



# **Introduction to White Water Safety**

## Sample Programme and Session Plans

## **BCAB Introduction to White Water Safety Sample Programme and Session Plans**

### **Introduction**

This document provides an example of the British Canoeing Awarding Body (BCAB) Introduction to White Water Safety programme and the accompanying session plans for the 9 modules.

Tutors need to ensure that participants clearly understand the ethos of the course, and about being a useful team member on the river, with a focus on safety rather than rescue. Consideration must be given to the BCAB white water safety courses available and ensuring the participant is supported with their choice. The BCAB Introduction to White Water Safety is aimed at those starting out on white water, or those who have little experience on rivers. Tutors are required to send out the BCAB Introduction to White Water course material to participants prior to the course, these resources will then be referred to throughout the practical course.

It is important that tutors obtain, understand and consider the participants' current understanding, knowledge and ability of the craft that they use and the typical environments that they will paddle. This can be done prior to module 1 through introductions or part of a more formal process.

**Note:** Tutor to participant ratio is minimum 1:2 and maximum 1:6.

The main focus for the Tutor is to ensure that all participants are able to contribute, explore and practice. The 6-hour practical/hands on programme does not take into account introductions, information gathering, administration, getting ready or any transportation. The timings provided are for the delivery of the modules.

All modules are interactive, practical sessions, discussing and using equipment, and exploring possible solutions to common issues in a moderate, white water (Grade 2) environment.

## Notes:

1. Participants rescue from their chosen craft throughout the course;
2. It is not mandatory that there is mixed craft on this course but it can be delivered with mixed craft if required by the participants;
3. Care must be taken with the number of participants immersed in the water at any one time.

## Participants

Participants need to either hold the relevant British Canoeing Awarding Body Personal Performance Award or equivalent ability in/on their preferred craft due to the paddling environment and the boat/board control required to complete the course. This should be filtered via joining instructions and first contact to make sure the participants are suitable for the environment that the course will be conducted in.

The Introduction to White Water Safety is available to all ages. Tutors should check participants' suitability, as well as having appropriate mechanisms for anyone under 18.

## Equipment

In addition to the participants' chosen craft, in module 2, tutors need to show additional equipment that is carried within a group.

## Venue

The Introduction to White Water Safety must be delivered in suitable conditions that are on moderate, white water site-specific venues.

## Course duration

The Introduction to White Water Safety is a 6-hour programme that consists of 9 modules. This can be delivered in a day or as a series of modules, over a maximum of an eight week period, to suit the participants.

## **Time of year and water temperature**

It is crucial that courses are run at times of the year that provide an appropriate learning environment, enabling the course to be delivered as outlined with participants immersed in the water. Care is to be advised when water and air temperatures are low.

## INTRODUCTION TO WHITE WATER SAFETY COURSE PROGRAMME

Module	Time	Module Outline
<a href="#">Module 1</a>	30 minutes	Motivations and decisions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ours and others' motivations</li> <li>● Collaborative support</li> <li>● Selection of river to match motivations</li> </ul>
<a href="#">Module 2</a>	30 minutes	Clothing and equipment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Craft overview, safety considerations and features</li> <li>● Clothing and equipment worn</li> <li>● Additional safety equipment</li> </ul>
<a href="#">Module 3</a>	40 minutes	The White Water environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Understanding water features</li> <li>● Recognising water features</li> <li>● Hazards on the river</li> </ul>
<a href="#">Module 4</a>	30 minutes	Preparing for the river trip <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Appropriate clothing and craft for the river trip</li> <li>● Safety protocols</li> <li>● River brief</li> </ul>
<a href="#">Module 5</a>	45 minutes	Swimming techniques <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Defensive swimming</li> <li>● Aggressive swimming</li> <li>● Changing direction</li> </ul>
<a href="#">Module 6</a>	45 minutes	Choosing how to help a swimmer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Supporting the swimmer</li> <li>● Wading</li> <li>● Reaching</li> <li>● Receiving a throwline</li> </ul>

<a href="#">Module 7</a>	60 minutes	<p>What to do when we swim</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Stay safe</li> <li>● Roll up, push/move away</li> <li>● Nudge</li> <li>● Attaching a line</li> </ul>
<a href="#">Module 8</a>	60 minutes	<p>Kit retrieval</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Paddle retrieval</li> <li>● Assisting others</li> </ul>
<a href="#">Module 9</a>	20 minutes	<p>Reflections and skills checklist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reflections from the course</li> <li>● Reflections on own learning and areas for development</li> <li>● Skills checklist</li> </ul>

