



Rafting

River Raft Racing Award

Award Description

This award is designed to introduce you to the raft racing specific skills which create an enjoyable and safe experience on natural rivers.

Extended Award Description

Your River Raft Racing Award will give you the ability to enjoy raft training and racing on natural rivers. You will explore the factors which create a safe experience on the water, developing your skills in raft movement, control, pace and stroke technique to effectively apply in a team environment. Through your extensive experience you will continue to expand your knowledge of natural river specific race tactics as well as understand the correct use and set up of equipment.

Award Content

1. Location

When heading to the water we should have an understanding of the river and how we will access it. Some factors we may consider are:

Factor: The River

We may need to determine: What information might we need about this river and how would we obtain this? What grade of white water are we paddling? What are the current water levels and might these change while we are on the water? What support might we need? What is the water quality and how could this affect the team wellbeing? What precautions can be taken to stay healthy on and around the river?

Factor: Weather conditions.



We may need to determine: What is the weather forecast for the time we are on the water? How might the wind speed and direction affect us? How can the sun and temperature affect us?

Factor: River rules and restrictions

We may need to know: Are there any specific rules or restrictions for this river? Who else will be making use of the water? What is the etiquette around fellow water users? Where do we get changed and how does the culture of the area affect that?

Factor: Access

We may need to know: Where are we allowed to get in and get out of the water? Best lifting techniques and if any aids are available to help us get the raft on and off the water? How can we work as a team to get safely in and out of the boat? What transport plan have we got in place? If there was an emergency, how would support get to 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 rafters? How might external factors affect which clothing we choose? Are we confident in the use of our chosen personal safety equipment?

What will we use?

What are the different equipment options available and why might we choose one over the other? How do we use our equipment? What do we do if there is a problem with it?

Have a think about what additional equipment might be useful to have access to on the bank.



How else can we prepare?

What muscles will we be using and how can we warm them up before going on the water? What warm up techniques can we use when we get on the water? Why is it important that we do this? What equipment might we need to aid our warm up? Do individual people in the group have different warm up needs and how can they be met? What can we do mentally, as individuals and as a group, to prepare for our time on the water?

3. Working as a Team

Being part of a team brings additional considerations into play. We must be able to stay safe as individuals as well as having the ability to assist our team mates. An understanding of how each team member influences the overall performance of the raft is important.

Consideration: The team makeup

What we might observe: What is the size and demographics of the team? How might this affect when we train?

Consideration: Team Positioning

We may need to determine: How best to use the positioning of individuals to balance the raft? How can we use body positioning to balance the raft? How do people's experience levels affect where they are most effective? How does the raft look in the water?

4. At the River

Before we paddle on white water we need to be confident in our ability to deal with the complications it may bring; both as individuals and as a team. Key skills we would need are:

Skill: Exploring a new river

We may need to know: How can we best scout the sections, from on and off the water? When exploring the river with multiple rafts, what signage can be



used to communicate with each other? Can other methods of communication be used?

Skill: Safety and rescue

We may need to know: How we can save ourselves and others from the water? What dangers might be associated with helping to save others? How do we perform a flip and re-flip drill as a team or individual? Who will take control of the raft in event of a flip? How do we throw and receive a throwline? What are the risks associated with throwlines?

Skill: Puncture, wraps and pins.

We may need to know: How do we deal with the raft getting pinned or wrapped against something? How could punctures occur and what can we do to avoid them? How do we deal with punctures? What equipment would we need to take with us on the river to deal with this?

Skill: Swimming on natural rivers

We may need to know: What are defensive and aggressive swim techniques? When would we choose to use each of these? How would we time our breathing when swimming through features? How do we decide whether to swim to the side or stay with the raft? What techniques can we use to make it easier to swim to the side or cross the river? How can we recognise dangerous places on the river by looking at the water and features?

5. River Raft Racing Skills

When rafting we should be in control. Key skills to achieve that control include us staying relaxed, understanding the effect of moving water on our raft and knowing how to use pacing and steering effectively.

Skill: Choosing a line

We may need to know: What is the best line down the river or section? What preparation on lines can be done before arriving at the river? How might river features affect our journey? How do these features affect the flow of the water



and the movement of the raft? How and when should we change our decision on the line we have chosen?

Skill: Pacing and timing

We may need to know: Where and when would we change our pacing and timing on the river and within the sections? Why would we do this? Should there be a difference in our timing depending on our position in the raft? When should strokes change to negotiate features effectively? What pace do we use on a long downriver? How does pacing change when trying to overtake someone on a downriver and how can we train for that?

Skill: Steering and strokes

We may need to know: What is the most effective steering technique on different rivers and river sections? What is the most effective steering technique for each discipline and pace? Which strokes and techniques can we use to deal with wide bends, coming out of a bend and types of water and flow? What factors affect our ability to keep travel going when moving across stream? How can we spot features and use them to help us change direction? What skills can we use to help avoid impact or flips?

6. Raft Racing: Adapting Technique and Tactics to the River

Techniques and tactics might need to be adapted when paddling on natural rivers.

Factor: Changing water levels.

We may to know: How will we use the water level to decide on the best sprint line on race day? How can we use changing patterns in water level to benefit our training?

Factor: Preparation to paddle the river.

We may to know: What can we do pre-race day to learn about the river and sections? How can we use this information to train as efficiently as possible?

Factor: Race day practicalities.



We may to know: What are the race rules? Where can our land and river warm-ups be done? What kit and food do we need to bring out for training and racing? How will we get our kit to where it needs to be?

7. **After the Rafting Session**

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

Discuss the experience: As we are working as a team, it is good to discuss how each individual feels the session has gone. What could we have done differently? What went well? Were other teams on the water; can we learn from them? How did our training affect the experience and what should we focus on before the next river trip or competition?

Consider what we will take away: We could also think about things from a personal perspective. What skills would we like to focus on next time? How do we feel our contribution affected the overall team performance?

8. **Future Development**

Each rafting session 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.

Working toward the assessment to be able to paddle the course without a coach or guide will enable the team to practice and develop own techniques and tactics for each of the disciplines.

Our strength and skill in the raft can be improved by working on general health and fitness away from the raft. The right nutrition can benefit our performance and knowledge about a good diet is important. Advice can be sought from coaches and nutritionists to help us with this.

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 British Canoeing or IRF Raft Guide qualifications.