

Guidance for Paddlers and Pool Managers

Swimming pools provide a superb resource for introducing people to Paddlesport and provide opportunities for paddlers to develop their skills and experience in a comfortable, safe and easily managed environment, unaffected by seasonal weather conditions.

Paddlesport by its very nature is diverse. The swimming pool environment is ideally suited to enabling enthusiasts of all ages and persuasions to benefit from easy access to water and making the most of their leisure time, particularly throughout the winter months.

Pool sessions can maximise opportunities for experiencing our sports diversity, overcoming fears of capsizing, learning to paddle, developing water confidence, improving boat handling skills, raising awareness of general safety procedures and also specific rescue practice, all in a safe and controlled environment.

Equally important to paddlers and to the sport of canoeing are the opportunities that swimming pool sessions provide for groups of paddlers to come together within a social and community context, benefiting from sound experiences, challenge and competition and here particularly Swimming Pools have provided an incalculable boost to the development of Canoe Polo. Polo is an important team game; it is ever growing in popularity and in its international standing, at which GB paddlers excel with many European and World honours.

British Canoeing, Paddlesport and Swimming Pools in Partnership

British Canoeing recognises that Swimming Pools can be expensive facilities to provide and that they are often operated under subsidies which are themselves cash limited. In this respect, canoeists should be aware that per hour charges can translate into high individual charges where the density of individuals using the pool is low and therefore canoeists ought not to expect any better or worse treatment on charging than any other bona fide user, however, continued access to Swimming Pools to maintain such opportunities is clearly very important to the sport of canoeing and, as such, British Canoeing is committed to developing and promoting the use of Swimming Pools by paddlers and to ensure that all pool activity can take place in a cost effective and safe way.

British Canoeing is recognised by the UK Sports Council as the Governing Body of the Sport of Canoeing and recognised also by the Health and Safety Executive and the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority.

The British Canoeing Coaching Service provides training and qualifications for paddlers and coaches in leadership, group management, safety and rescue.

It is recognised by the Health and Safety Executive in its publication 'Managing Health and Safety in Swimming Pools' (HSG 179 isbn 0-7176-1388-7) that Lifeguards require specialised skills or additional knowledge to supervise 'specialist' activities such as Canoeing and Sub Aqua adequately. Organisations that can advise are listed in appendix 7 of that document (British Canoeing is listed as BCU in this document) and further information on this is available at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg179.htm>

Further to this and realising that such 'specialist' knowledge is not necessarily available to most Pool Managers and Pool Attendants, the HSE also notes that where Pool Lifeguards do not have such specialist skills, the Manager can take two options:

- A: They can provide adequate supervision by either training lifeguards to obtain the necessary skills or by employing lifeguards who already have those skills.
- B: They can allow clubs to provide the necessary cover.

British Canoeing believes that the availability of specialist canoeing skills during periods when canoeing activities are taking place within a swimming pool are highly desirable and would, therefore, strongly support option B above and advises that the specialist skills necessary are:

1. When running a club session for club members, British Canoeing recommends that a **British Canoeing Club Activity Assistant Endorsement or a British Canoeing Coach Level 1 or higher would be appropriate.**
2. When running a public session, the recommended qualification is **British Canoeing Coach Level 2, British Canoeing Polo Coach or higher.**
3. When running Polo activity, the recommended qualification would be the holding of a **British Canoeing Club Activity Assistant, British Canoeing Polo Coach Award or Polo referee status.**

These options outlined above provide staff competent to manage the safety of the participants, lifeguarding responsibilities and also take responsibility for the session activities and learning. Where lifeguarding responsibilities only are required, the minimum qualification is Pool Lifeguard plus British Canoeing Foundation Safety and Rescue or Canoe Safety Test or a BC Coaching Qualification. This could be provided by one individual or through shared responsibility.