## INTRODUCTION TO WHITE WATER SAFETY

### MODULE 1

<b>Module Title:</b>	Motivations and decisions
<b>Time:</b>	30 minutes
<b>Module Outline:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ours and others' motivations</li> <li>● Collaborative support</li> <li>● Selection of river to match motivations</li> </ul>	
<b>Delivery:</b>	
<p><b>Ours and others motivations:</b></p> <p>As a group, discuss why we started paddling and what a great day on the river would look like. Draw out key words to support and revisit throughout module 1.</p> <p>In a group, explore and develop an understanding and appreciation of the motivations to undertake white water trips. This varies from paddler to paddler and from context to context. Explore motivations, including degrees of social engagement, immersion in natural or near-natural settings and challenge, as well as considering how such information shapes and informs decision making.</p>	
<p><b>Collaborative support:</b></p> <p>Highlight the importance of maintaining a collaborative, positive and supportive atmosphere for all.</p>	
<p><b>Selection of river to match motivations:</b></p> <p>As a group, discuss choices relating to motivation and provide examples of known rivers to provide context – compare a trip on a new river or a more familiar local trip. As discussion develops, highlight what motivations inform preferable environments and locations, this needs to be balanced against the presented conditions and an honest consideration of individual abilities.</p>	

## INTRODUCTION TO WHITE WATER SAFETY

### MODULE 2

<b>Module Title:</b>	Clothing and equipment
<b>Time:</b>	30 minutes
<b>Module Outline:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Craft overview, safety considerations and features</li> <li>• Clothing and equipment worn</li> <li>• Additional safety equipment</li> </ul>	
<b>Delivery:</b>	
<p>A group discussion using their own clothing and equipment. Tutor to bring spare/additional equipment to show examples of different types of clothing and equipment used as part of this course.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> It is better if participants bring their own clothing and equipment so they can practice and consider uses and limitations.</p> <p>Explore, discuss and show as a group (remembering to keep it within the context of the white water environment).</p>	
<b>Craft overview, safety considerations and features:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show how to carry out checks, for example, any damage, splits, wear to the structure, footplate secure, deflated/leaks, drain plugs, any lines are taut and secure, etc.;</li> <li>• Explain the importance of additional craft buoyancy (airbags/blocks) and how this can aid rescues (if applicable to craft);</li> <li>• Show relevant attachment points that need to be checked for safety, rescue and carrying. For example, broach loops, grab handles, canoe swim lines; as well raising awareness of snag potentials.</li> <li>• Discuss the options and safety implications of carrying/stowing equipment, loose, lashed or on a line.</li> </ul>	



### **Clothing and equipment worn:**

- Highlight the need to consider the time of year and weather when choosing appropriate clothing and layering;
- Discuss appropriate personal clothing, layering, windproof, footwear and helmet (PPE), as well as raising awareness of snag potentials (clean principle);
- Clarify the fitting of a buoyancy aid (PPE) (practical demonstration of appropriate adjustment and fitting).

**Notes:** Tutors are to ensure that all clothing and equipment used on the course is appropriate for a white water environment, PPE meets manufacturer's recommendations and is fitted correctly, following the clean/snag free principle.

For all BCAB white water qualifications, awards or training courses, the wearing of a leash system or a leash attached to a SUP Board is **NOT** permitted.

### **Additional safety equipment:**

Discuss the additional safety equipment that is highly recommended to carry, depending on the craft paddled:

- Mobile phone in a waterproof case (fully charged);
- Whistle;
- Knife;
- Saw for canoeists;
- Sling or tape, with or without a karabiner;
- Small first aid kit;
- Group shelter;
- Spare clothing;
- Food and drink.

Throughout, encourage participants to reflect on the learning from this module and openly discuss as a group.

## INTRODUCTION TO WHITE WATER SAFETY

### MODULE 3

<b>Module Title:</b>	The white water environment
<b>Time:</b>	40 minutes
<b>Module Outline:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Understanding water features</li> <li>● Recognising water features</li> <li>● Hazards on the river</li> </ul>	
<b>Delivery:</b>	
<p><b>Understanding water features:</b></p> <p>As a group on the bank, use a section of Grade 2 water that provides a variety of features. Revisit the pre-course information, developing an understanding and names of water features.</p>	
<p><b>Recognising water features:</b></p> <p>Walk down the river bank as a group, allowing participants the opportunity to identify water features, including deep and shallow sections, downstream Vs, eddies, stoppers and cushion waves.</p>	
<p><b>Hazards on the river:</b></p> <p>Discuss and highlight river hazards as a group, ensuring that participants understand the dangers of strainers, trees in the water and boulders. Discuss eddies, showing different shapes and sizes, importantly what is a safe eddy for the craft being paddled and the danger of eddies flowing into a strainer.</p> <p>Throughout, promote the importance of avoidance of hazards, signposting to pre-course information and encourage participants to reflect on the learning from this module and openly discuss as a group.</p>	

