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Check List

for the guidance of relevant authorities

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Advice To Coaches on: Check List for the guidance of relevant authorities

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INTRODUCTION

These guidance notes are intended primarily for local authorities and others whose agents are in 'loco parentis'. They are also aimed at those leading novice and intermediate groups during the phase when experience is being consolidated, and developed. A separate set of recommendations exists for Approved Centres.

The aim of the coach should always be to assist his or her protégés to achieve a level of proficiency where they can make their own decisions and accept their own risks independently.

There is no implication in these guidelines that club based, or independent groups of adults, need always to have a qualified person in charge when undertaking canoeing activities or journeys.

SWIMMING ABILITY AND BUOYANCY AIDS

All students undertaking canoeing activities outside of a swimming pool should wear a buoyancy aid* or a lifejacket* the fitting of which should be checked by a suitably qualified leader.

Normally canoeists should be able to swim 50 metres in light clothing. Discretion may be exercised, however, in accordance with a coach's training and experience, where special circumstances exist.

Some non-swimmers may, in fact, be safely introduced to canoeing by trained coaches, in a controlled environment, as a means of introducing water confidence.

The BCU recommendation with regard to personal buoyancy is:

It is recommended that buoyancy aids to BCU/BACT Standard BA83 (CEN 50N type*) be worn by novices for all canoeing activities, and for white water paddling at all levels.

Lifejackets to BSI 3595/81 *(CEN 150N) or buoyancy aids to BMIF Standards are normally suitable alternatives, but are not permitted for BCU ranking competitions. For canoe polo suitable body protection is required, which may be afforded by some buoyancy aids.

Where race training is being undertaken, buoyancy aids may be dispensed with by those under 18 only at the discretion of the coach in charge.

*The CEN standards will gradually replace the BCU/ACT and other standards from 1 July 95. The BCU/ACT devices and others, manufactured before 1 July 95 may continue to be used, however, for the duration of their 'reasonable life'.

General Requirements

Buoyancy Aids or Lifejackets must be worn which are correctly fitting and must be checked by the coach before going afloat.





A release system, which ensures immediate disengagement from the front of the cockpit rim, must be in place when spray decks are worn.

When helmets need to be worn they must be correctly adjusted and checked by the coach.

Clothing must be appropriate, taking into account the following factors:

Water temperature, air temperature, wind chill factor, the ability of the group, the type of activity, the length of the session and the location (i.e. availability of support).

Suitable foot protection must be worn to prevent cuts due to hazards such as glass, shells or flints, or due to contact hazards on the craft.

DEFINITIONS FOR INLAND CANOEING

Very Sheltered Water

The definition involves:

Quiet canals with easy bankside access and egress

Small lakes, which are not large enough, and do not have difficult landing areas, for problems to occur if there is a sudden change in conditions. Specified sites on gentle, slow moving rivers

The definition implies weather conditions, which are not in themselves likely to cause problems. Care must be exercised when water temperatures are low.

VERY SHELTERED WATERS are suitable for BCU Level 1 Coaches or Trainee Level 2 Coaches to control groups without being under the direct physical supervision of a Level 2 Coach or Level 3 Coach.

Sheltered Water

The definition involves:

Flat water rivers, faster flowing, but not involving the shooting of, or playing on weirs, or running rapids

Lakes. Discretion and common sense must apply when considering the use of Lakes. To operate further than 200 yards from shore on a large lake can be a serious undertaking. To paddle in offshore breezes on large lakes requires the same degree of caution as for the sea. Water temperature (especially in Scottish Lochs) must always be a consideration. Suitable lagoons, or sections of sheltered bays, of large lakes can sometimes be designated 'Sheltered' or even 'Very Sheltered' water by careful and sensible selection.

The definition implies normal conditions. Care must be exercised when water temperatures are low.

SHELTERED WATER is suitable for BCU Level 2 Coaches to supervise groups. Trainee Level 2 Coaches may also operate in the same location under the authorisation of a BCU Level 3 Coach.

For short, simple journeys a Level 2 Coach must be in charge, equipped in accordance with the requirements of the BCU 4 Star Test.

