



PADDLE VENTURES

THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH'S AWARD



PADDLE VENTURES

Paddle ventures are on the increase as an alternative to walking, as they offer a wide range of varying environments and craft where the participant can develop their skills both personally and as a member of a team. The venture could be as wide ranging as a journey along the local canal network, or down one of the rivers such as the Severn, Wye or Thames to a remote wilderness expedition in this country or abroad. One of the elements that may attract participants to undertake a paddlesport venture is that you do not have to carry a rucksack on your back!

A paddle venture gives an entirely new perspective on journeying, and the subsequent development of new skills and experience frequently leads young people into an activity, which may last a lifetime; yet the levels of skill and experience may realistically be acquired in the time it takes to gain a Bronze, Silver or Gold Award.

Paddle ventures lend themselves very readily to exploring and provide an opportunity to engage in fresh areas of study in a stimulating environment; they also offer an exciting form of travel, which can lead to new interests, and awareness of oneself and the environment.



The Craft

The open canoe with its origins in the Canadian canoes of the North American Indians and the Voyageurs is an ideal craft for expeditions. It is an excellent vehicle for carrying



equipment. They allow for companionship, usually carrying two or three people, and are safe insofar as if you fall in, you fall out. Rafted open canoes or similar craft that can accommodate the whole team can be used as they provide a very stable platform.

The sea kayak is an excellent craft in which to undertake a camping venture. With their length and keel they are easy to paddle in a straight line and there is ample room for camping equipment. Though designed for the sea, they are suitable for use on the type of river involved in Award Expeditions, and paddlers who camp and travel long distances prefer them.

There are also an increasing number of purpose-built touring kayaks becoming available, which are ideal for Award ventures. The low volume white water kayak, though providing excellent sport and used in vast numbers throughout the country, is not a very suitable craft in which to carry out a journey, as there is rarely enough room to carry camping gear and food. Many young people find them difficult and tiresome to paddle in a straight line for five or six hours at a stretch. They are exciting and very good for training and mastering kayaking skills but, as far as the Award is concerned, they are more suited to the Physical Recreation Section.

Team composition

The British Canoe Union now recommends, for safety reasons, that any team should consist of a minimum of **three craft and four young people**, except for craft designed to accommodate the whole team. For methods of transport that require double occupancy (for example tandem canoes), the maximum in a team may be increased to eight to enable the use of four craft.

Water

Access to canals is easy in the UK, many young people will start their Award canoeing experience in this type of environment and even in large urban areas canals can offer unique opportunities. Access to rivers in the United Kingdom is often difficult, except where they have been turned into navigations or there is a tradition of access. Navigations usually involve the lower reaches of rivers, which in many cases, are still used for commerce and recreational boating. They include many local canals, and rivers such as the Severn, the Wye, the Yorkshire Ouse, the Great Ouse, the Thames and the Trent.

Paddlers require licences for all English and Scottish canals and some canalised rivers. The British Canoe Union has negotiated a special arrangement with the British Waterways Board / Thames Licence whereby their waters are included in the BCU Licence, which is free to BCU members. Separate licences are required for many of the larger rivers, such as the Great Ouse. The relevant details may be obtained from the local BCU Access Officers.

On the Continent there are thousands of miles of suitable rivers used by tens of thousands of touring paddlers on a scale difficult to imagine in Britain. Most have their source in the Alps or the Massif Central. While their upper reaches have limited place in the Expeditions Section and their lower reaches are frequently polluted and highly commercialised, the middle sections, often extending for hundreds of miles, are a delight for paddlers. The Dordogne, the Ardèche, the Rhine, the Rhône and the Danube are typical examples and provide wonderful, stimulating environments for paddling expeditions. Some rivers have been canalised with locks, and licences may be required.

Where to carry out the venture

Participants should choose water, which is suitable for the aim of the venture and the type of craft and, above all else, water that is well within the competence and experience of the participants. One of the principal conditions of the Expeditions Section is that all ventures should be self-reliant and unaccompanied.

The choice of where a venture is carried out will depend to a large extent on its aim, but referring to waterways guides will assist choice. These guides provide detailed advice on the waterways as well as details of access and rights of passage. The BCU will also be able to give advice on many of the overseas waterways, or tell you where the information is available.