## INTRODUCTION TO WHITE WATER SAFETY

### MODULE 4

<b>Module Title:</b>	Preparing for the river trip
<b>Time:</b>	30 minutes
<b>Module Outline:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Appropriate clothing and craft for the river trip</li> <li>● Safety protocols</li> <li>● River brief</li> </ul>	
<b>Delivery:</b>	
<p><b>Appropriate clothing and craft for the river trip:</b></p> <p>As a recap on module 2, work together in pairs to look at each other's clothing and craft, discussing the appropriateness to the white water environment.</p>	
<p><b>Safety protocols:</b></p> <p>Discuss protocols and importance of a supportive group, with everyone having a responsibility to safety. Highlight what safety kit is being carried and by who, home contact details and procedures for any unplanned delays.</p>	
<p><b>River brief:</b></p> <p>Highlight the importance of a river brief and the content so that all group members understand 'the plan', as well as the importance of creating an environment where everyone can share their thoughts and considerations.</p> <p>Throughout, encourage participants to reflect on the learning from this module and openly discuss as a group.</p>	

## INTRODUCTION TO WHITE WATER SAFETY

### MODULE 5

<b>Module Title:</b>	Swimming techniques
<b>Time:</b>	45 minutes
<b>Module Outline:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Defensive</li> <li>● Aggressive</li> <li>● Changing direction</li> </ul>	
<b>Delivery:</b>	
<p>Using a slower flow initially, demonstrate defensive swimming (feet first, hips up, chin to chest and looking), methods of changing direction and rolling to initiate aggressive swimming.</p> <p>Discuss and emphasise throughout the awareness of where you are as a swimmer in relation to their boat, others and potential hazards such as boulders and pushing away using their feet.</p> <p>Participants practice techniques with the tutor to provide both ‘top tips’ and coaching to develop confidence and competence of individuals. As participants develop techniques, move to a slightly higher flow, for further practice and appreciation of both speed and power (grade 2).</p> <p>Throughout, encourage participants to reflect on the learning from this module and openly discuss as a group.</p>	
<b>Notes:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Providers consider how many participants are in the water at one time, and set practices with appropriate safety cover;</li> <li>● Swimmers checked that they are entering the water with a ‘clean principle’;</li> </ul>	

- Selection of suitable training sites is essential. Issues such as water quality, depth of water for swimming, reliability of water levels and in-water hazards all need to be considered. Once a site is identified, it needs to be risk assessed. Throughout the delivery of the course, tutors need to undertake a continual, dynamic risk assessment to ensure that the sites being used for particular sessions are suitable and do not present unacceptable levels of risk.

## INTRODUCTION TO WHITE WATER SAFETY

### MODULE 6

<b>Module Title:</b>	Choosing how to help a swimmer
<b>Time:</b>	45 minutes
<b>Module Outline:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Verbally supporting the swimmer</li> <li>● Reaching</li> <li>● Wading</li> <li>● Receiving the throwline</li> </ul>	
<b>Delivery:</b>	
<b>Verbally supporting a swimmer:</b>	
<p>Demonstrate to the group how a swimmer can be verbally supported, keeping a distance to lower any risk, shouting to the swimmer, reminding them of safe swimming (feet up), using their name and directing them to a safe area to get out of the water.</p> <p>In pairs (one swimming, the other supporting), practice in slow, moving water. For further practice and appreciation of both speed and power (grade 2), progress to a slightly higher flow.</p>	
<b>Reaching:</b>	
<p>Demonstrate reaching rescues to the group to provide support to the swimmer and help them to the side. It is important to show the use of different reaching aids and how these can be used effectively.</p> <p>In pairs (one swimming, the other supporting), practice in slow moving water. For further practice and appreciation of both speed and power (grade 2), progress to a slightly higher flow.</p>	

**Wading:**

Demonstrate to the group methods of wading into an eddy, to provide support to the swimmer and help them to the side. It is important to discuss and show appropriate depths for wading into an eddy and river bed conditions.

In pairs (one swimming, the other wading into an eddy to support), linked with the reaching session before and practise in slow moving water.

**Receiving a throwline:**

Initially provide a land based demonstration to the group on how to receive a line as a swimmer in white water, catch the line, roll into a defensive swimming position and hold the rope in front of the chest

Participants practice receiving the line in slow moving water. For further practice and appreciation of both speed and power (grade 2), progress to a slightly higher flow. Throughout, the tutor throws the line for participants to catch.

Throughout, encourage participants to reflect on the learning from this module and openly discuss as a group.

**Notes:**

- Providers consider how many participants are in the water at one time, and set practices with appropriate safety cover;
- Swimmers checked that they are entering the water with a 'clean principle';
- A selection of suitable training sites is essential. Issues, such as water quality, depth of water for swimming, reliability of water levels and in-water hazards all need to be considered. Once a site is identified, it needs to be risk assessed. Throughout the delivery of the course, tutors need to undertake a continual dynamic risk assessment to ensure that the sites being used for particular sessions are suitable and do not present unacceptable levels of risk.



