performances on the beach, cave, kisu or minibus.
- Keep your batteries charged.
- Use a tripod.

Pre-recorded video and DVD's can be used to good effect for giving students demonstrations and models to understand surfing techniques and manoeuvres. They can also be used to check their understanding by questioning. Often closed questions gain more information than very open questions, e.g. "At the top of the wave where is the surfer looking?"

FEEDBACK

Research tells us that feedback should be given long enough after the performance to allow both the student and coach to internalise the performance and short enough to give maximum potency. When a surfer is sometimes 50m from the coach this can be positive or negative depending on your point of view. Positive as you can only give small bites of visual feedback and not overload the student. Negative in that unless you have a lengthy repertoire of signals some of the ability to reinforce or change the performance are lost.

► Reviewing Skills

You may need to compensate for a lack of technical feedback by making the most of your reviewing skills.



Photo 3a Visual feedback signal - "Arms out"

Photo 3b "Shoulder going this way"

Use the beach as a white board to draw pictures to give feedback. Build a small wave and use a model of a boat on the wave to describe movements.

► Intrinsic Feedback

Structure exercises so as to allow the student to tune in to their intrinsic feedback. Coach the student to feel!

This will be the most effective tool you can use as a coach and will require you working with your student to develop their kinaesthetic awareness. Remember your smart rules for goal setting.



INTRINSIC FEEDBACK

• **exercise:** An important tool is that of using extremities. An exercise to help the paddler find the most effective position in which to hold the paddle is to:

1. Paddle with their hands gripping the shaft very close to the blades.
2. Paddle with their hands touching each other in the middle of the shaft.
3. Paddle with their hands in the most comfortable position between these two points.

The concept of scoring these positions can also be added e.g. 0 for least effective and 6 for most effective.



Photo 4 Wave model

QUESTIONING

With the use of immediate feedback so limited by the environment, effective questioning has some very important roles.

The coach needs to receive the specific answers to aid their analysis, e.g. “On that last wave were you attempting to make the section or go for a top turn?”

Questioning can also be used to help the student review a performance and visualize what changes they wish to make on the next run.

IMAGERY AND MENTAL REHEARSAL

Given the communication problems in the surf environment these are very useful and powerful tools. See the PETTLEP model in Chapter 3.



WALKING THE WAVE

- **exercise:** Build/draw a wave or use a sand dune and get the student to run the wave preferably with their paddle as if they were on the real wave.

Often by the student closing their eyes they can concentrate greater on the movement of the body.

Remember when drawing/walking the wave, ensure the wave is drawn in the same manner as the waves washing up the beach.



Photo 5 Walking the wave



COLOURS

“When I coached Martine from our squad she had a problem of throwing her trim violently forward to bottom turn and upright when at the top of the wave. I used colours in a similar way here. She is a very visual activist. We labelled the upright position Green and the forward Red. I suggested that there should be room for Amber. She used a foamy on the beach to climb and drop on a Karrimat wave, identifying the appropriate colours as she surfed the wave.

Prior to this exercise Martine was not always able to feed back to me what had happened out on the wave. She went out for 5 waves and came back in. Her trim of the boat was still jerky but she said con-

fidently “I can get Green and Red, but not Amber!”. She had created both a new awareness and a language of colour. As well as now having a common language, Martine could easily work off the water to improve her performance. She worked with the foamy to analyse her performance, could overlay colour to the video footage I had taken, and easily pre-practised using visualisation.

She went back out and put Amber into her runs. Her movements were smooth, and the kayak carved without shedding speed.”

Ian Sherrington - Level 5 Surf Coach

► CORE KNOWLEDGE

As coaches we need to identify which factor (technical, tactical, physiological or psychological) is the rate-limiter at any stage in our student's development. For example, when paddling out, does the student have knowledge of the techniques involved such as forward paddling, what strategy to use (e.g. position, waiting, enough power), or are they scared about being back looped.

Within surfing all four factors are of equal importance; it is very hard to isolate them individually. The following are some examples of the core knowledge that your students must possess.

TACTICAL

► Wave Selection

Here the coach has to actively encourage their students to watch and paddle a wide selection of waves, size, direction, shapes, speed and character (fat sluggish waves or steep fast waves). The effect of the wind onshore/offshore, how it holds up the wave. Look at tidal height and beach morphology.

► Wave Awareness

The student should be aware of the shoulder. Will it break? Which way... left or right? Probably not if there is a head of another wave just in front of it. Will it close out? That is does the wave break along its whole length therefore not really allowing a long run for the paddler.