Moderate Inland Water

The definition involves:

Grade II white water, and equivalent weirs

MODERATE Inland Water is suitable for BCU Level 3 Coaches in the relevant discipline (ie kayak, or canoe) to supervise groups.

Other requirements

Kayaks and canoes must be equipped with additional buoyancy. Kayakists must wear suitable helmets (see Appendix II) and for journeying be equipped in accordance with the requirements of the BCU 4 Star Test. In addition, the coaches must carry a throw line, and there should be sufficient spare paddles in the group.

ADVANCED INLAND WATER

The definition involves:

Very Large Lakes

Grade III white water and above

Advanced white water or very large lakes require a BCU Level 3 Coach to be in charge, holding the 5 Star Certificate, or with relevant experience and ability.

Other requirements for advanced white water

Kayaks and canoes must be fitted with additional buoyancy. Suitable helmets must be worn and all participants equipped in accordance with the requirements of the BCU 5 Star Test. In addition, the coaches must carry a throw line, and there should be sufficient spare paddles in the group.

STAFF RATIOS - INLAND CANOEING

The following staff ratios are suggested as ideal for practical teaching purposes, where the quality of the instruction is important to the session. Safety factors are dependent upon a combination of the prevailing conditions, the ability of the group, and the purpose of the session. BCU Level 2 Coaches and above are trained to recognise when circumstances allow these guidelines to be safely exceeded, or when lower limits should be applied. The coach in charge should be allowed to exercise discretion based on his or her experience.



Very sheltered water 1:8 (students) / open canoes paddled solo - 1:6
*Level 1 Coach /
 Level 2 Trainee*

Sheltered water 1:8 (students) / open canoes paddled solo - 1:6
Level 2 Coach

Moderate inland water For journeys, the level 3 Coach should be supported by
Level 3 Coach *competent paddlers on a ratio of about 1:6 students in accordance with conditions and the ability of the group.

Maximum size of group for journeys should be about 12 singles or 6 doubles (staff boats must be on a ratio of 1:6).

Advanced inland water
Level 4 Coach For journeys, the Level 4 coach (or equivalent ability and experience) should be supported by *competent paddlers, on a ratio of about 1:4 in accordance with conditions, and the ability of the group.

Maximum size of group for journeys should be about 12 singles or 6 doubles (staff boats must be on a ratio of 1:4).

*A competent paddler is a canoeist, or coach under training, who is at home in the conditions likely to be encountered, and well able to undertake rescues and assist as necessary.

DEFINITIONS FOR SEA KAYAKING

The sea is a very different environment from inland waters. It can easily ensnare the unwary, the uninitiated, or the careless, with its sometimes apparently tranquil appearance. It can change, often gradually and imperceptibly, at other times dramatically and suddenly, with devastating consequences. For these reasons the BCU has always operated a separate syllabus for awards for sea canoeing.

A Level 3 Sea Coach is the qualification for the member of staff responsible for choosing kayak venues and their suitability for sea canoeing activities.

SHELTERED TIDAL WATERS

The definition involves:

Small enclosed bays where there is minimal possibility of being blown offshore

Enclosed harbours where there is minimal possibility of being blown off shore

*Defined beaches (a short section of beach with easy landing throughout, no tide races or overfalls, in conditions in which swimmers and beach craft could be happily operating) - winds not above force 3 (force 2 if offshore when the greatest of caution must be exercised)

The upper reaches of some suitable slow moving estuaries. In all cases the wind and weather conditions must be favourable

SHELTERED TIDAL WATER areas are suitable for BCU Level 2 Kayak Coaches to supervise groups, or for BCU Trainee Level 2 Coaches to supervise groups when authorised by a Level 3 Coach.

Other requirements

Tow lines must be carried by coaches, and a first aid kit and emergency equipment be available close at hand when operating away from an immediate base.

MODERATE TIDAL WATER

The definition involves:

- a stretch of coastline or estuary in close proximity to the shore, with easy landing, not involving fast tidal streams, tidal races, or overfalls, winds not above force 3 (force 2 if offshore, when the greatest of caution must be exercised).
- the upper reaches of some estuaries

It is recognised that as coaches progress through level 3 Sea Coach training towards assessment they will develop skills, knowledge, and experience that will increasingly equip them for taking greater responsibility for groups on the water.

