

Surf Kayak

Progressive Surf Kayak Award

Award Description

This award is designed to progress your ability to apply correct decision making skills for an enjoyable and safe day out surfing.

Extended Award Description

Your Progressive Surf Kayak Award progresses your ability to apply your choices to an enjoyable and skilful day in surf, on sections of sandy beaches with easy access and free from significant hazard. You will be confident in gentle, sloping and spilling waves, preferably peeling, not pitching or dumping. Wave height should be no more than double overhead when seated in a kayak in the trough of the wave.

Your award looks at the factors which affect our decisions on where and when to go out, developing a deeper understanding of your surroundings and the external and environmental factors which affect the location of your ride. You will be confident in creating proficient use of skills and equipment to be in control throughout our day and expand your knowledge of dealing with mishaps. Your award should be seen as a sound basis for independently building the experience and expertise associated with Advanced Surf Kayak Award holders.

Award Content

1. **External Factors - Where do we go surfing?**

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 – we need swell, this generates the waves that we are going to surf. Choosing the right beach for the swell that has been generated is important.

We may need to know: How is swell generated? 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 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 you 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 beaches that we can choose from? What might change as the tide fills or drops?

How can we 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 a range of locations. Some places have more potential dangers than others. The shape of the beach; its profile will affect the shape of the waves formed. Knowledge about how the shape of the land affects the waves is called 'bathymetry'.

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? Can we journey on the beach to find waves that offer

varying levels of challenge? How will we choose waves which hold enough power to be able to perform to the best of our skill set?

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? Which are the most important? Why might we choose one over another?

What will you wear?

There are different options available to us as surfers. What are these? Why might we choose one over another?

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?

3. Getting to the Beach

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

A beach 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 at the beach? Is the beach a managed or supervised beach? Is surfing restricted to certain areas? Are certain areas busier? Is etiquette generally being observed? When might the presence of other users cause us to change our location? Where are the other water users? 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 our skill in surfing a kayak or ski, we're looking for waves no bigger than twice our head height when sitting in or on our craft.

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 look for?

5. Surfing Skills

At this point in our learning we will be surfing our kayak or wave ski with purpose and control 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.

Skill: Assessing the surf zones

What we might observe: How long is the wave shouldering for? Can we identify a suitable shouldering wave? Is there a route out that is more obvious?

Skill: Paddling out through the surf

We may need to consider: 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 the waves?

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? 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? What type of take-off will it require? How will we use the characteristics of the wave to ensure we are heading in the right direction?

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 body and paddle position to make our turns as effective as possible? What observational or physical triggers can we use to make our turns as effective as possible? Can we use any other factors to assist in our accuracy of turn?

Skill: Finishing our ride

We may need to consider: When will we exit the wave and why? How can we read the wave? How can we use body position and power transfer to exit the wave effectively? How will a good exit from the wave help us?

Skill: Dealing with mishaps

We may need to know: What types of recovery or roll can we use in the event of capsize? What caused capsize? Has it gone away? 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?

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? 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 moving onto the Advanced Surf Kayak Award.