► Position On The Wave

Where the paddler is on the wave will affect their speed and what manoeuvres they can achieve. For maximum potential speed the paddler needs to be higher on the wave or on the steepest/most critical part of the wave known as the shoulder or pocket.

The coach has to put the student in positions where they are able to feel the differences, i.e. structure exercises where the student 'explores the wave.'

► Choreographed Runs

In the early stages of surfing, the paddler may only be concerned with catching a wave. A pro-active approach would be to diagonal run along the wave. A reactive approach is one that would occur if, on seeing the wave break, the paddler either exits the wave by turning off it, or if too steep, running before it.



AWARENESS ON THE WAVE

- **exercise:** Allow the student to catch a wave and to surf out in front of it. Question them to gauge whether they were aware of the drop in speed and change in noise? Now get them to do the same but turn before the boat loses speed. Get them to surf away from the pocket until they slow down.



KEY POINTS

- **Attention style** - Broad or narrow external or internal (see Chapter 3). Where is your student concentrating... on the front of the boat, or looking both ways to check where the shoulder is? Coach your student to have a broader external view.
- **Bilateral transfer** - Where possible, always get paddlers to practise both sides.

Choreography is another form of goal setting. The student should be encouraged to put together a run made up of a number of manoeuvres.

Here we can take an example from competition judging, which looks at:

- The take-off including wave selection.
- The run, making the best use of the wave.
- Exiting the wave.

"It is the ability to read and predict the wave that separates the average from the good surfer, rather than flashy manoeuvres."
(Keeble and Andreisson)



KEY POINT

- The key themes for a coach to take away is that we should encourage individual customisation of strokes and skills, allow students to practise their techniques in a variety of environments, and foster decision-making in their application.

► Speed

Without optimising speed it is impossible to master many of the surf manoeuvres. The achievement of speed is governed by position on the wave



Photos 6a-d Wave selection

and affected by some of the following technical and physiological points.



TOP TIP

- If the paddler is continuously slowing the boat with the paddle (providing conditions allow), get them to take off and then throw their paddle away and surf without it.

TECHNICAL

It is worth talking here briefly about some key aspects of hull design, a huge subject.



Photo 7 A variety of surf craft

► Waterline Length

When a kayak is in displacement mode, that is when paddling out and taking off, the longer the waterline length the greater speed achieved.

However, when planing/surfing only the mid to back third/tail of the boat is in the water so a flat, wide hull profile will increase speed. General river playboats with a flat mid-section and kicked up tail will be slower.

► Rails

For grippy fast turns the kayak will require rails, that is the angular shape at the gunwale. The nearer to 90° the angle, the greater the grip.

The rails of the craft will not only affect its grip on the wave face, to a certain extent they will also affect the arc of a turn, particularly the bottom turn. Once planing, only half to one third of the rear of the craft is in contact with the water, therefore it is important that the rails here are sharp to effect positive water release and therefore ultimate speed. As the rail shape moves forward it will progressively become 'tucked' under, too soft at the bow to avoid them catching during slow or stalled turns.

PHYSIOLOGICAL

Dynamic seating position and dynamic balance should be maximised to enable body, blade and boat control.

The paddler must have good contact with the craft so that when they move the craft moves. Care should be taken to pad out the craft to allow this. Surf wax can be used on the seat of a ski.

► Range Of Body Movement

Mobility is the key, especially upper body, front to back trim and rotation. The answer here is to make the student aware of the extremities of trim and rotation so that they can work within or aspire to those extremes. (Using the scoring method mentioned earlier will help).



Photo 8 Coaching edge control and body movement. The use of the inflatable rubber ring allows this to be done on the beach and even indoors!

The nature of the seating position on a ski allows greater use of the lower body especially by tensioning the body by pulling on the toes.

► Edge Control And Core Stability

Developing edge control and core stability is vital for surfing and effective craft control. The student must be coached to use edging in much the same way as a dimmer switch rather than just off and on. The paddler must be able to effectively control edge to climb and drop on the wave and to allow for the vagaries of the wave.



TOP TIP

- It is important to coach below-decks paddling using the processes of relaxing and tensing alternate legs, so that the rails are engaged. The analogy of skiing and locking and unlocking edge is a good one.



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Photo 9 Sand simulator

► Power

Generally surfing requires short bursts of anaerobic power (development of this is covered in Chapter 2).

Paddling out may require more power and breath but both very much rely on technique. The student must be made aware of correct forward paddling technique (see Chapter 14).