Other requirements

For journeys, a Level 3 Sea Coach must be in charge on the water.

ADVANCED SEA

The definition involve:

Any journey on the sea where tidal races or overfalls may be encountered, which cannot be avoided.

Sections of coast line where difficult landings may be encountered or where landings may not be possible.

Difficult sea states and/or stronger winds (force 5 or above)

For ADVANCED SEA areas a Level 3 Sea Coach holding the 5 Star Certificate, or with equivalent experience and ability, is required to be in charge on the water.

STAFF RATIOS FOR SEA KAYAKING

The following staff ratios are suggested as ideal for practical teaching purposes. BCU Coaches and above are, however, trained to recognise when circumstances allow these guidelines to be safely exceeded, or when lower limits should be applied. The person in charge should always be allowed to exercise discretion.





Sheltered Tidal Waters 1:8 (students)

Level 2 Coach

Moderate Sea

Level 3 Sea Coach

For journeying along a stretch of coastline or estuary in relatively close proximity to the shore, with easy landing, not involving tidal races or overfalls, winds not above force 4, a Level 3 Sea Coach should be in charge supported by competent paddlers* on a ratio of about 1:6 students in accordance with the conditions and the ability of the group

Advanced Sea

Level 4 Coach

For journeys, a Level 3 Coach with 5 Star Sea or equivalent ability and experience should be supported by *competent paddlers on a ratio of about 1:4 in accordance with conditions, and the ability of the group.

*A competent paddler may be a canoeist, or coach under training, who is at home in the conditions likely to be encountered, and well able to undertake rescues and assist as necessary. If there is a necessity to split the group, or a possibility that adverse conditions could make this likely, the supporting paddler must hold the relevant qualification.

SIZE OF PARTY

Large fleets of kayaks on the sea should be avoided - groups of 6-8 are ideal.

JOURNEYING ON THE SEA – other requirements

Buoyancy Aids or Life Jackets must always be worn.

All kayaks should have the telephone number of the owner marked on or in them, and comply with BCU recommendations (see appendix I).

Kayaks must be fitted with suitable foot rests, and the entire group must wear spray decks.

Kayaks must possess maximum buoyancy (single pillar buoyancy should be supplemented with air bags).

Bow and stern toggles are essential, as are adequate spray decks. Deck lines, when fitted, must be taut and not able to foul the cockpit area.

Each member of the group should carry all the equipment listed in the BCU 4 Star Sea test syllabus, and a suitable means of pin-pointing one's position when in the water. At the discretion of the leader, taking into account the type of group involved, and the nature of the journey being tackled, a hand held flare may be appropriate.

Spare split paddles carried by other persons in the group is also suggested.

These may be in the boats, but should be easily accessible.

2 parachute flares and two hand-held flares must be carried by the leader.

Tow lines must be carried by all coaches and/or supporters.

USE OF ESCORT BOATS

Provided staff are appropriately qualified and experienced, the proper equipping, training, gradual building up and reinforcement of experience of the students renders escort boats unnecessary.

INFORMING HM COASTGUARD

A BASE LEADER must be appointed who is acquainted with the itinerary, and has access to full details of the names of all involved, types of kayak used, and the emergency equipment carried.

JOURNEY LEADER must inform HM Coastguard by telephone of group numbers and itinerary and update Base Leader if plans are changed.

If group is overdue, Base Leader is responsible for raising the alarm and must not go off duty until the group is accounted for.

HM Coastguard to be informed as soon as practicable on completion of journey.

There is no need to inform HM Coastguard of 'static' activities, such as surfing sessions, basic skills work, and similar, close inshore. It is advisable to let Coastguards know if you are going to be carrying out a number of rescue practises, particularly in situations where a member of the public could become concerned.

Groups should conform with the BCU/HM Coastguard 'Code of Safe Practice'.

DEFINITIONS FOR THE CONDUCT OF SURFING

A Level 3 Surf Coach should give authorisation for each and every session, having regard to the prevailing wind and wave conditions, and the competence of those running the session. (A Level 3 Coach may undertake this role provided he or she has appropriate surfing experience and ability).