Licences are required for rivers such as the Thames and the Norfolk Broads, which are maintained as navigations. Membership of the BCU can include a British Waterways Board Licence and River Thames licence. The British Waterways produce a huge array of information that can assist in the planning process for any venture.

The weight and bulk of camping gear and food should be kept to a minimum when paddling. Portages are not only at the beginning and end of the day, but frequently during the journey itself around weirs, locks and some rapids. British Waterways do not allow some craft to use locks, unlike the Environment Agency, Thames Region. You will need to check with the relevant agency / authorities with regard to whether you can access locks or whether they have to be portaged. Portage can be a strenuous activity, especially for younger participants, and frequently involves several trips between the place of disembarkation and re-embarkation. It is important to train all participants in effective lifting procedures.

Paddling Requirements

The requirements for paddling ventures are the same as those for all other ventures. See Introduction and Requirements in the Award's Expedition Guide.

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award has developed a set of guidelines to assist coaches/trainers of paddle sport expeditions in developing their own training programmes, set out on pages 12 and 13. A number of these key elements have been taken directly from the BCU star tests that are appropriate to the venture being undertaken. The requirements programme has been developed to identify the additional training required to ensure that the young people can venture safely with remote supervision in the chosen environment. The coach/trainer should identify and use those elements of the training programme that they feel will fulfil the conditions of the Award's Expeditions Section.

The nature of paddling ventures is such that the minimum training requirements for all ventures is the Silver Common Training Syllabus.

Conditions

Participants using inland waters must observe the Country Code.

All participants must know:

- The Water Sports Code.
- The basic rules of the road - priorities, the sound signals used on water and distress signals.

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- The courtesies, customs and etiquette associated with boating and sailing.

All participants must be adequately trained to:

- Demonstrate that their equipment is waterproofed.
- Satisfy the Assessor that their craft, equipment and clothing is suitable for the venture.
- Satisfy the Assessor as to their competence.

Training

The requirements are split into three sections:

- The Common Training Syllabus, which is compulsory for all ventures
- Core Paddling Skills, which are compulsory for all paddling ventures (p12)
- Skills that are specific to the environment (p13)

The trainer will need to develop the programme to meet the aim of the venture and the needs of the participants. Trainers will need to select the appropriate elements specific to the environment in which the venture will take place.

Reference must be made to any additional Operating Authority requirements. Many Operating Authorities will require appropriately qualified coaches, such as those holding BCU qualifications, to deliver this training.

There is no substitute for experience and days should be spent on the water until the craft becomes an extension of oneself or the team and the paddler is at home in the environment. When the basic skills have been acquired, it is essential that experience be built up using the same kind of water that is to be used for the qualifying venture.



Equipment

All craft must be sound, suitable and fitted out for the conditions in which they are to be used. They must have integrated buoyancy, or buoyancy which is securely attached to the boat. Boats must have bow and stern toggles, or loops, or buoyant painters fore and aft which are properly secured.

Personal and expedition Equipment

Participants should refer to the equipment list in *The Duke of Edinburgh's Award's Expedition Guide*. Most equipment is the same for all modes of travel with adjustments being made where necessary.

The list below is intended as a starting point when considering additional equipment for paddling ventures:

- Buoyancy aid or life-jacket as appropriate, with whistle attached.
- Repair kit
- Bivvy bag (poly-bag).
- Waterproof or water-resistant watch.
- Knife
- Maps/charts in or with water resistant protection
- Matches in waterproof container.
- Personal first aid kit.
- Throw line/towline
- Emergency rations.
- Water-resistant torch with spare bulb and alkaline batteries.
- Notebook and pencil.
- Spare paddle
- Coins/phone card for telephone.
- A bailer and large sponge
- Compass
- Flares

Helmets should be considered where relevant to the environment.



Clothing

The list of personal equipment in the Award's *Expedition Guide* will provide a basis for the kit list for paddling ventures. This equipment can be supplemented with appropriate specialized clothing. Considerations must be made for the environment that the participants will be working in. Shade is often unavailable and therefore protection for the head, hands and feet is particularly important. Feet must be protected at all times; even old trainers may be used. The ability to keep a complete change of clothing dry is essential and must be carried.