► Paddle Size And Length

The paddle is made up of two main components: the blade and the shaft. The relationship between the two is very important, depending on the size and age of the paddler and the use the paddle is put to. Surfing, which requires a short burst of power, may use a big blade and short shaft. However, young or smaller surf paddlers may use a smaller blade and longer shaft.

PSYCHOLOGICAL

See also Chapter 3.

There are many factors that may affect a paddler's performance. The coach should be aware of these and have strategies and session progressions to cope with each. Here are a few:

- Past paddling history, recent bad experiences.
- Who you surf with, peer pressure, motivation.
- Intimidation from other water users.
- Size and nature of wave.
- Nature of break, reef breaks with nasty rocks.
- Cognitive (mental) excitement can impede physical performance, which can lead to some manic runs until the paddler settles in. This is especially true if they have not been able to surf for a while.

Relaxation Techniques

Yoga offers the best training for relaxation techniques. The two I have found useful are to practise tensing and relaxing muscle groups and the concept of breathing deeply using the diaphragm in a circle, not just in and out. Another approach is to listen to music.

Inner Game

Inner game strategies allow self-2 to do its job, i.e. to control fluid movement (see Chapters 1 and 2).

► BASIC SKILLS

Remember when reinforcing or correcting a performance to firstly coach from a body perspective, this will invariably lead to a correction in the blade or boat.

When coaching specific skills or manoeuvres it is vital that the coach isolates that skill or manoeuvres in order that the paddler only concentrates on that skill or manoeuvre, for example:



Take-offs

Ask the student to try 3 without surfing the wave then come in for review and correction.



Bottom turns

Ask the student to take off, go to the bottom of the wave, turn then exit the wave. Do this 3 times left, 3 times right, then come in.

THE BONGO SLIDE

This is about preventing the boat from capsizing once it has been broached by a breaking wave. In its most basic form this can be described as:



1. Edge into the waves to prevent them tipping you in.



2. Use a low support stroke to assist this.

It can be argued that this position is a secure position for a beginner, but what about the other water users who get bounced over as the kayak makes its way to the beach?

By over-developing this secure position the coach may be hindering the paddler's development and the safety of other water users.

By coaching a few more techniques we can ensure that, even when broached, the paddler has a degree of control over their craft by being able to have some forwards and backwards movement as opposed to just sideways.

- ✓ 1. Edge into the waves.
- ✓ 2. Use a low support stroke to assist this.
- ✓ 3. Trim forwards (to go backwards), trim backwards (to go forwards).
- ✓ 4. Continue to paddle forwards or reverse to change position.
- ✓ 5. Progress to changing edge and using sweep strokes to turn (unlocking and locking the edge).



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Photo 10 Trimming in the soup

► Getting Ahead

With the ever-decreasing length of craft the severity of broaching, turning parallel to the wave, will be reduced. In modern craft, after the drop is taken it can be more effective to point the craft at the beach and lean back? With low volume back decks the craft is spat out in front of the wave.

PADDLE OUT

To get off the beach put your hands either side of the boat, or one hand one side and a vertical paddle on the other, and push down and slide the boat forwards.

Paddling out through the surf is more about strategy than brute force.



11

Photo 11 Paddle out

- ✓ The coach should give their students experience of watching the waves, and asking them where is the path through?
- ✓ Time the waves - how long between the sets?
- ✓ Set courses that make the paddler change direction and speed and wait.
- ✓ Coach dynamic forward paddling, vertical paddle shaft close to boat, good trunk rotation, and forward trim. Head down, high style during punch through to avoid paddle shaft in face.
- ✓ The concept of continuous paddling to provide momentum and using the blade to anchor the boat as they go through the wave.
- ✓ Sometimes, if the wave is too steep it may be better to turn and run.

If paddlers have trouble understanding these skills the coach could set up a follow the leader exercise.

► Use Of Rips

Rips provide a very useful, often dry conveyor belt to the outside, often allowing the paddler to save energy even if it means paddling further back to it after each run.

► Angle Of Attack And Edge

Attacking the waves at up to 45° or on edge minimises the likelihood of being back looped.

► Bunny Hops

As the paddler paddles up the wave they lift their feet/knees and thrust forwards with their hips whilst pulling on the paddle, causing the boat to hop over the wave.

► Rolling Under Waves

It is possible for the paddler to perfect timing to roll under the waves by capsizing towards the beach. The wave will assist with the roll.