Coach and Club Insurance

Coach

If you have a coaching qualification, membership of British Canoeing includes the additional insurance needed. The cover not only includes the main membership insurance but also includes the professional advice you provide whilst coaching, provided that the activity falls within the remit of your approved training or qualifications. Further information can be found here

<https://www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/membership/membership-coaching/>

Club

Information on insurance cover provided to British Canoeing Affiliated Clubs can be found here

<https://www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/guidance-resources/clubs-centres-providers/clubs/club-management/insurance/>

Due consideration to these points by authorities, organisations and Pool Managers in determining their 'duty of care' provision in relation to 'specialist' user groups could provide ideal opportunities to enter into 'partnership' with individual Clubs and Coaches. Such action would ensure that 'duty of care' requirements are fully covered and to continue to provide cost effective access to members of the community to what, in most cases, is a community facility.

When being approached by Clubs seeking access to time slots within pool programmes, managers should expect/seek the following negotiation, discussion and agreements with respective club leaders.

Direct contact between yourself and a recognised club official creating an opportunity to both parties to consider their concerns, i.e. pool damage, pollution and safety provision.

Pool/Facility Manager and organiser should determine if the normal safety standards of the pool could be provided by the Canoe Club.

Where this is the case, the following need also to be considered and put in place:

The establishment of clear and effective working relationships between yourselves (liaising parties). Ensuring knowledge of, and direct involvement in, safety issues related to the pool's emergency plan, risk assessment and contact points. Occasional meetings to check on how the partnership is operating etc..

Jointly, the Pool/Facility Manager and Club Representative should ensure that the agreed safe operating procedures can be enacted in the event of an emergency such as a drowning or other serious accident. This should include raising the alarm, summoning the emergency services and the use of specialised equipment on hand to provide life support.

Should it not be felt that the pool's normal safety standards can be provided by the Canoe Club:

It may be necessary for a member of pool staff to be on hand should an emergency occur to ensure the site specific procedure is enacted. This person need not be a lifeguard for the canoe session but simply a member of staff on hand to carry out the essential elements of an emergency procedure agreed and written down in the written procedures for the pool.

Additionally the following negotiation, discussion and agreements should be considered:

Provision by the club official of the names and qualifications of intended specialist safety personnel.

Confirmation that the club is an affiliated British Canoeing Club/ or British Canoeing Approved Centre.

Arrangements for boats and boat storage.

Agree a Code of Conduct and terms of operation for usage of pool.

Building a partnership with club or centre and being able to create cost effective access to a pool can have further 'pay back' for the club manager and your pool's local community.

Most clubs are more than willing to support the community activities of swimming pools and could be approached to support a pool paddling session as part of your community programme.

Pool Managers -Assuring yourself of actual requirements / gaining further reference as to a club's suitability as a user of your pool.

Having had contact with Club officials to discuss their potential use of your pool, you may well have additional concerns you wish to raise or you may wish to reference the status of the club and of the qualifications of a coach's personal award as a supervisor. In such instances, please contact info@britishcanoeing.org.uk

British Canoeing has a network of Canoeing Development Officers and Regional Coaching Organisers available to them who can be available to support any proposals or arrangements you may be considering. Information from info@britishcanoeing.org.uk

We would recommend also that facility managers and user groups move towards preparing a joint statement on the role of a given facility in the development of paddlesports. This should incorporate what actually happens and is actually planned. It need not be long, but could simply set out that the pool aims to provide an indoor venue for introducing beginners to canoeing and for winter training. Any such statement could be developed for those facilities that want to be more directly involved with canoeing as an activity.

Additional Details: Coach: Paddler Ratio

In general sessions the recommended ratio of coaches to paddlers is 1:8, though a Level 2 Coach or above may operate with more dependent upon their judgement and experience. In Canoe Polo, minimum on the water numbers may be 10, while the maximum may be 16.

Recommended numbers of canoes and/or kayaks

The number of canoes/kayaks allowed in a pool at any one time will depend on the size of the pool and the activity. While one to one coaching in the pool may require the coach/trainer to be in the water, free swimmers are not allowed in the water at the same time unless the pool is partitioned. It is not essential to wear buoyancy aids or helmets, the use of these will be will be a part of the consultation between the Club and Pool Manager and will, at all times, be covered in the risk assessment.

Although Canoe Polo involves physical contact and controlled aggression, given the nature of the

protective equipment worn - complete upper body protection in the form of a dense all-round buoyancy aid, helmet and face guard - the likelihood of injury to a participant is minimal.

