

Canoeing

Canoe Award

Award Description

This award is designed to develop your personal paddling and decision making skills so you have a fun and safe day out canoeing.

Extended Award Description

Your Canoe Award endorses your skill, judgment and decision making when journeying. You will be confident in planning and undertaking canoe journeys on the water in winds up to and including force 3 taking place on grade 1 rivers with simple eddy lines. Your award is a sound basis for building the experience and knowledge associated with the Progressive Canoe Award.

Award Content

1. Location

In order to have an enjoyable day out canoeing 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 size of the lake, the weather and any flow on rivers/estuaries and features of the location we, and those we paddle with, choose. We can take each of these factors into consideration and ask ourselves some questions to ensure the appropriate decisions are made.

We may need to know: Are we permitted to paddle? How can we plan a day trip on the water?

Factor: Weather conditions

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 waters that we can choose from?

Skill: Can you access a suitable weather forecast? Can you evaluate wind speeds on the forecast and estimate what it may look or feel like when you are on the water?

Factor: Does the river or estuary we are planning to paddle on have any flow? Understanding this will give you a safer and more enjoyable day on the water.

Who are we paddling with?

Do we all know the strengths and weaknesses of those we paddle with? How will we all communicate with each other on the water throughout the trip? Will people be paddling solo or tandem and what are their motivations?

Additional questions we could ask: Are there other factors that we might need to consider before we choose a location. Other factors might include nesting birds and animals, water levels and quality. How will we know our location and find our way on the journey?

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.

Skill: Can we plan a safe and enjoyable journey for us and those we paddle with?

2. Getting Ready

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

How will you travel on the water?

There are different options available to us as canoeists. We can paddle solo or tandem and, at times, might improvise a sail or use lines or a pole. Why might we choose one over another?

What will you wear?

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

What will we take?

Do we have the kit we need to keep us safe and comfortable throughout our trip? How will we pack the kit and keep it dry?

What safety precautions could be considered?

How can we protect ourselves from any other potential hazards? Repeated immersion in cold water can be potentially dangerous. How can we help prevent this becoming an issue?

Have a think about what additional equipment might be useful to have access to. What if you or somebody you're canoeing with gets really cold or overheats? What potential injuries might we need to treat? How might we do this?

Skills: Can we plan contingencies such as escape routes and what will happen if we are late returning? Can we prepare, pack and use the kit and equipment required for our journey?

Skill: Can we identify and deal with risks we encounter as well as monitor our own and the well-being of others we paddle with, and offer assistance when necessary?

Having decided upon our equipment for the day we must get it to the water without damage to it or ourselves. Canoes are often are heavy awkward to move.

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.

3. At the Water

Parking spots and where to get on the water are usually shared spaces. We must be aware of other users and any rules and restrictions by considering the following:

Consideration: Other users – some places can be busy areas. We may need to share the water with swimmers, kayakers and anglers, amongst others. To do this safely, an ‘etiquette’ amongst these users has developed to minimise conflict and help everyone enjoy the environment.

What we might observe: Who else is there? Are we using a managed or supervised venue? Is canoeing restricted to certain areas? How would we know? What is the ‘etiquette’? How does this affect us?

4. Canoeing Skills

When canoeing we should be in control. Key features of being in control include us staying relaxed, understanding how to travel forwards and turn. We will also need to be able to manoeuvre our canoe in tighter places and stop. But before we can do that we need to be able to get on the water.

Getting on the water

There are a range of techniques and tactics that we can use to get on the water. These might include placing our canoe in shallow or deep water, and position it in relation to wind and flow. We might need to stabilise the canoe while we or others get on the water.

Consideration: The height of the bank and depth of the water will affect how we get on the water.

What we might observe: Can we identify the best place for us to get on the water? Where are the other water users? If we are canoeing with other people, how can we keep an eye out for each other?

We may need to consider: How we are going to get on the water in the most efficient manner in order to conserve energy and prevent capsizing?

Skill: Can we safely launch our canoe and help others launch theirs?

Paddling Factors

To get the most from our trip you'll want to be able to control your canoe and manoeuvre as necessary. This might require you to go left or right of an obstruction, go through small gaps, move a short distance sideways, enter or cross eddy lines or flows and prevent a capsizing. When journeying we will think about looking where you want to be. 'Future water' is a term often used to describe this. The shape and speed of our track over the water can be affected by whether we are edging or leaning, our trim, how you engage your body, the timing and the type of stroke you choose. We might wish to consider how we can travel in any environment. Can the wind be harnessed to help us and why might we choose a pole instead of a paddle?

Considerations

What boat and body positions we can use to get the most from the environment? What other factors could come into play? What paddle strokes, poling techniques and sailing methods can we use to be as efficient and effective as possible?

Skill: Forward paddling – can we set up our canoe to help us paddle in the direction we wish to go? Can we amend our trim, edge, paddling speed and style? Can we use a variety of techniques to achieve our aim?

Skill: Can we slow our canoe and stop? Can we reverse our canoe when necessary?

Skill: Can we turn our canoe effectively? Can we turn our canoe around a tight corner and also carry speed through a wider arcing turn?

Skill: Can we move our canoe sideways? Can we do this to get to a stationary object and to manoeuvre past an object while we are moving forwards?

Skill: Can we enter, cross and exit a simple flow?

Skill: Can we prevent capsize towards the paddle side of our canoe when necessary during our journey?

Skill: Can we use a pole, a sail and lines to move our canoe when needed?

Dealing with mishaps

Having to rescue is inevitable – rivers, lakes and estuaries are dynamic environments and at times we will make some mistakes.

Considerations:

We might need some assistance to get where we need to or we might end up out of the boat. Knowing how to work with other canoeists and canoes and help each other when necessary, and knowing how to swim safely and deal with a capsized canoe are therefore key skills. It might not be us who needs help but someone we are canoeing with. How would we safely get ourselves or others back to shore or into the craft? How would we deal with loose kit?

Skill: Can we capsize, swim and/or self-rescue to the shore, be able to rescue another canoeist and their canoe in deep water and help them continue their journey in situations where they need assistance?

5. After the Trip

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

Review the day: When we are back on shore we can think back about the trip. Did anything unexpected happen or did anything change whilst we were out and, if so, how and why?

Watching what others do: It might be useful to spend some time watching other canoeists. How are they doing things? Are they using the same tactics and skills as we are? Do they seem to be canoeing more effectively than we were? Can we see why? Think back to our trip. Can we identify what went well and what did not?

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

6. Future Development

Each day we spend canoeing 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 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 Progressive Canoe Award.