TAKE-OFF

Prior to take-off the paddler should give some thought to the type of wave. Has it got a peak? Will it close out? Is it a double wave? Which direction will the shoulder go?

The paddler should position themselves on the steep peak of the wave to allow for minimal paddling:

- ✓ Dynamic forwards paddling (practise exercise of max speed in the minimum number of strokes).
- ✓ Trim forwards.



12

Photo 12 Take off

- ✓ Depending on the wave initially take off at a 45° angle to prevent the boat nose-diving.
- ✓ As timing and the ability to read the waves improve the paddler can progress to taking off straight down the wave and then doing a bottom turn.
- ✓ Once surfing, look around you. (Where is the shoulder and where are the other surfers?)

DIAGONAL RUN 'SURFING DOWN THE LINE'

The coach should get the paddler to take off and gain as much distance along the wave parallel to the beach as possible before the wave breaks, the use of beach markers may help. Emphasise that increased speed equals greater distance. To improve:

- ✓ Position the boat in the top third of the wave.
- ✓ Trim forward.
- ✓ Keep the paddle in front of you, with a sufficient gap between the shaft and the body, forward paddle if necessary. On steep waves the paddle may need to be held to the side.
- ✓ Use edge to maintain height.



13

Photo 13 Diagonal run

► The Role Of The Stern Rudder

For the purposes of this chapter a stern rudder is a rudder stroke performed behind the hip. Depending on its purpose the stroke is varied or blended by either:

- ✓ 1. Placing the stroke further back or deeper.
- ✓ 2. Changing the angle of the blade.
- ✓ 3. Varying the distance from the back of the kayak.

The variety of the stroke has led it to be called a Low Brace Stern Rudder. We should already know that it is a dynamic stroke that is performed whilst the craft is travelling forward. Conversely the very act of using the stroke slows the craft down, it also tends to make the paddler lean back.

It is a useful stroke to have in the repertoire because it is essential in steering a kayak without edges and also sets up a good lower body position. However it can easily become a bad habit and takes skill to effectively use. It may be far better to coach the use of edges and forward sweeps to steer (especially at slow speeds).



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Photo 14 Encourage the paddler to lean forward with the paddle and surf without using it.

CLIMB AND DROP

At 90° to the wave (facing the shore). Experiment with body trim. Lean forward to go down, back to slow down and therefore climb back up the wave.

► Whilst Tracking Along The Wave

The coach should set an exercise that makes the student go to the bottom and right to the top of the wave using edging, relaxing one leg whilst tensioning the other to edge up and down the wave to gain awareness, trim forwards to maintain speed.

► Optimum Trim

It is important that the paddler develops these techniques until they have developed 'optimum trim'.



15a

Photo 15a Heading for the beach

At this point the craft is in harmony with the wave, maximum speed is combined with effective trim to put the craft in perfect balance. No paddle strokes are needed, the craft held there by tensioning various muscle groups.

This position is the key to all other surf manoeuvres and it is vital that the paddler can replicate and return to this 'optimum' position with the least amount of effort. Only once the student has 'got this down' in long term memory should you move on to more advanced techniques.

EXITING THE WAVE

Used to get off the wave either because the wave is about to break or another surfer is in the way. There are two methods:

1. Flatten out and head for the beach.
2. Gain some speed and punch back out through the wave.

A power draw blade combination will help pull the boat through the wave if it breaks.

WIPE-OUTS

Following the inevitable wipe-out the paddler should adopt the crash position i.e. tuck in and put the paddle to the side. If the paddle gets hard to hold take one hand off the paddle.

The benefit of a ski is that the paddler can jump off prior to the wave and hold the foot straps.



15b

Photo 15b Punching out

Rolling

Rolling is covered in depth in Chapter 15. The key points in surfing are to use a number of environment strategies:

- ✓ Use the wave to roll up on, that is roll up on the same side as the incoming wave.
- ✓ Hesitate so that you roll up between sets.
- ✓ In shallow water use the bottom.
- ✓ On a ski, taking one leg off the ski can assist the roll.

CHANGING DIRECTION

Bottom Turn

This is a turn at the bottom of the wave, the speed that is gained from the drop down the wave enables



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Photo 16 Bottom turn (see also Fig. 2)

the surfer to lean outside of the boat, engaging the rails, allowing an effective turn without loss of speed. When coaching the main emphasis is on getting the paddler to lean outside of the boat whilst maintaining forward trim to enhance speed, and engage the inside edge. The head should be looking to the top of the wave (future water). It is the head that is the pivot point paddle in the low brace stern rudder position.