How to prevent damage to pools – some good practice

There are two potential sources of damage to pools from the use of canoes:

- 1 - from boats with pointed ends striking the sides of the pool
- 2 - paddles hitting the pool sides/bottom.

It is important that coaches and paddlers using pools for canoeing purposes are aware of the damage that canoes can cause and the significant knock-on effect that damage caused by canoes and canoeists can have on pool close down time.

Damage to tiles, for example, is not just about replacing tiles - Broken or damaged tiles can be potentially harmful to other pool users, tiles can be expensive to replace and require pools to be drained and, if nothing else, damaged tiles are unsightly and off-putting to other pool users, possibly having an effect on user perception and continued use.

Clubs using pools should consider these issues with at least equal priority to general safety matters as addressing the potential for damage within your user strategy. Responsibilities will set priorities and guidelines that are both preventative and reflective to minimise damage. This will help to establish a best practice review should a problem occur.

Ideally clubs and organisers regularly using the same pool should endeavour to have a 'for pool use only' fleet of canoes and paddles which do not move off site. These could clearly be purchased specifically for use in the pool and designed and maintained exclusively for indoor use. Where there is any possibility of the ends of canoes causing damage, they should be protected with etha foam or other suitably dense material, secured with adhesive tape.

Where canoe polo is played, the ends of the polo kayaks must be protected as per the British Canoeing Canoe Polo rules.

Whilst any type of canoe may be used in a pool, advance trainer and any modern short play boat are the most suitable. Where there is paddling in sharp-ended boats (e.g. pool slalom or slalom training) it is preferable to set the gates in such a way that the boats will not strike the sides of the pool. Paddles with wooden, plastic or composite blades only, without metal tips, should be used.

Avoiding pollution

The only other source of damage is through pollution from river/sea water, dirt, leaves and crumbs of polystyrene buoyancy foam, etc.

Where canoes are used outside of the pool environment and then returned to the pool on a rotational or occasional basis, it is important that club/organisers ensure that priority is given to ensure that all canoes and equipment are cleaned prior to pool use. Pre-cleansing should ensure that all river/sea contamination is removed. Any dirt should be hosed off the canoes prior to use with a mild disinfectant and a suitable area for this purpose identified with the pool manager. Buoyancy for kayaks should comprise of etha foam or air bags rather than polystyrene.

Swimming and Young People

When setting up sessions for young people, the ideal scenario is that every child would be able to swim 25m but it is not always the case that youngsters who come along to sessions can swim. It has been known that they say they can swim when they cannot. Make sure you check this out at the beginning and provide for non swimmers with buoyancy aids. The fact that a child cannot swim should not be an inhibiting factor preventing their enjoyment. Positively encourage them to take part using a buoyancy aid and help them develop water confidence.

Equipment and young people

Always ensure that your equipment matches the child – the buoyancy aid should fit well. The boats and paddles used should be appropriate to the size of the child.

Summary of British Canoeing Endorsements and Awards relevant to Specialist Pool Supervision

British Canoeing – Club Activity Assistant Endorsement

This endorsement is designed for people who wish to run specific sessions at designated venues. The role is endorsed by British Canoeing to support a club's workforce. The sessions a Club Activity Assistant can lead must be within a club's Standard Operating Procedures and be fully Risk Assessed.

Recommended level of coaching award and ratios

These can be found on the Terms of Reference provide guidance on appropriate British Canoeing Qualifications and ratios suitable for a range of paddlesport instructional, coaching and leadership situations. This guidance is relevant to anyone involved in the provision of paddlesport activity including clubs, centres, schools, local authority or community sports programmes. These guidelines do not apply at formal British Canoeing organised competitions where safety during official practice and competition are the responsibility of the event organiser. These guidelines should be used in conjunction with the safety management systems, risk assessments and codes of practice relevant to the activity concerned to ensure that the coach/leader concerned has adequate personal competence, currency of performance, is equipped and practised in the use of all necessary equipment, and is aware of all the potential hazards of the environment/activity in question. In this way British Canoeing recognise that deployers may need to use differing ratios and/or qualifications for specific activities.