Personal and team Camping Equipment

This equipment list is the same for land and water ventures; however, paddlers are often able to carry more equipment for comfort. Craft, paddling and portaging (if required) must be considered when equipment is selected.

Food and Drink

Paddlesport ventures offer the opportunity for a wide and varied menu; this can include fresh produce and tinned food which could not be carried on a foot expedition. Teams are also able to take water filtration units for wilderness expeditions. Ventures on salt water will have other issues. Remember "Water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink".

Waterproofing equipment

All clothing, much of the camping gear and food will need to be protected in waterproof containers or dry bags. Large plastic drums with an efficient seal are popular with open canoeists. Waterproof bags inside rucksacks are an alternative, being particularly useful at portages and adjusting the trim of the craft. Whatever method of waterproofing is used, it must be effective. Spare clothing and sleeping bags should be given the additional protection of being individually sealed by whatever waterproofing method is chosen.

In all craft the storage of equipment affects the trim and stability. Equipment should be stored to ensure that the craft is appropriately trimmed for the prevailing conditions, and heavy items stored as low as possible to increase stability.

Supervision

The Supervisor must be approved by the Operating Authority and is the agent responsible for the safety and welfare of the participant whilst on their venture. They must be familiar with their role and responsibilities.

Supervisors must have considerable experience of water similar to that being used, be competent in assessing water and weather conditions and must be approved by their Operating Authority. For all paddle ventures the Supervisor must be in the area of the venture. The way in which they supervise the team will be very much dependant on their confidence / competence in the team and their own personal confidence and competence.

The BCU offers appropriate qualifications for paddlesport coaches to operate in the environment of the venture, but these should not been seen in isolation and experience should also be seen a valuable asset.

Where ventures take place in sheltered estuaries or on sheltered coastal waters, the Supervisor must provide safety cover afloat. Contact should not be made with the team during the journey except for the needs of supervision. The safety cover must be sufficiently remote from the participants to avoid destroying the team's sense of remoteness and self-reliance and yet be able to render assistance in an emergency within a reasonable amount of time. The safety cover may consist of the Supervisor and the Assessor, who will be appropriately qualified and experienced, shadowing the team at an appropriate distance. Where a safety boat is used it must be sufficiently seaworthy and fitted-out to cope with any water conditions, which may arise in the sea area being used. It is desirable that all craft used on open water should be highly visible. Written approval must be obtained from the Operating Authority for the venture and its supervision.

Assessment

The Assessor must be familiar with their roles and responsibilities.

It is recommended that those who assess paddling ventures have paddling experience and are able to evaluate paddling competence and water conditions. Assessors should ideally have the same level of qualification, or equivalent experience as the Supervisor.

Many of the Wild Country Panels have expert paddlers among their members who are qualified and willing to assess paddle ventures. Other regions have specific water panels, which can provide assistance with relevant local knowledge.

For ventures in sheltered estuaries or sheltered coastal water, where the venture is accompanied by a safety boat, Assessors may also undertake the role of Supervisor providing they have the necessary qualifications, or equivalent levels of experience and have the approval of the Operating Authority (see above). They should be totally independent of the Award Team at Silver level. At Gold level they must be totally independent of the Award Team and not associated with it in any way.

Assessors need to be flexible to cope with changes of plan and should have sufficient time at their disposal to enable them to adapt to the needs of the venture. As with all ventures, there should be close liaison with the team and the Supervisor before and at agreed times during the venture.

Holding a BCU coaching qualification does not give the right to assess Award ventures.



Training programme requirements

Training programmes should incorporate both canoe training and those skills specific to the environment.

Core training:

Lift and Carry

- Know how to safely lift and carry the craft. Lift and Carry if boat allows. Safe portaging techniques relevant to the environment

Launching and disembarking

- Know the importance of safe manual handling enabling participants to launch and recover craft from a variety of locations including steep, slippery banks.