The bottom turn is a complex manoeuvre and can be varied through:

1. Position on the wave. There will be a 'sweet spot' to turn to give maximum speed however this may have to be sacrificed in order to make the section or to set up for a manoeuvre.
2. Blade position. Initially the blade can be used to provide support but blade entry should be minimum to prevent loss of speed. To prevent spin-out master the use of edge. In more rounded boats pull in on the drive face of the blade, so that as you squeeze in with the back hand and lock the elbow, the boat shoots forward like a squeezed bar of soap.



TOP TIP

Many paddlers have trouble grasping the body extension required for the bottom turn. A physical guidance land drill will help (see Photo 8).

► Cut Back

Whilst mastering going along the wave the paddler may deliberately venture too far from the shoulder and will need to turn or cut back towards it (see Fig. 2).

1. Look where you want to go and twist the body.
2. Unlock the edge and steer using front sweep or stern rudder dependent on speed.
3. Maintain forwards trim.

Having returned to the shoulder the paddler can use the broken water to turn back to the green wave (known as a bouncer). When surfing back towards the shoulder, lift the nose and hit the broken part of the wave, to initiate the turn (towards the beach) and turn as above.

► Top Turn

A top turn follows a good bottom turn and the speed that this has induced and is performed in the



Photo 17 Cut back

upper part of the wave. It can also be used to stall the boat to regain the shoulder.

1. On the way back up the wave flatten the edge.
2. Look down the wave and twist the body.
3. Down wave stern rudder pushes away.
4. Trim forwards.

► ADVANCED SKILLS

Before attempting these the surfer must have mastered the concepts of speed and position on the wave and core manoeuvres outlined previously.

The nature of the moves are governed by the paddler. It is dependant on their speed, what the wave will allow and what they are trying to achieve, e.g. a stall, skid, pivot or carve.

RE-ENTRY, SLASH TOP TURN – OFF THE LIP

(See Title Photo).

This is where the paddler uses the breaking lip of the wave to turn back towards the beach similar to a top turn. The planning of the turn should take place prior to and will affect the nature of the bottom turn.

1. Pick a spot to attempt the re-entry.
2. Bottom turn accordingly.
3. Flatten the boat in relation to the wave face.
4. Once the feet have cleared the top of the wave look back down the wave and rotate the body.
5. Down wave stern rudder pries away (and acts as a pivot) whilst the hips push in the opposite direction.
6. Lean back and flatten the boat to land.

AERIAL

The ultimate top turn manoeuvre and extension of the re-entry (see Fig. 2).

- ✓ Requires speed and a steep vertical attack and the appropriate wave.
- ✓ At the top of the wave the beach-side blade powers and stays in the wave.
- ✓ Thrust forward with the hips.
- ✓ When the boat feels weightless, look back down the wave, twist the body, push away with and pivot around the blade.
- ✓ To land flatten the boat and lean back to keep the nose from diving or catching an edge.

To give optimum feedback as the coach, position yourself behind the wave and gauge the amount of boat that clears the top of the wave.

REGAIN, FLOATER

A regain is when the paddler regains another shoulder, this is when a section of wave breaks in front of their path. They can either surf around the section back on to the shoulder or, providing they have enough speed, float over the section ensuring they thrust the nose over the top of the white water.

- ✓ Create speed by using a bottom turn.
- ✓ Flatten the boat.

PADDLE OUT TAKE OFF

This allows the paddler to catch the wave in the pocket, whilst paddling towards the break. It requires a wave with a distinct shoulder, good timing and maximum speed (see Fig. 2).

- ✓ Paddle towards the shoulder, paddling throughout.
- ✓ As the nose of the craft is about to hit the white/broken water, lean back and flatten the hull.
- ✓ Twist the upper body down the wave (towards the beach) and then lean forward.
- ✓ Pry the back of the craft around using the white water and gravity to push/pull the nose down the wave.
- ✓ Keep the craft flat or even lift the down wave rail slightly as the turn progresses to avoid the rail from catching and tripping up the nose.



THE LINE UP

One thing I teach (borrowed from Jock Young) is to do with how we set ourselves up for the take-off. I teach a “Charc” as in the squirt boating term meaning Charging Arc. I feel that this can improve success and safety at the take-off. A Charc should provide the following:

- Vision
- Position
- And therefore, Precision

The idea being that if we paddle a slowly accelerating arc towards the take-off we can keep the wave’s progression in view. We can tighten up or open out the arc and all the time the craft is gaining momentum. Using this method surfers will catch more waves in the place they want. Also the progressive acceleration means that boats are up and planing early and can then start steering early, i.e. less chance of being closed or pearled.