MODERATE SURF

The definition involves:

beaches which are free of significant hazards (strong rips or undertow, tidal streams, rocks, groins). An area of beach must be marked out with flags to contain the group and prevent any loss of communication.

the area selected must not interfere with other beach users - swimmers and surfers in particular. (Third part insurance is required on some beaches to indemnify against damage caused to other beach users).

small to moderate waves - 1 metre maximum (see BCU guidelines for assessing surf height and character).

A BCU Level 3 Surf Coach should be physically in charge of the session. (A Level 3 Coach who is an experienced surfer may undertake the role).

ADVANCED SURF

The definition involves:

The surfing of reefs, points, and off-shore features.

Surfing from beaches where surf height exceeds 1 metre or where stronger winds, cold conditions, rips, long shore drift, rocks or other potential hazards are involved.



For ADVANCED SURF a Level 4 Surf Coach must be physically in charge of the session. (This role may be undertaken by a Level 3 Coach who is a very experienced surfer).

STAFF RATIOS

Moderate Surf	1:8 (students) - Level 3 Surf Coach or Level 3 Coach who is an experienced surfer	9-12 (students) - Level 3 Surf Coach or Level 3 Coach as above + 1 Level 3 Trainee Surf Coach.
Advanced Surf	1:6 (students) Level 4 Surf Coach	7-12 (students) - Level 4 Surf Coach + 1 Level 3 Surf Coach or Level 3 Coach who is a very experienced surfer).

THE CRAFT

All craft, of whatever type, should be clearly marked with the phone number and ideally the name of the operator so that in the event of a boat being found adrift the owner can be easily contacted and any need for search and rescue rapidly established.

All craft should be free of sharp or rough edges and should not have sharply pointed ends (also see Appendix I)

Kayaks

Adequate pillar buoyancy must be permanently fixed in to the Kayak.

Additional air bags should be used each side of rear pillars.

A bulk headed or failsafe footrest must be provided to fit each individual. The space in front of the footrest should be fitted with fixed buoyancy so that it cannot be passed in the event of a beach 'loop'.

End grabs at each end of the kayak need to be easy to hold on to. Loops should not be used because of the danger of finger entrapment.

Paddles must be of a suitable type and size for the participants, and be of strong construction suitable for the forces involved.

Wave skis

Foot straps should be adjusted so that the whole foot cannot pass through the strap and cause ankle entrapment.

Ankle leashes must be in good condition and their use explained at the start of the session.

Lap belts must have a simple cam action quick release, which operates smoothly, and **must not be fastened until the student has practised releasing in an emergency, under direct supervision, and achieved a consistent and confident release.** (*Warning:* Cags can ride up over the release buckle on ski straps).

Metal parts must be inspected for rusting and/or to check smooth release action.

EQUIPMENT

Spare safety craft. A fully equipped kayak, or other suitable vessel should be in readiness on the beach throughout the session. Coaches must carry towlines and a 20m throwline.

First aid kit and survival bag, together with means of providing shelter and a hot drink unless operating from close to base.

Audible alarm signal - whistle or air horn - for attracting attention in an emergency.

ORGANISATION

Onshore winds are unlikely to cause problems unless they are strong enough to raise the wave height in excess of the competence of the group, or cause significant rips. Longshore winds above force 3 can create a strong 'long shore drift' which may split the group. Offshore winds in excess of force 2 can blow craft out to sea once clear of the break line.

Both air and water temperatures should be considered. Sea water temperatures are normally low in the United Kingdom, especially between November and May. Participants must be instructed to capsize their craft if a collision appears likely - both parties.

The group should be split into 'buddy' pairs and informed of their responsibility to each other.

A simple signalling system should be established, particularly to indicate if help is required, and when to come immediately to shore.

A coach, capable of competently operating the rescue craft, must remain on the beach as a spotter to ensure that all the party is safe.

Appendix I


CANOE AND KAYAK FIXTURES AND FITTINGS

The British Standards Institution has approved a Code of Practice for Canoe Construction, and a Recommendation for Safety Features in Canoes. The code states, "There is no such thing as a 'safe' canoe or kayak. There can only be a safe canoeist. His or her safety is only ensured by good training and experience and the avoidance of unnecessary risks"

The specific safety recommendations are:

Buoyancy

- 1.1 Each canoe or kayak shall be fitted with positive buoyancy so placed that the boat, when full of water but with no canoeist inside, will float at an angle of no more than 3 degrees when a 6.5kg lead weight is suspended from each end.
- 1.2 Closed-cell foam buoyancy shall be securely fixed. NOTE; Closed-cell foam buoyancy may be positioned to add to the structural strength of the canoe.