Loading and storage of kit

- Know how to waterproof kit properly and how to load the craft efficiently and secure kit within the craft. Secure craft onto trailers or vehicles

Forward paddling

- Demonstrate the ability to paddle forwards in an efficient and economical manner, participants should demonstrate a fluent and rhythmical paddling stroke including where required simple steering strokes to enable them to maintain good cruising speed and control.

Reverse Paddling and stopping

- Demonstrate slowing and stopping the craft using controlled reverse paddling strokes

Turning

- Ability to turn the craft whilst stationary and whilst on the move using appropriate strokes (there is no requirement for specific strokes providing the craft can be manoeuvred effectively)

Moving sideways

- Ability to sideslip the craft to avoid obstacles in the way of the craft or to come alongside (there is no requirement for specific strokes providing the craft can be manoeuvred effectively)

Capsize and recovery

- Ability to self-rescue – swimming self, paddle and boat to shore, recover, empty and re-launch craft.
- Where the craft cannot be capsized demonstrate ability to recover paddlers and kit back aboard.

Rescues (where craft permits capsize drills)

- Demonstrate ability to be rescued from craft
- Appropriate rescue techniques for rescuing paddler and craft – appropriate to the environment, for example throw line techniques suitable for moving water.

Rescues (where capsize is not possible)

- Be able to rescue a team member back on to the boat
- Perform an all in rescue where all team members have to get back onto the boat
- Man overboard drill

Towing

- Simple towing techniques (flexible and adaptable)

First Aid

- This should include water borne elements including secondary drowning and aquatic hypothermia.

Ongoing Risk Assessment

- The ability to make decisions based on the weather and water conditions; for example being weather bound

Equipment

- Selection and Maintenance of equipment
- Care and simple repair of equipment

No Trace Camping

- Include methods of disposing of human, food, kitchen, cooking and dirty water waste. Local advice on these matters should be sought and followed.

Skills specific to the environment

	Common Training Syllabus	Additional paddling/safety requirements <i>The skills in the table should be matched to the training requirements of the environment</i>
Placid Water	All elements of the Silver Common Training Syllabus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be able to recognise weirs and outflows and be able to avoid them. • Know how to manoeuvre the craft using painters or bow and stern lines to move around or through obstacles such as locks. • Understand the basic rules of travel on the waterways and how to approach and pass other craft. • The safe use of locks if appropriate for the type of craft. • Understand how to trim the boat correctly for different weather conditions. • Rafting boats together and constructing a simple downwind sail. • Be able to effectively rescue loaded boats in deep water.
Moving Water up to Grade 2	All elements of the Gold Common Training Syllabus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be able to recognise weirs and outflows and be able to avoid them. • Know how to manoeuvre the craft using painters or bow and stern lines to move around or through obstacles such as locks. • Understand the basic rules of travel on the waterways and how to approach and pass other craft. • The safe use of locks if appropriate for the type of craft. • Understand how to trim the boat correctly for different weather conditions. • Rafting boats together and constructing a simple downwind sail. • Be able to effectively rescue loaded boats in deep water. • Have a basic understanding of River Hydrology to be able to identify submerged rocks, strainers and similar hazards, selecting safe passages around obstacles. • Be able to break in and out of the flow. • Be able to make an eddy • Demonstrate forward and reverse ferry gliding. • Demonstrate the ability to line the boat through areas of shallow water or rapids and wading • The ability to estimate the speed of the water. • Ability to determine if water levels are rising or falling.
Lakes and Estuaries	All elements of the Gold Common Training Syllabus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand how to trim the boat correctly for different weather conditions. • Rafting boats together and constructing a simple downwind sail. • Be able to effectively rescue loaded boats in deep water. • Be able to deal with multiple capsizes in deep water. • Canoe Sailing (where appropriate) • Additional Navigation Skills appropriate to the environment • Use of flares • Understanding tidal effects
Large lakes and Coastal conditions	All elements of the Gold Common Training Syllabus	<p><i>All of the elements from Lakes and Estuaries plus</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe landing techniques, to include surfing for sea ventures. • Reading the Water (white caps / white horses, tides) • Maritime weather forecasts • VHF radios

NOTES



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