At a peak you can perform this as an inside or outside charc. One coming from deep, providing good vision for a bold take-off. The other works from a position of safety when we are concerned not to get caught too deep.

Ian Sherrington



Photo 18 Two different fin set-ups

USE OF FINS

Fins are used to prevent the craft’s tendency to spin out or slide on the wave, i.e. they provide grip and directional stability in the turns. Providing they are set up correctly fins provide lift and thrust which therefore maximises the speed potential of the craft. The use of fins is best learnt through experience. Here are some guidelines:

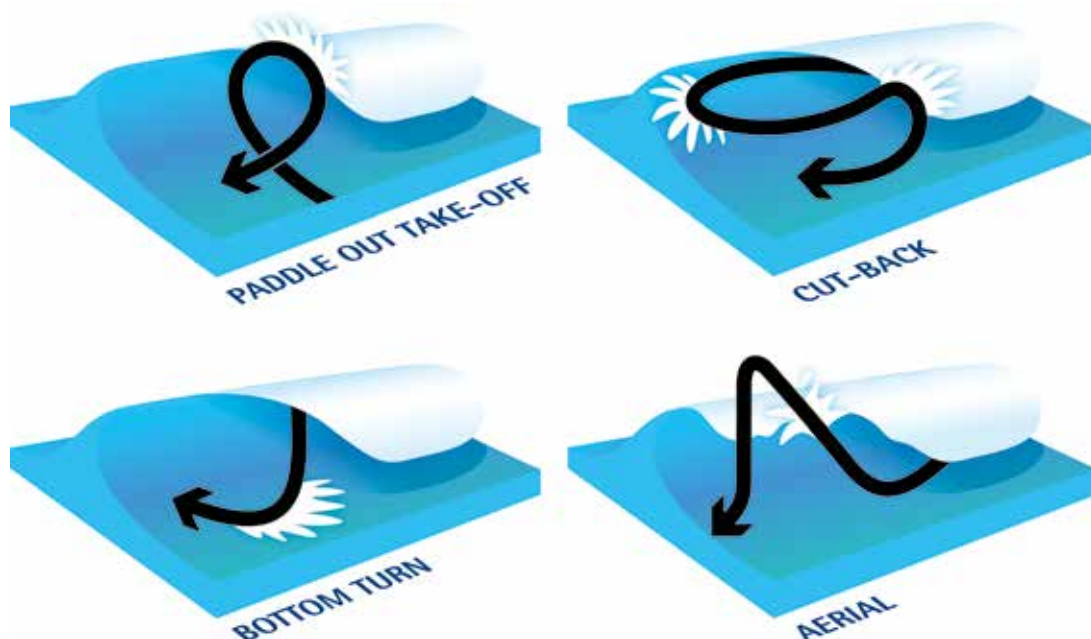


Fig. 2 Manoeuvres

✓ Choose a site that will limit damage to fins whilst getting on or off the water.

✓ Hone your edging skills first to understand the limitations of the craft.

✓ Assuming a tri-fin set up, experiment first with one centre fin, then 2 side fins and finally all 3. Usually the third fin is positioned behind the side 2.

✓ Remember that there is a trade off between increasing the number and size of fins and the increase in drag.

✓ Generally, positioning fins further forward increases turning ability. Positioning them further back increases speed whilst making the craft stiffer.

✓ “Within the parameters of normal use and assuming the fins are correctly foiled, the shape of skis is of little importance. On the other hand the area (or size) of the fins and the mounting position is of great importance. The fin shape, size and configuration can be varied to suit the rider and is a personal one. Most tri-fin sets use fins of even shape and size but sometimes a larger centre fin will be used when more drive in turns is required.”

Roger Shackleton.

The result is edge to edge surfing and full top and bottom turns.



TOP TIPS

- Practise with a purpose. All too often it is easy to get carried away in the surf environment and neglect what you are trying to practise.

- Allow time to reflect and evaluate your surfing.

- Get someone to observe you, even better video your surfing.

- Be self critical with relation to Body Boat Blade Brain.

- As a coach continuously update your coaching knowledge, e.g. transfer your paddling/observations between different craft.

- As paddlers we need to identify which factor (technical, tactical, physiological or psychological) is the rate-limiter at any stage in our development, e.g. knowledge of how to do a top turn, when to do a top turn, lack of upper body mobility or fear of wiping out.

