

Guidance for Stand-Up Paddleboard Coaches and Leaders operating in a White-Water environment

This document is to provide guidance (alongside the SUP White Water Coach and Leadership awards), for those coaches and leaders who are leading Stand Up Paddleboarders on White Water environments. The very nature of Stand Up Paddleboarding is an activity that includes an element of falling off the board and getting back on. This is more likely in a White Water setting due to the turbulent water.



Briefing

Alongside the usual content within a safety brief, it is advised that there is emphasis on **height management**, and **falling**. Throughout the river trip/coaching session these areas are advised to be reinforced frequently.

Selecting and using the appropriate equipment can contribute to a safe and successful river journey. An awareness and selection of the correct fin choice with the environment in mind can minimise the chances of swimmers falling, as the appropriate fin depth and fin angle could reduce falling into the water.

The appropriate board width for the participants ability should also be taken into consideration. This approach will increase stability, and could reduce the likelihood of falling.



Height management

As a Coach/Leader it is important that the use of different heights is covered at the beginning of the session/trip and used throughout, considering the feature(s), an individual's ability, stability and others that share the water.

Although as a leader you may not need to change your height as regularly as others during the river trip it is advised that you act as a role model and alter your height for others to observe and appreciate as an important factor in safe SUP paddling on White Water.

Discussing and demonstrating ahead of rapids is an appropriate approach to reinforce essential height management. The monitoring height principle should be in place before ending up in the water. So, falling from maximum height (standing) directly into the water should be discouraged.



Falling

It is imperative that everyone knows how to fall off their board correctly and what to do when in the water with participants upskilled and practiced enough through demonstration and drills.

Falling off the board in a dynamic environment can have its risks. We advise that when falling the paddler does not attempt to grab the board, and to keep their feet up. This approach to falling can reduce the risk of foot entrapments, and putting shoulders under strain when reaching out for the board.

If close to the board, and the environment allows, it may be appropriate for the swimmer to swim back onboard their craft. Such environments could include slow, non-turbulent water, an eddy line or a pool at the end of a rapid. It may be appropriate to retain the paddle if possible and swim to a safe point on the river bank, then to make their way downstream to aid reuniting with their board and associated equipment. It is therefore essential as a SUP Coach/Leader to cover the techniques for swimming with a paddle.

Useful links

[BCAB Coaching Podcast - SUP Coaching and Leading in White Water](#)

[Leadership Model](#)

[Leadership eLearning](#)

[Leading and guiding in unfamiliar environments eLearning](#)

[White water hazards and features](#)

[Introduction to white water safety](#)