

Freestyle

Flat Water Freestyle Award

Award Description

This award is designed to develop the foundation freestyle moves that can be performed on flat water.

Extended Award Description

Your Flat Water Freestyle Award enables you to develop your skills in a deep, flat water, sheltered water or swimming pool environment. Evolving our knowledge on flat water stands us in good stead for transferring our skills to moving water, waves or holes. Using the accessibility and easy access of flat water, you can have fun expanding your moves in a safe environment. Your Flat Water Freestyle Award should be a sound basis for building the experience and knowledge associated with the Freestyle Award.

Award Content

1. Location

To have an enjoyable day with freestyle, we need to make sure we choose a suitable spot to play. There are a wide range of easily accessible spots for us. We may use an indoor pool, or a lake, a flat section of river or sheltered part of the sea.

We can take some key factors into account when choosing our venue and deciding if it is suitable:

Factor: Water depth

We may need to know: How deep is this flat water? Is the water deep enough for us to go on end or upside down? Are there parts that are shallower than others? Are there any objects under the surface to avoid?

Factor: Pool rules

We may need to know: Can we take our own boats in the pool? Do they need to be cleaned before entering the pool? Do they have any other requirements of boats used at the pool? Are there rules about sliding in off the side? What equipment do they want us to be wearing?

Factor: Weather

What we might observe: What is the air temperature? What is the water temperature? How strong is the wind? What direction is the wind blowing? Are there more sheltered areas to use? Is the wind creating chop on the surface? How will this affect how easy it is to practice the skills we are playing with? How might the weather affect how long we play for?

Factor: Water quality

We may need to know: What is the water quality like? Are there any factors that could make the water quality worse? What could the consequences be for us if the water quality is poor?

Factor: Access and environment

We may need to know: What restrictions might be in place on a piece of water and why? Are there larger, powered boats using the area we plan to use? Will this present us with any issues? How can we reduce our impact on the environment and animals around us?

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 freestylers? Why might we choose one over another? Would the location or weather affect these choices? 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? What difference does the shape and size of our boat make? What is the difference between a freestyle boat and other boat types? How will we choose a boat which is the right size for us? How will we ensure the boat is outfitted and the seat positioned to suit us?

What will we take?

What additional equipment might be useful to have with us? What safety kit would it be useful to have with us or available on the bank?

3. At the Water

Before we get on the water we need to be confident in our ability to deal with any complications it might bring. We must also consider how we will safely get on the water.

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 injuries might we need to treat? How might we do this?

Consideration: Getting to the water

We may need to determine: 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?

4. Freestyle Skills

Freestyle is about moving your boat about on every possible axis while having lots of fun. There are some fundamental skills and moves that can be learnt and performed on flat water.

Skill: Good posture

We may need to know: How might bad posture affect what we are able to do?
How can we experiment with our posture to help with strength and rotation?
What injuries could bad posture cause?

Skill: Warming up

We may need to determine: What are the benefits of doing a warm up? What makes a good warm up for freestyle? What difference might we see in a good freestyle warm up, compared to a warm up for a different sport or paddlesport discipline?

Skill: Edging - many freestyle moves involve putting the boat on edge.

We may need to practice: How can we use edge for a variety of different moves? How can we vary how much we edge our boat? How would we hold the edge one way, while looking the other way? How can we keep our boat on edge while paddling forwards or backwards? What happens if we edge while moving forward without our paddle in the water? How will we position our upper body while edging for different moves?

Skill: Tailies (a.k.a. Stern Dips or Tail Squirts) - elevation is less important than good technique with this move.

We may need to consider: How can we use our speed, edge control and torso rotation to perform this move? Why do we paddle forwards first? What happens if we edge more or less? Where do we look while performing this move and why? Where will our paddle be positioned throughout the move? Are we able to perform this move on both sides?

Skill: Spin 360 - a lot of freestyle moves involve rotation. By rehearsing our skills on the flat, we will develop our coordination and prepare our body for what we are about to do. This means we will be set up to learn cool rotational moves quickly.

We may need to consider: Why is this move important? How will we perform this move? What tools and techniques can we use to help us perform this

move? Does our boat stay flat throughout the move? Would it make our move easier or faster if we put the boat on edge?

Skill: Pivot Turn

We may need to consider: How will we perform this move? What move is this the flat water version of? How can we use edging and weight transfer to help us? How do we use the paddle to help perform this move?

Skill: Lean Cleans - elevation is less important than good technique with this move.

We may need to consider: How will we perform this move? How can we get a good rhythm going to allow us to continue making the move? What effect does torso rotation have on this move? Does this body motion remind us of any other moves above? What moves does this skill lead us on to? Can we do this both ways? Are both directions as consistent?

Skill: Double Pump - a method for dipping the front end to begin a cartwheel or bow stall. This is about learning the right technique to get started.

We may need to practice: What different techniques can we use to get started on this skill? How much edge do we need? How can we use the poolside to assist us in getting started with this move?

Skill: Assisted Pop - a way to practice the pop part of one of the coolest looking moves; the loop.

We may need to consider: How do we perform this move? How does someone else help us? What can we practice to maximise the pop and make our boat flip forward for the loop? What might we need to consider to work out if it's safe to play with the assisted pop? What can we do to help reduce the risk of injuries to our self and our helper?

Skill: Rolling - being able to roll back up means we can relax and try any trick without worrying about going upside-down.

We may need to practice: Can we roll quickly from any position? Have we practiced capsizing unexpectedly in a variety of positions?

Skill: Support strokes - understanding where our balance points are and how we correct balance allows us to be confident in performing all our funky tricks.

We may need to practice: Can we put the boat off-balance and correct it? Can we do this on any axis? Can we use our torso position to adjust our balance? Where are the balance points? What can we do with the paddle to help correct our balance?

Skill: Dealing with mishaps

We may need to consider: How would we safely get ourselves or others back to the side or back into their boat? How would we deal with loose kit? What do airbags do and why is that useful?

5. After our Session

Every time we go paddling, we have an opportunity to learn and improve. We can maximise how much we learn from our session by thinking back and reflecting on what we did, even if it seemed like all we were doing is playing and having fun!

What did we do: What skills did we play with today? Have we improved on any of them? If so, what helped? Did we find anything particularly challenging? We able to do everything as well on both sides?

Using video: Video is a great way to watch back what we do. It can help us see if something is working and what we need to change. It can also be handy to spot our good examples of a skill and weaker performances. Does our left and right version of the same move look the same?

Watching what others do: It might be useful to spend some time watching other freestyle paddlers doing tricks on flat water. YouTube has loads of cool videos and can be a great resource.

What next? What can we focus on next time? Are there any games we can play to practice the skills we've learnt? How would we use these skills in a different environment such as on a wave, in the flow or using an eddy line?

6. Future Development

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

Continually evaluating our skills creates a natural evolution of ability. When we reach a certain point in this, it may be worth considering moving onto the Freestyle Award.