- Examine your training programme to ensure that it has specificity and variety.

- Are your goals intrinsic process goals?

▶ SESSION PLANS

The following are suggested session plans for a variety of beginner/novice surfer groups. They will of course have to be tweaked to suit the conditions and the individual needs of your students, so remember to question and observe extensively to allow you to receive maximum information prior to session. There is no timescale specified for these sessions; it is dependent on the student, site, coach, weather, etc. Each session assumes appropriate risk assessment and warm-ups are covered.

With thanks to **Howard Jeffs** for his contribution.

INTRODUCTION TO SURF

An introduction to surf session for 2-3 star paddlers.

- ✔ Bongo slide, secure position, support and edge.
- ✔ Explore trim.
- ✔ Catch a wave.
- ✔ Concept of speed and position.
- ✔ Diagonal run using edge and downwave low brace stern rudder.
- ✔ Wave awareness and exiting the wave.
- ✔ Turning.

BEGINNER

Ensure a safe progression by firstly using the shore and soup zone.

- ✔ Edging on beach, maybe dry roll.
- ✔ Paddle parallel to soup practising edging and low brace.
- ✔ Take off at varying angles and move across the beach, play with edges, maintain forward paddling.
- ✔ Explore relaxing the edge to allow the kayak to turn whilst still preventing being tipped in.
- ✔ A common fault will be paddlers leaning back. Coach forwards trim.
- ✔ Coach turning. Head looking for future water, plant paddle, twist upper body, unlock edge. (Land drill useful).

▶ Progression

- ✔ Turns, zigzag across the wave, emphasis on moving along the waves. (Set up beach markers to help gauge distance covered.)

- ✔ If available use a small green wave, talk briefly about paddling out, wave selection and take-off.

The downwave stern rudder should only be used where the paddler is having difficulty preventing the kayak broaching. Explain that it is a short term fix due to it acting as a brake.



TOP TIPS

- To help gauge both trim and edge it is beneficial to give a measurement or score. If student and conditions allow get the student to take one hand off the paddle and control the boat with their lower body.
- Another common fault is where the paddler holds the paddle shaft too close to their body. Get them to hold it a beach ball distance away from their chest.

PLAYBOATER, NO SURFING EXPERIENCE

Typically catches the biggest wave, heads straight for the beach, gets nailed, rolls up performs three 360's and the beginnings of a blunt, surfs all the way to the beach. Ask yourself do they want to change? They do not have to, however they might like to know what it is all about.

- ✔ Introduce the concept of the shoulder, watch the waves, the need to move along the wave.
- ✔ Catch 3 waves with a definite shoulder. Look where you want to go, ride the wave and get off before it breaks.
- ✔ Trim the boat to allow for better speed.
- ✔ Control the edges to allow you to climb and drop, explore the top and bottom of the wave.
- ✔ Use manoeuvres to maintain speed and maintain proximity to shoulder.
- ✔ Steer from the front of the boat, keep the paddle in front of you.

3 STAR PADDLER, CAN BOARD SURF

Typically will head for the green wave and a forming shoulder. Finds the boat slow and cannot manoeuvre it accurately.

- ✔ Reinforce transferable skills of edge and trim, and using the whole body to turn the kayak.

- ✔ Separate edge and trim into two different units.
- ✔ Concentrate on trim first to get the speed up.
- ✔ Focus on staying in the pocket and/or the upper portion of the wave, to maintain speed.
- ✔ Progress onto moving away from the pocket by forward trim, backwards trim to move back into the pocket.
- ✔ Finish exercise by good wave selection, positioning and venturing out onto the wall using forward trim and exaggerated edge control.

INTRO TO SKI

Introducing students to wave skis can be a very rewarding experience, especially if they are new to the sport and have never paddled before!

Unlike the kayak, the initial impression of entrapment under the deck is alleviated, however if you wish to have a productive and safe initial session then there are a few points to consider.

