

Sea Kayak

Advanced Sea Kayak Award

Award Description

This award is designed to develop proficient skills and appropriate decision making skills for a safe day out on the sea in advanced conditions.

Extended Award Description

As an Advanced Sea Kayaker, you will have extensive experience of paddling on the sea. Your experience will include paddling a wide variety of sea conditions with winds over force 4 and/or tides over 2 Knots, using sea kayaks in tidal or non-tidal environments, where you may make open crossings in excess of 2Nm, as well as travelling along the coastline.

Award Content

1. Location

To have an enjoyable day out on the sea we need to make some key decisions to ensure we are in the right place at the right time.

Key factors influencing our decisions include swell, the weather, the tide and features of the location we choose. We can take each of these factors into consideration and ask ourselves some questions to ensure the correct decisions are made:

Factor: Waves

We may need to observe: How can we find out the sea conditions in the area we are travelling? How are the waves being generated? What will the sea state be? What is the relationship between waves, wind and tidal flow?

Factor: Weather conditions

We may need to know: How will we find an accurate forecast? What is the forecast and how can we use it to interpret likely conditions on our journey? Which direction and how strong is the wind? Is it due to increase or decrease? Is it going to change direction? How will the forecast wind speed impact on the locations we can choose from? What impact might the topography have and how will the forecast wind speed impact on the waters that we can choose from? What other weather factors are relevant?

Factor: The tide

We may need to know: What speeds and directions are the tides flowing? Are there tidal gates to be aware of and how are these calculated? What impact do the wind and tides have on the water surface?

Factor: Access and environment

We may need to determine: What restrictions might there be on the water we are paddling on? Is this a managed or supervised area? Is kayaking, launching or landing restricted to certain areas? How would we find this information? How can we reduce our impact on the environment and animals around us? What are the potential dangers in the area we are paddling? Can we land in appropriate areas? What features do we need to take into account with regards to restricted landings?

2. **Getting Ready**

Before getting to the water we must choose suitable kit and equipment and have the correct knowledge to use it. Key points we may consider are:

What will we wear?

What are the clothing options available to us as sea kayakers? Why might we choose one over another? Are we confident in the use of our chosen personal safety equipment?

What will we use?

What are the different equipment and boat options available and why might we choose one over the other? What different features might we consider when choosing our craft? What features of our paddle might affect our choice?

What will we take?

What additional equipment might be useful to carry on the sea with us? What safety kit would it be useful to have with us or available on the shore? Do we have the equipment we will need to look after ourselves and help others during the trip? Can we access a VHF radio and GPS and are we confident in the use of these? How will we store our equipment to make sure it is accessible when needed? How will we deal with broken or lost equipment or carry out a simple repair?

What plans will we make?

Are we able to make a navigational plan for an open crossing, using a map, chart and compass? How will buoyage affect our trip? How will we maintain course throughout our trip? What methods will we use to locate our position throughout our trip, even in poor visibility or darkness? Can we calculate our time and distance effectively using both compass and map, as well as GPS? Do we have ways to monitor our progress and adapt our plans? Are there escape routes in our plans?

3. At the Water

Before we set out on our journey we need to be confident in our ability to deal with the complications it might bring. The sea is usually a shared space; we must also be aware of other users and consider how we will safely get on the water.

Consideration: Other users - we sometimes launch and paddle in busy areas. We may need to share the water with swimmers, other kayakers and anglers, amongst others. To do this safely, an 'etiquette' amongst these users has developed to minimise conflict and help everyone enjoy the environment. It is also important to know something about the others we are paddling with.

We may need to consider: Who else is in the area? What is the etiquette here? Who else is paddling with us? What is their current ability? Are we aware of their motivations? What communication strategies can we agree upon to be used throughout the trip and in case of an incident?

Consideration: Safety and rescue

We may need to know: How can we protect ourselves and others from any potential hazards? What damage to our health might repeated immersion in cold water cause? How can we help prevent this becoming an issue? What would we do if someone we are paddling with gets really cold or overheats? What potential illness or injuries might we need to treat? How might we do this at sea, with limited landing areas? What additional safety equipment might be useful to carry and have access to? Do we have an escape plan? How will we summon help if it is needed? Do we have the equipment we need to look after ourselves and help others during the trip? How will we ensure it is accessible when we need it? Do we understand the collision regulations and light and sound signals at sea?