Information on the Terms of Reference is available here

<https://www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/coaching-leadership/guidance-resources/remits-ratios/>

Pool Programmes

These suggested pool programmes are primarily aimed at young people, but aspects of these would benefit any new paddler and it should not be hard to adapt them to suit the respective audience

Block 1- Sessions 1-6

Introduction

All young people coming to pool sessions have different needs. They will have different fears and expectations of water and boats. Research from one set of pool sessions showed that 90% had a fear of not getting out of a boat and 65% had a fear of putting their heads under water. Make sure you check out what the child's fears are before you start a session and either engineer the session so that they can overcome their fear or are not confronted by it – for example, you do not necessarily have to put your head under water when falling out of a kayak!

Always demonstrate first what you want the children to do – actions speak louder than words.

OUTCOMES – BLOCK 1

You should aim to develop:

- Water confidence and swimming ability.
- Good balance in the boat.
- Good forward paddling skills.
- Good boat handling skills.

OUTCOMES - SESSIONS 1&2

Safety

- Be able to correctly put on and take off a buoyancy aid.
- Be able to put the boat into the water with help.
- Be able to get back into the boat from the water without help.
- Without spray deck, be able to capsize and keep hold of boat and paddles.
- Be able to swim 20 metres.

Skills and activities

- Be able to balance in the boat.
- Be able to paddle the boat with hands (forwards and backwards).
- Show how to hold the paddles correctly.
- Paddle the boat (with paddles) around the pool (50m).
- Be able to stop the boat in both directions.
- Be able to turn the boat around.

OUTCOMES: SESSIONS 3&4

Safety – as above plus:

- Empty boat with assistance.
- Warm up before paddling.
- Without spray deck, be able to capsize and swim to side, keeping hold of boat and paddles.
- Be able to put on and take off a spray deck.

Skill and Activities

- Be able to paddle the boat (200m) in 2 x 100m blocks showing an improvement in terms of time and number of strokes taken between the first 100m and the second 100m. Be able to paddle the boat backwards in a straight line for 20m.

OUTCOMES: SESSIONS 5 & 6 Safety

As above plus:

- Capsize with spray deck, swim to side with boat.
- Empty boat with assistance.

Skills and activities

- Understanding of control hand on paddle.
- Show improved directional stability in forward paddling and rotation of the upper body.
- Show how to prevent a capsize – using support strokes.
- Paddle a total distance of 1000m (in 2 x 200m and 6 x 100m blocks).
- Showing an improvement in time and decreasing number of strokes in each progressive block).
- Paddle forwards around a figure of 8 course with less than 3 touches on the markers.
- Paddle backwards around a figure of 8 course with less than 5 touches.

Coaches' guidance

Session 1

Safety – in order to overcome fears about the boat and to develop water confidence, play a number of games. Games should be such that both swimmers and non-swimmers can take part. Design activities so that the boat will sink SLOWLY with the child in it (submerging level not nose first) this will help develop their confidence that they can get out.

Skills – In the first session, focus on using a lot of activities that involve forward paddling with the hands.

Activities – Suggested water confidence and familiarisation activities include: Using the boat as a prop, swim around, clamber on the boat. Races into and out of the cockpit. Hand paddling races.

Session 2 Safety – Develop the range of activities that you use to develop water confidence – get the children to stand up in their boats (beware though of them falling out and hitting the side of the pool) lean sideways, etc.. This will all help in instilling confidence in capsize.

Skill – The session should again focus on forward paddling and developing an effective technique. Review forward paddling with the hands and then introduce the paddles.

Activities – relay races, tunnel trouble (paddling backwards down the pool lanes).

Session 3 – 4 Safety – Continue the development so that the child completes a formal capsize with a coach on a 1 to 1 basis. Follow this up several times working towards the child becoming more confident with a capsize.

Skill – The focus is still forward paddling but also starts to develop boat steering skills. Work in small groups for this.

Activities – paddling laps around the pool, towing people, chariot races, etc..

Sessions 5 – 6 Safety – Once you start to coach support strokes, spray decks can be introduced but you should be very wary of accidental capsizes with the spray decks fitted. In order to develop confidence with the spray decks, practice putting on and taking them off on the side of the pool (see outcomes session 3 – 4). Move the drill into the water with the coach working on a 1 to 1 basis, then move back to the same system and activities as in the initial capsize practices.