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### MODULE 7

<b>Module Title:</b>	What to do if you swim
<b>Time:</b>	60 minutes
<b>Module Outline:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Stay safe</li> <li>● Roll up, push/move away</li> <li>● Nudge</li> <li>● Attaching a line</li> </ul>	
<b>Delivery:</b>	
<p><b>Stay safe:</b></p> <p>Explain to the group that ‘everybody has or will swim’ but the importance is to be proactive and not be a victim in the white water environment.</p> <p>Remind the participants of previous modules of swimming and the importance of locating a safe area to get out of the water. Equipment (craft and paddle) can be retrieved later if necessary.</p>	
<p><b>Roll up, push/move away:</b></p> <p>Explain to the group that there are methods that can be used to retrieve equipment by themselves, as well as assist others.</p> <p>In slow moving water, demonstrate capsizing to the group and then rolling/righting the craft the right way up and pushing/use of swim lines to aid the craft towards the bank.</p>	
<p><b>Attaching a line:</b></p> <p>Explain to participants that, at times, swimmers and craft can be ‘stranded/pinned’ midstream and that the use of a throwline can bring the swimmer and craft to the side. Remind and show the group of appropriate attachment points on the craft.</p>	

To the group, demonstrate the use of receiving a throwline and bringing the craft and swimmer to the side safely. Using a throwline and karabiner to clip the craft and pendulum into a safe eddy or appropriate bankside.

In slow moving water, participants practice receiving a line and both their craft and themselves retrieved from midstream.

Throughout the module show safe and appropriate techniques for emptying craft, ensuring appropriate manual handling as well as safe methods of getting back in/on their craft, considering the environment as well as them being psychologically and physically ready.

**Notes:**

- Remind participants that it may be safer to swim rather than roll/right the craft push or grab the swim line;
- Providers consider how many participants are in the water at one time and set practices with appropriate safety cover;
- Swimmers checked that they are entering the water with a 'clean principle';
- Selection of a suitable training site is essential. Issues such as water quality, depth of water for swimming, reliability of water levels and in-water hazards all need to be considered. Once a site is identified, it needs to be risk assessed. Throughout the delivery of the course, tutors need to undertake a continual dynamic risk assessment to ensure that the sites being used for particular sessions are suitable and do not present unacceptable levels of risk.

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### MODULE 8

<b>Module Title:</b>	Kit retrieval
<b>Time:</b>	60 minutes
<b>Module Outline:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Paddle retrieval</li> <li>● Assisting others</li> </ul>	
<b>Delivery:</b>	
<b>Paddle retrieval:</b>	
<p>To the group, demonstrate methods of retrieving/throwing paddles, using different techniques, as well as swimming and reminding them that it may be safer to leave and swim to the side.</p> <p>In slow moving water, participants practice retrieving paddles using a variety of techniques to explore what works best for them.</p>	
<b>Assisting others:</b>	
<p>At the start of this specific session, remind participants that <u>assisting</u> others does have a higher risk factor. Both ability and environment must be considered and this technique should only be carried out in a slow moving/flat pool environment.</p> <p>To the group, demonstrate methods of assisting someone in/on their craft across a slow moving/flat pool environment. The use of slings, nudging placing then a canoe as a tandem crew can be explored with the importance of being able to move away immediately.</p> <p>In slow moving/flat pool environments only, participants practice assisting others using a variety of techniques to explore what works best for them.</p>	

**Notes:**

- Remind participants that it may be safer to swim rather than retrieve the paddle;
- Remind participants that assisting others is not a rescue but any assistance can increase the risk to themselves and they should always consider their ability and the environment.
- Remind participants that are canoeing that spare paddles can be stowed appropriately and used as an effective method to carry on paddling as well as retrieving a dropped paddle.

## INTRODUCTION TO WHITE WATER SAFETY

### MODULE 9

<b>Module Title:</b>	Reflections and Skills Checklist
<b>Time:</b>	20 minutes
<b>Module Outline:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reflections from the course;</li> <li>● Reflections on own learning and areas for development;</li> <li>● Skills checklist.</li> </ul>	
<b>Delivery:</b>	
<b>Reflections from the course:</b>	
<p>Discuss and share key learning points - what worked well? What was difficult? What solutions did you come up with?</p>	
<b>Reflections on own learning and areas for development:</b>	
<p>Participants should leave the course with a good understanding of their own areas of strength and areas to develop. The Skills Checklist could be used to aid this discussion.</p>	
<b>Skills checklist:</b>	
<p>Participants should complete their Skills Checklist with the Tutor and agree areas for development, and ideas on how to complete the development areas identified.</p>	