Consideration: Getting to the water

We may need to determine: What are the different launch sites available to us? What are the advantages and disadvantages of these? Which launching sites are appropriate for our skill level and that of the others we are paddling with? How are we going to get to the access point and do we need to organise a shuttle? What is the best way to carry, load and secure our craft to protect ourselves or others from injury and prevent unnecessary damage? How will we get our craft and additional equipment to the water? Are the conditions and weather as expected? Do we need to adjust our plans?

4. **Advanced Sea Kayak Skills**

When sea kayaking we should be in control. Key features of being in control include us staying relaxed and keeping our actions within our abilities. We should be able to use effective positioning to ensure our own safety and that of others. To make appropriate judgements, we must be able to determine which

environmental features are a help or a hazard and understand how to utilise or avoid them.

Skill: Effective forward paddling

We may need to know: How can we use different parts of our body for an efficient forward paddling technique? How can we maintain our technique over long periods? How might winds over force 4 and tides over 2 knots affect our forward paddling? What other advanced conditions might affect our forward paddling? How can we adapt our forward paddling technique for these conditions? How can we adapt our paddling style for continual and efficient forward paddling? Do we understand the advantages and limitations of different styles of paddles?

Skill: Negotiating confined spaces

We may need to know: How we are going to manoeuvre in the most effective and efficient manner, using conditions to aid our boat's movements? What techniques and tactics can we use to get in and around rocks? Are we able to move forwards, backwards and hold our position even when affected by the wind, tide and waves? How can we use our positioning in a confined space to ensure our safety and help others? Can we use different speeds and approaches to help our manoeuvring? How can we read the water to help our manoeuvring? Can we use timing and communication with others to help us?

Skill: Maintaining and changing direction

We may need to know: What techniques and tactics can we use to maintain our direction? What water and environmental conditions might we need to take into consideration when doing this? How can we use the water, wind and waves to maintain or change direction? How can we use our edge and paddle position to help maintain or change direction? How can we use features of our craft to make us more efficient?

Skill: Working as a group

We may need to know: How can we monitor and maintain our own well-being and performance and help other people to maintain theirs? How can we respond to this in advanced conditions? Are we working as a team to follow the agreed strategies and plans for the day? Are we, and the people we are paddling with, coping with the conditions and expected future conditions? Are we attending to our needs and the needs of others we are paddling with? Are the methods of communication we set up working effectively in the advanced conditions? If not, how can we change them?

Skill: Dealing with mishaps

We may need to know: How can we support ourselves on both sides when off balance? Can we roll in advanced environments? Can we remain with our craft and paddle in the event of capsize? What would we do if we, or somebody else, is separated from their craft? Can we self-rescue? Can we get others back into the craft in an advanced environment? Can we help to rescue an injured fellow paddler? How would we deal with loose kit? Are we able to continue if our kit is broken or lost? How can we be proactive when being rescued or rescuing others in an advanced environment? What strategies can we use to work with others to prevent or deal with incidents? How will the advanced conditions affect all of our decisions on dealing with mishaps? Do we have sufficient plans and strategies for all potential incidents? Are we able to summon help?

Skill: Towing

Considerations: What different tows can we use? What is the best use of single or multiple towing or anchoring techniques in various situations? How would we pick up and establish a tow? How can we release from a tow? What are the dangers with towing?

5. After the Sea Kayak Session

Every advanced sea kayak trip is an opportunity for learning and improving. We can create a positive impact on our future experiences by performing a good post-trip assessment.

Look around: Reflection in action is useful and changes can be made during the trip. Has anything changed whilst we are out on the water? Are there any environment clues? What are we going to change?

Watching what others do: It might be useful to spend some time observing other paddlers. How are they using the environment to get the best from their boats? Can we use technology to aid our reflection and development?

Consider what you will take away: What have we learnt today? What can we focus on next time?

6. Future Development

Each day we spend sea kayaking further expands our skills and knowledge, creating a more enjoyable experience on the water. With no trip experiences ever the same, we never stop learning.

Continually evaluating the choices we make creates a natural evolution of decision making ability. When we reach a certain point in this, it may be worth considering moving onto British Canoeing Leadership or Coaching qualifications.