Skill – Reinforce and practice the skills learned on sessions 1-4.

Activities – Circuit race – paddling laps around the pool towing people, chariot races, boat manoeuvres games.

Useful tips

Nose clips are useful. Ensure that a number of boats are available for the young people to try out. Not all will favour a closed cockpit kayak (CCK), some will prefer an open cockpit kayak (OCK) or even canoe. Try to give a broader experience, matching the boat to the child and not vice versa. If someone shows an interest in the open cockpit boat and potential in marathon or sprint racing, then work through the next sessions in developing their forward paddling skills, directional stability and aerobic fitness for paddling. Where possible assist them in getting more experience outdoors.

Pool Programmes

BLOCK 2 – Sessions 7 –15

Introduction

In order to keep the interest of young people, it is important to keep sessions interesting and progressive?

Young people like to see improvement, however small. They will get bored with games unless they are within a structured session.

This phase could be seen as the consolidation phase.

OUTCOMES – BLOCK 2

You should aim to develop:

Safety

- More confidence in capsizing (adapt this to the type of boat the child wants to use, e.g. OCK. Not all children will want to be in a CCK.).
- This includes capsizing whilst using spray decks. The ability to rescue yourself and others.

Skills

You should work to:

- Consolidate forward paddling skills and directional stability.
- Be able to turn the boat around and to move the boat sideways with efficient technique (sweep, support, draw and bow rudder strokes).

OUTCOMES: SESSION 7 –10

Safety

- Exit the boat in deep water and then re-enter from deep water without capsizing.
- Help a friend in their boat back to the side.
- Help a friend whose boat has turned upside down. Perform a rescue from the poolside by reaching or throwing.
- Be able to tow a swimmer 25m, the swimmer holds on to back of boat.

Skills and Activities

- Forward paddling showing upper body rotation and pushing with the feet.
- Backwards paddling showing upper body rotation and pushing with the feet.
- Be able to move the boat sideways showing good reach and boat control.
- Be able to turn the boat on the move.
- Paddle a figure of 8 course forward without touching the sides or markers.
- Paddle a figure of 8 course backward with no touches.
- Complete 2 flat water slalom courses
- Play a game of no paddles polo.

OUTCOMES – SESSIONS 11 – 15 Safety

Show beginnings of Eskimo rescue – on poolside and off rescuer's bow. Demonstrate swimmer to upside down canoeist rescue. Swimmer to right the boat without touching the canoeist.

Skills and Activities

- Start to develop the stern rudder strokes on both sides and overhead.
- Use the draw stroke on both sides, moving the boat the width of the pool.
- Show good use of high and low supports strokes.
- Be able to paddle forward around the pool (200m) in 2 x 100m blocks showing an improvement in terms of time and number of strokes taken between the first 100m and the second 100m. Be able to paddle the boat backwards in a straight line for 25m. Complete 2 pool slaloms showing improvement in time/score and number of strokes taken to complete.
- Complete the slalom 'Wriggle Test'.
- Complete 2 mini polo games.

Coaches Guidance

With sessions 7 –15, the aim is to consolidate the forward paddling technique and to work on boat handling skills. The key skills are draw strokes, support strokes and bow rudder. In terms of capsize practice, please see the notes as for the previous section. You should work to ensure that the paddlers are comfortable with using spay decks and by the end of the block should be able to capsize with the spay deck fitted; tow the boat to the side and, with assistance, empty the boat of water. Make sure your demonstrations are clear and mix skill development with activities. Give young people plenty of opportunity to try out their new skills. Make sure that those activities are at a pace that will encourage them to use these new techniques. If the activity is too fast or frantic, then all that they have learned may go out of the window! Don't be afraid to stop the activity if it isn't working.

A great game for the swimming pool is canoe polo. By this stage you should have introduced 'no paddles polo'. If you need guidance on how to play canoe polo, contact the BCU office.

Using a slalom gate or gates can provide a very good focus for improving boat maneuvering. It will

also be good preparation to give young people confidence for their first slalom – whether in a pool or outdoors.

