

Surf Kayak

Advanced Surf Kayak Award

Award Description

This award is designed to advance your surfing skills, techniques and accuracy in decision making for a safe day surfing in a range of environments.

Extended Award Description

As an Advanced Surf Kayaker you will have extensive experience of surfing in a kayak, including surfing in a variety of conditions, including reefs, points, offshore breaks and sandy beaches, which may have significant hazards, may be remote and/or have difficult access. You will be confident in powerful, steep, pitching, fast, hollow and heavy waves, up to and above double overhead when seated in a kayak in the trough of the wave. You will have a comprehensive understanding of the environmental factors which affect the location of our ride.

Award Content

1. **External Factors - Where are we going to go?**

In order to have an enjoyable day out surfing that challenges our skill set, 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 the 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: Swell – swell generation is critical for us to get the best, most powerful waves. Choosing the right beach or reef break for the swell that has been generated is essential.

We may need to know: How and where is the swell being generated? Is there any interference? If so, what kind and how is this caused? Can we anticipate the period? What effect will this have on the set patterns? How can we find out what swell is affecting the section of coastline that we are nearest to? How will different beaches affect the swell in different ways?

Factor: Weather – wind speed and direction has a big impact on us as surfers.

What we might observe: 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 reefs and beaches that we can choose from?

Factor: The tide - some surfing locations are best when the tide is full on high or low (depending on the beach or surf spot), understanding this will give us a better and more enjoyable day in the surf.

We may need to know: What time is high water? What time is low water? How will this impact on the reefs and beaches that we can choose from? What might change as the tide fills or drops? Can we learn to read and anticipate changes to the waves by looking at the beach before the tide fills it?

Factor: Places to surf – we can surf in almost all suitable locations. The shape of the beach; its profile will affect the shape of the waves formed. The bathymetric profile will affect the quality of our session.

We may need to know: How would the shape of beaches that are available affect the swell that is forecast? What types of beach usually have the least potential issues for us? What features of a beach may generate a steeper wave profile? What features may provide more consistent waves for us to develop our skill set? Can we identify suitable point breaks? What are we looking for in a break? How would we establish if a reef is suitable for us to surf on? How can we assess safe places to surf from on the water?

Additional questions we could ask: Are there other factors that we might need to consider before we choose a location? Nesting birds? Seal pups? Water quality?

When we put all of this information together we can decide on suitable locations for our level of skill, to help us achieve the aims of our day.

2. Equipment

Once we have chosen where to go, we must decide on equipment suitable for our location. Key points we could consider are:

What will you surf?

Which specific kayak design characteristics can allow us to become more skilful and perform advanced manoeuvres? Which are the most important? Why might we choose one over another? What adaptations might we make to our boat to maximise our skills?

What will you wear?

There are different options available to us as surfers. What are these? Why might we choose one over another? How might surfing in an isolated environment affect our choice?

What safety precautions could be considered?

How can we protect ourselves from any other potential hazards? What damage to our health might repeated immersion in cold water cause? How can we help prevent this becoming an issue? What additional equipment might it be useful to have access to in the boat, or on the beach? What if you or somebody you're surfing with gets really cold or overheats? What potential injuries might we need to treat? How might we do this? What means of communication might we need? How would we raise the alarm in an emergency? How far away from our base vehicle are we? Does this distance mean we need to carry additional items? If so, what are they? How isolated are we from populated areas and what additional considerations might this bring?



3. Getting to the Beach or Reef

Having decided upon our equipment for the day we must get it to the beach without damage to it or ourselves. Some surf craft are relatively light and fragile, others are heavier but more robust.

We may need to determine: How best to carry, load and secure our craft to protect ourselves or others from injury and prevent unnecessary damage.

4. At the Beach or Reef

A beach or reef is usually a shared space. We must be aware of other users and any rules and restrictions by considering the following:

Consideration: Other users - the surf zone can be a very busy area. We may need to share the waves with swimmers, board surfers and kite boarders, amongst others. To do this safely we follow the basic surf etiquette rules to ensure we minimise conflict and help everyone enjoy the surf zone.

What we might observe: Who else is in the water? Where are the other users? Is the beach a managed or supervised beach? Is surfing restricted to certain areas? Are certain areas busier? Is etiquette generally being observed? Is there somewhere quieter up or down the beach to take away pressure from the main peaks? Is there one peak? Are there points or areas we wouldn't want to place ourselves or force others into? How can we avoid these? If we're surfing with other people, how can we keep an eye out for each other and still get some waves?