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- 1.3 Water exclusion buoyancy employing sealed compartments shall only be used if sufficient closed cell foam buoyancy is provided to meet the requirements of 1.1, or if facilities are provided to permit removal of water seepage.
 - 1.4 Provision shall be made on buoyancy air-bags to allow them to be tied in position.

Footrests

- 2.1 A footrest shall be provided for closed cockpit kayaks when used on white water or surf, as specified in 2.2 or 2.3.
- 2.2 Platform footrests in closed-cockpit kayaks shall not, in any position, permit the canoeists feet to pass forward of the footrest. The footrest shall be rigidly fixed and be incapable of rotation on its mounting.
- 2.3 Bar type footrests in closed-cockpit kayaks shall be designed to allow canoeists to withdraw their feet or legs if they pass the bar. In practice this means that the bar shall be of 'fail safe' design, ie. Rigid when the canoeists' feet are pressed against it in the normal paddling position, but capable of swinging or falling clear of the canoeists' feet if they pass beyond the bar.

End Grabs

(The figures in brackets indicate the diameter of rope recommended for kayaks when used on white water)

- 3.1 The canoe or kayak shall be fitted at each end with end loops, end toggles or handles, to provide handholds. Handholds shall be attached within 50cm of the extremities.
- 3.2 Where end loops < are fitted, rot-proof rope of not less than 6mm (8mm) diameter shall be used. The loop shall allow all four fingers of the hand to pass through.
- 3.3 Where end toggles are fitted, each end toggle shall be secured by a short length of rope, suitably rot-proofed, with a minimum diameter of 4mm (6mm) and a length of between 50mm and 200mm, fitted at its unattached end with a toggle at least 75mm long and a diameter of at least 20mm, made of a material that can withstand exposure to sea water without deteriorating.
- 3.4 Where handles are fitted, they shall have two separate anchor points, which allow all four fingers of the hand to pass, and the grasp shall not be less than 6mm (10mm) in diameter.

Painters and Deck-Lines

- 4.1 Where a painter is fitted, or where provision for the attachment of a painter is incorporated, a suitable fitting shall be provided to secure the free end of the

painter. A painter shall not pass around the cockpit rim.

4.2 Where deck lines are fitted, they shall be taut and shall be secured to remain free from the cockpit area of a closed-cockpit canoe or kayak.

4.3 Painters and deck-lines shall be rot-proof and not less than 6mm (10mm) diameter.

Colour

To assist in detection, the deck or hull of sea kayaks should be finished predominantly in red, orange or yellow of high visibility.

< End loops are not recommended for boats used on white water or in surf due to the danger of fingers becoming entrapped should the canoe or kayak rotate in a “stopper” or on a surf wave.

Appendix II

WHITE WATER RAFTING

A Code of Conduct for the supervision of white water rafting is available from the BCU office.

Appendix III

DRAGON BOATING

Canoeing coaches are not automatically qualified to supervise Dragon Boating.

Information concerning the supervision of Dragon Boating is available from the Dragon Boating Association Chairman, Mike Haslam, 44 Bassaleg Road, Newport, Gwent. NP9 3EA

Appendix IV

SAFETY HELMETS

BCU Guidance Note

The BCU Council determined the following policy statement:

‘Where safety helmets are considered to be necessary for an event or activity, or where they are required to be worn by the competition rules, they must conform to the following: Safety helmets must have a hard, strong, outer shell, and provide protection close to the eyebrows and ears and well down towards the neck at the back of the head. The helmet must incorporate a shock absorbing liner of suitable foam. It must fit the head well, and must not easily pull up and backwards, exposing the forehead’.

Explanatory note The use of the word ‘necessary’ in the above, should be noted. Helmets are often put on novices for initial training on flat water. This is not stated in BCU guidelines as a requirement, however. Helmets not conforming to the above would, therefore, still be useable in that context.