Competition

Competition needs to be handled sensitively at this stage. Try to get each child to focus on improving its own performance and not to focus on the 'winning'. Everyone wins if they can improve their own time, decrease the number of strokes it takes to complete a course, or decrease the number of touches around a slalom or obstacle course.

You should also be setting up different and progressive types of events such as pool slaloms and time trials. With pool slaloms you can set a course to meet the ability level of your group – easy or more difficult. British Canoeing can provide you with information on setting these up.

Useful Tips

Get the children to start to keep a record of their own personal performance and to record their improvement over a period of time.

Why not provide an award for the most improved paddler – male and female.

Pool Programmes

Block 3 – Sessions 16 –30

This represents a good winters paddling, meeting once per week for a minimum of 1 hour.

OUTCOMES – BLOCK 3

You should aim to develop:

Safety

- Further confidence in capsizing.
- Further methods of rescuing others.
- Rolling.

Skills

You should work to do the basic skills even more efficiently and effectively. Be able to perform skills on both sides (as appropriate). Perform the skills in full size boats doing all the skills to BC 2 Star competency.

OUTCOMES: SESSIONS 16-30

Safety

- Capsize with spray deck, swim to pool side, whilst still in boat.
- Boat to be a maximum of 2 metres from pool side.
- Demonstrate Eskimo rescue – off rescuer's bow and off rescuer's paddle.
- Demonstrate deep-water rescue with help from partner. Paddles to be retained at all times.
- Patient to be back in boat within 1 minute.
- Demonstrate 2 methods of canoe to swimmer rescue.
- Show beginnings of Eskimo roll. Any style of roll.

Skills and Activities

- Sculling for support on both sides.
- High and low brace supports.
- Bow rudder on both sides (showing effective 180 turn).
- Show cross deck paddling across the width of the pool.
- Canoe polo skills – show pick and throw, dribbling, catch and shoot skills.
- Take part in 3 polo games.
- Take part in 3 pool slaloms.
- Take part in pool rodeo.

Coaches Guidance

As stated in the introduction, the focus should be on doing the basics even better. In terms of coaching technique, work in groups of 2 –3 and get the young people to use self and peer evaluation and coaching. This helps them take responsibility for their own development. It is also more time effective.

Safety

Working in small groups is in case of a capsize and it also ensures that each will get a rest, which is essential at this stage where intense effort is required to develop technique.

Encourage the group to work on the skills on both sides.

Moving outdoors – The whole key is to get the paddlers outdoors to develop their skills and experience further. Briefing in advance of the first outdoor session is essential. This needs to cover; use of buoyancy aids, likely effects of weather, safety aspects related to the water including using the boat and paddle properly.

Structure the first 5 outdoor sessions in such a way that you cover all of the pool based skills and activities including games.

BEYOND SESSION 30

There are many aspects of the paddler's performance that they can work on beyond session 30. These include:

Safety

- Rolling develop a number of rolls – pawlata, screw, float Steyr.
- Rescues – 3 methods of deep water rescue.
- Capsize – be able to capsize further distances from the pool side and be able to swim to the side whilst still in the boat.

Skills

- Perform draw strokes on the move and on both sides with the purpose of avoiding obstacles, e.g. buoy, slalom pole).
- Sculling for support for longer lengths of time.
- Improve draw strokes – work to develop competence by timing how long it takes to cover 5 metres.
- Use box strokes to turn the boat in both directions

Polo skills

- Bring the paddle into use, learn to pick up and flick on both sides.
- Develop dribbling skills over longer distances.

- Improve passing, catching and throwing.

Activities

- Take part in 2 outdoor ranking slaloms.
- Take part in 4 regular polo games.
- Take part in 2 club tours or events.

MATCHING TO BRITISH CANOEING AWARDS

When you have completed this you could have achieved BC 3 Star.

Coaches Guidance

At this stage, the paddler should now be using a full sized boat, starting off in the swimming pool and then moving outdoors as a development from the last year.

Try different boats in the pool thereby developing strokes.

Training – as the paddler learns all of the strokes, they should then become more proficient at speed.

NUTRITION

In order to ensure that all the hard work in terms of developing fitness is not undone, help your group understand the needs of a healthy diet. If you need help on this, contact your local sports nutritionist or for any further information contact British Canoeing.

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