Consideration: Wave height – to continue to develop and challenge our skill in surfing a kayak or ski, we're looking for waves bigger than twice our head height when sitting in or on our craft, which offer some power when they break.

What we might observe: How big are the waves here? How are the waves breaking and how might that affect our surf session? What specific features of the breaking wave should we observe? Are the waves breaking in both directions? How long might a ride be? Is the wave holding enough power to be able to use the lip? Is there a clear paddle out?

5. Surfing Skills

At this point in our learning we will be surfing our kayak or wave ski with considerable skill, flair and improvisation on the wave face. We should be able to ride close to the shoulder of the wave, on our terms, whilst choosing appropriate techniques to match the hydrology of the wave. We will be using the full wave face from top to bottom and engaging our skills to end our ride using the most powerful parts of the wave.

Skill: Assessing the surf zones

What we might observe: How long is the wave shouldering for? Can we identify a suitable shouldering wave? Where can we launch our craft from? Is there a route out that is more obvious? Are there any areas which cause concern? If so, how will we avoid them? Is the wave face uniform? Where can we position ourselves to be able to assess the wave from on the water? What are the wave features telling us?

Skill: Paddling out through the surf

We may need to consider: What decisions might we need to make while paddling through the surf? How can we anticipate and be ready for these? Can we see an obvious line of least resistance? Why do we think it is there? Are there any areas we don't want to be? How can we get from the beach to a position of being ready to ride with the least amount of exertion? How long might this take? What strategies and techniques can we use to get us over or under the waves? Is there anywhere we don't want to be?

Skill: Catching a wave

We may need to observe: How will we choose the right wave and ensure we are in the correct position for it to maximise our ride? Why might we want to catch a wave at its steepest part? How big is the wave? Where is it peaking? Which way is it breaking? How will we use the characteristics of the wave to ensure we are heading in the right direction? What different take-offs might we use? How can we assess a wave's characteristics to decide what take-off it will require? What do the foam cones tell us?

Skill: Riding the wave

We may need to know: What different types of turn can we use to ride each wave to its full potential? Which parts of the wave hold the most power? How will we get to these? What do we hope to achieve from a good turn? Which factors have the greatest effect on our turning angle? How can we use our turning angle to derive maximum power from our craft? What observational and physical triggers can we use to select our turning angle and make our turns as effective as possible? How can we use our body and paddle position to make our turns as effective as possible? Can we use any other factors to assist in our accuracy of turn? How can we use a variety of pace and attack to link our manoeuvres seamlessly? Which factors have the greatest effect on our ability to stall and accelerate the boat? Do we know what move is coming next? Are we riding reactively or proactively?

Skill: Finishing our ride we can use the lip for a variety of high impact manoeuvres at the end of our ride

We may need to consider: When will we exit the wave and why? How can we read the wave to ensure we arrive at the lip at the right moment? How can we utilise the lip at the end of our ride? How can we use body position and power transfer to exit the wave effectively? How will a good exit from the wave help us? What ways might we be able to surf out after the wave has broken? How can we get most of our boat out the water as the wave breaks? Is our connectivity helping or hindering us?

Skill: Dealing with mishaps

We may need to consider: What types of recovery or roll can we use in the event of capsize? What caused capsize? Has it gone away? Can we continue our ride? If we need to rescue someone, what options do we have? Where are we best to position ourselves? How might we prioritise our actions?

6. After the Surf Session

Every surf session is an opportunity for learning and improving. We can create a positive impact on our future experiences by performing a good post-ride assessment.

Look around: When we're back on shore we can look back at the beach and the waves. Has anything changed whilst we've been out? If so, how and why? Were we in the right place? Watching the waves, can we visualise what ours looked like? Could we have done more? How do we feel, both physically and mentally? What would have made the session easier/more progressive?

Watching what others do: It might be useful to spend some time watching any other kayak/ski surfers. Where are they positioning themselves relative to the shoulder? Are they using the whole face of the wave? Can we see how? Are they exiting before the wave breaks? Can we see why? What are they doing when the wave breaks? Can we anticipate what move is going to come next? Are we seeing a variety in pace and attack? Think back to our waves. Can we identify why those that felt good differed from those that didn't?

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

7. Future Development

Each day we spend kayak surfing further expands our skills and knowledge, creating a more enjoyable experience on the water. With no two surf 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 what areas you are currently developing and working with fellow surfers in your paddling community to help each other improve. It may be worth considering moving onto British Canoeing Leadership or Coaching qualifications.