

Coaching for Progressive White Water

This section deals with teaching progressions to move students onto more advanced white water technique. The key is finding challenging tasks within an environment that the coach can control.

Driving to targets

It may be worth changing our language, away from describing individual strokes and towards a simple concept of driving a boat to a target. This forces the student to mix their own combination of strokes to move their boat from A to B. We can concentrate on concepts such as planting the paddle in our “future water” and alternating between steering strokes to line a boat up and acceleration to execute the move.

Slalom exercises

This change in approach can be extended into a slalom session, where a succession of eddy targets is given to students. Introducing a timed element forces the paddler to make every stroke efficient. The coach can position themselves at a crux move of the run or in a calm eddy at the start or finish to offer small pieces of feedback and motivation.

Counting Strokes

To focus on efficiency of strokes, consider making the paddler count how many strokes it takes to execute a particular move.

Surfing Waves

Practice surfing waves, carving across a wave face, changing edge and using a stern rudder for steering.

Surfing holes

Practice the skills of side surfing, holding an edge, bracing for support and using power strokes to work towards the edge of a stopper. In time they can develop their hole spins and enders to work out of a hole.

Fundamental freestyle

Practice plugging the nose in a stopper for a pop out, or as a means to escape a hole. Practice stern squirts on an eddy line as an alternative to standard break-ins. Use a reverse screw roll to right the boat.

More advanced freestyle

Paddlers in freestyle boats can work on cartwheels, splitwheels, loops and a range of other moves. Besides providing a pathway to freestyle competition, freestyle paddling develops excellent edge awareness, fitness and a sharp roll.

Boofs and flares

Paddlers can learn the importance of keeping the bow up by boofing over small rocks and riding high on cushion waves. Site selection is very important here. Boofing skills can also be practiced when riding over waves – pulling knees to chest on a vertical stroke to lift the bow off the back of the wave.

Decision making

Paddlers can get more involved in the decision making process that is so vital to white water kayaking. Reading water on new rapids or picking alternative lines on rapids they know. Sharing safety decisions and responsibilities.

Advanced white water rescue skills

Working on throw bag skills, anchor systems, knots and extraction techniques.