

# Slalom

## Slalom Explore Award

### Award Description

This award is designed to develop the foundation in slalom techniques and skills as you start your journey into slalom.

### Extended Award Description

Your Slalom Explore Award develops your ability to apply your choices to an enjoyable paddling session on the water, looking at the factors which affect your decisions on where and how to train. You will develop your speed and agility to play on powerful white water rapids, learning to handle the challenges that forces of nature may bring, with precise decision making skills. Your award should be seen as a sound basis for building the experience and knowledge associated with Progressive White Water Award holders.

### Award Content

#### 1. Location

To have an enjoyable slalom session we need to consider some key factors about our location. We can take each of these factors into consideration and ask ourselves some questions to ensure the correct decisions are made.

#### **Factor:** Weather

**What we might observe:** What speed and direction is the wind? How might this affect the gates? Is the wind due to increase, decrease or change direction during our session? What changes might we need to make to our performance to take the wind into account? How might the wind chill affect our performance? What can we do to counteract this?

**Factor:** Water Conditions

**We may need to know:** Is there any flow and if there is what effects may this have? What are the current water levels? Are these due to increase or decrease in the days leading up to our session? What is the current water quality? How might we find this information? How can we minimise our risk of infection and illness due to water quality? How might this information affect where we hang the gates?

**Factor:** Access and environment

**We may need to consider:** What restrictions and limitations might there be on the water we are paddling on? How would we find this out? Where will we access/egress the water? What environmental factors might affect this decision? Has the venue got a pontoon or other man made surface we can use for access? 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? 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 craft options available to us? Why might we choose one over another? What does a well-equipped boat look like for a session? How can we set the boat up to ensure we get the maximum from our session?

**What will we take?**

What additional equipment might be useful to carry with us? What safety kit would it be useful to have with us or available on the bank? What drink and nutrition might we need during and after our paddling session?

### 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. The water 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 – some venues can be a very busy area. We may need to share the water with swimmers, fisherman and paddlers, amongst others. To do this safely, an ‘etiquette’ amongst these users has developed to minimise conflict and help everyone enjoy the water.

**What we might observe:** Who else is in the area? Are we using a managed or supervised venue? What is the etiquette here? How might this affect us? Who else is paddling with us? What is their current ability?

**Consideration:** Safety and rescue

**We may need to know:** What are the potential hazards at this location and how can we protect ourselves from them? 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? What additional equipment might it be useful to have access to during our session?

**Consideration:** Getting to the water

**We may need to determine:** How are we going to get to the water? 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. Pre-session

Before we get on the water we must ensure we are physically and mentally prepared for our session. We could do this by contemplating the following:



**Personal readiness:** Do we feel mentally and physically prepared for the session? Why is this important? What are our warm up and warm down plans? Why is this important? Do we understand the purpose of this session and know how we can get the most from it? Do we have clear aims, areas of focus and a plan of attack for this session? How might we plan this? How will we deal with areas we find challenging? How can we use our mistakes to advance our future paddling?

**Communicating with others:** Are we open to the knowledge and advice of our coaches? How will we communicate our plans and reflections with our coach? Why is it important that we do this? How can we support others within our paddling group?

**Understanding the gate sequence:** What observations might it be useful to make before a session? Why might our coach have chosen certain gate positions?

## 5. **Slalom Skills**

When paddling a slalom kayak or canoe we should be in control. Key features of being in control include us staying relaxed and balanced and understanding the application of the fundamentals.

**Skill:** Forward paddling

**What we might observe:** Why is effective forward paddling so important to us when racing? How does effective forward paddling help us and the boat? How can we use our paddle for an effective forward paddling technique? What is the best posture for an effective forward paddling technique? How best can we engage our leg muscles to create effective forward paddling? What advantages will this have? What are the advantages of keeping a flat boat in slalom? How might we achieve this?

**Skill:** Steering and controlling the boat

**We may need to consider:** What different techniques and tactics can we use to steer our boat? How much edge is required to turn the boat? What does this feel like? How can we turn our boat effectively without affecting our speed?

**Skill:** Upstream gate technique

**We may need to know:** What strokes would we use to turn upstream? What water features do we need to look out for? How might they affect our approach and technique? How would we approach the gate? Where would we position our craft when approaching the gate? Where would our body be positioned when entering the gate? What techniques will we use to exit the gate effectively and efficiently and set ourselves up for our next manoeuvre? Where will our boat be positioned when we exit the gate?

**Skill:** Stagger gate technique

**We may need to consider:** How will we set up our boat to approach a stagger? What strokes and techniques will we use to be effective and efficient throughout the stagger? What water features do we need to look out for? How might they affect our approach and technique?

**Skill:** Decision making

**We may need to consider:** Are we able to analyse how we would like to achieve a gate sequence before we get on the water and explain this to our coach? Can we change our plans whilst on the water if needed? Are we able to understand the changes we have to make to our plans whilst on the water? What technology can we use to review our decisions and improve future runs?

**Skill:** Dealing with mishaps

**We may need to know:** What recovery strokes and techniques can we use when we go off balance? How would we safely get ourselves or others back to shore or into the craft? How would we deal with loose kit? How would we swim safely back to shore? Are we able to roll?

## 6. Post Session

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

**Watching what others do:** It might be useful to spend some time watching others. How are they forward paddling? How are they linking strokes to turn the boat? Do they seem to be able to maintain rhythm and pace?

**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 in a slalom boat further expands our skills and knowledge, creating a more enjoyable experience on the water. With no two paddling sessions 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 Slalom Perform Award or enter a local competition.