► Dry Land Drill

- ✔ Consider the fins, if they are fitted. Avoid damage by sinking them in the sand before getting into the boat, or do not use them.
- ✔ Get the paddler to sit on the ski. Adjust any footrest, straps and lap straps until you can fit a minimum of two fists underneath the paddler's knees and the deck. The seat should be grippy, use either a seat pad or surf wax.
- ✔ Ensure the foot straps are sufficiently tight enough to prevent the feet from sliding through them.
- ✔ Get the paddler to assemble the lap strap system (anything other than a 'fail safe' system is unacceptable!) and release a number of times. Try again with their eyes shut. Tip the ski on its side so there is now load on the system and repeat the above.
- ✔ Review the paddler's 'on water' clothing to ensure that nothing can catch or become trapped in the release mechanism.
- ✔ Show how to fit and remove ankle or paddle leashes. Some paddlers attach their paddle to the ski with a telephone cord type leash, others use their leash around their ankle to keep the ski with them if they bail out. (If they are not the coiled telephone cord type but the long surfboard style, then explain about looping the excess leash through the lap strap belt to avoid a large loop forming by the side of

the ski and inevitably entangling the paddle! Also explain that this loop of excess leash should be stored on the opposite side of the lap strap release system.)

- ✔ Show the various options of carrying the ski to the water's edge.

► Flat Water Session

A flat-water (lagoon, lake, out back on a calm day) session is very useful to introduce the paddler to paddling a ski and later on learning to roll the ski. If this cannot be done use a sheltered section of the beach.

- ✔ A ski is notoriously tippy until it is moving. By keeping one or both legs either in the water or alongside the ski will assist balance until momentum is gained. This is a useful technique to provide balance even as an expert paddler. If the ski is still too tippy check it is the correct size for their height and weight, if not change it.
- ✔ In the beginning it may also assist balance to adopt a lower paddling style and slowly bring the shaft more vertical as momentum increases.
- ✔ Forward trim essential to keep the weight forward. If it doesn't hurt they are not far enough forward.
- ✔ Get them to paddle a short circuit until they can get both feet into the foot straps, without capsizing!
- ✔ Introducing the lap strap. Here coach must instil confidence and ultimate trust with their student, similar to an intro rolling session.
- ✔ Get the paddler to put their hands by the side of the ski and grip the rails. Tell them to remain in this position and you will pull them back upright after they have capsized.
- ✔ Get the student to capsize in their own time and pull them back up immediately! At this point you can usually judge how water confident they naturally are and how much more practice they need to gain personal confidence.
- ✔ Once you the coach are confident in their performance, revisit the lap strap as a surface exercise with their eyes shut. This time move into slightly deeper water, let the student capsize and release the belt. Reconfirm beforehand that if they have any problems, you are by their side, put their hands back on the rails and you will pull them back up.
- ✔ Let them practise until they can complete the task with confidence with you not close by.

NO SURF

Generally if there is enough wave to push the boat along you can coach surfing. In fact the student will really have to work hard to get the optimum speed out of their craft. Strategies will have to be sought for keeping speed throughout the turns e.g. forwards paddling, lots of forwards trim.

This may be the ideal time for the student to try a different craft such as a ski or a surfboard.

However, there will always be that occasion when everything conspires against the coach to give a flat day. Don't despair, here are a few options:

- ✔ Practise forwards paddling technique, recreate the variation required for taking off on the wave, and strategies required for paddling out.
- ✔ Choreograph imaginary runs, firstly on land and then on the water, use buoys to help.
- ✔ Rolling, practise hesitation, and position awareness.
- ✔ Rescues, being involved with the surf environment. The students should familiarise themselves with a range of techniques to rescue themselves and others. By practising first on flat water aids the progression through to bigger surf.
- ✔ Practise swimming in full kit pushing the boat, carrying the paddle.

- ✔ Practise shepherding a swimmer, giving encouragement.
- ✔ Practise carrying a swimmer on the craft.
- ✔ Practise using other lifesaving devices e.g. a torpedo buoy.
- ✔ Practise rescuing and treating an unconscious swimmer.
- ✔ If you still have time watch surfing videos. Get the students to practise their observation skills.

► Theory

Finally there is a huge chunk of theory that needs to be imparted as practically as possible:

- ✔ Safety.
- ✔ Craft type and design.
- ✔ Equipment.
- ✔ Weather and wave forecasting, beach morphology.
- ✔ Tides and rips.
- ✔ Etiquette, why not re-enact some examples on a beach wave?

These are just some ideas to be getting on with. Use your imagination, be prepared to learn from others and always be open to new ideas.

FURTHER READING

BCU Canoe and Kayak Handbook (Surf Chapter), BCU, Pesda Press, 0-9531956-5-1
Kayak Surfing, Bill Mattos, Pesda Press, 0-9547061-0-2
All about Wave Skis, Shackleton R, 1985, Surfside Press

NIGEL ROBINSON

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He now runs courses from his home in Pembrokeshire where he was born and brought up either close to or on the sea. That passion for the sea continues to grow whether kayaking, surfing or sailing.

