

Sea Kayak

Sea Kayak Award

Award Description

This award is designed to develop your skills and ability to apply appropriate decision making for an enjoyable and safe day out on the sea.

Extended Award Description

The Sea Kayak Award endorses your skill, judgment and the decision making required for a successful day on the sea. You will be confident in planning and undertaking journeys on the sea, in winds up to and including force 3 and/or tides up to 1 Knot, using sea kayaks or sit on tops, in tidal or non-tidal environments, with proficient skills to be in control throughout. Your award should be seen as a sound basis for building the experience and knowledge associated with Coastal Sea Kayak Award holders.

Award Content

1. Location

To have an enjoyable day out on the sea, we need to make some key decisions to ensure we are in the right place at the right time.

Key factors influencing our decisions include swell, the weather, the tide and features of the location we choose. We can take each of these factors into consideration and ask ourselves some questions to ensure the correct decisions are made:

Factor: Weather conditions

We may need to know: Which direction and how strong is the wind? Is it due to increase or decrease? Is it going to change direction? How will the forecast wind speed impact on the locations we can choose from? How might the profile of the coastline affect the forecast conditions?

Factor: The tide – In tidal environments, some locations are best when the tide is high or low and understanding this will give us a better and more enjoyable day on the sea.

We may need to know: What time is high water? What time is low water? How will this impact on the locations that we can choose from?

Factor: Access and environment

We may need to determine: What restrictions might there be on the water we are paddling on? Is this a managed or supervised beach? How would we find this information? How can we reduce our impact on the environment and animals around us? What are the potential dangers in the area we are paddling? How many access points are there in the area we are paddling? Do we have an escape plan? How might the coastline profile, swell and conditions affect our decisions on where to launch and paddle?

2. Getting Ready

Before getting to the water we must choose suitable kit and equipment and have the correct knowledge to use it. Key points we may consider are:

What will we wear?

What are the clothing options available to us as sea kayakers? Why might we choose one over another? Are we confident in the use of our chosen personal safety equipment?

What will we use?

What are the different equipment and boat options available and why might we choose one over the other?

What will we take?

What additional equipment might be useful to carry on the sea with us? What safety kit would it be useful to have with us or available on the shore? Do we have the equipment we will need to look after ourselves and help others during the trip? How will we make sure it is accessible when needed? How will we deal with broken equipment or carry out a simple repair?

What plans will we make?

Are we able to make a navigational plan for our day journey using a map? How can we use this plan to follow the coastline and identify our location throughout the day?

3. At the Water

Before we set out on our journey we need to be confident in our ability to deal with the complications it might bring. The sea is usually a shared space; we must also be aware of other users and consider how we will safely get on the water.

Consideration: Other users - we sometimes launch and paddle in busy areas. We may need to share the water with swimmers, other water users and anglers, amongst others. To do this safely, an 'etiquette' amongst these users

has developed to minimise conflict and help everyone enjoy the environment. It is also important to know something about the others we are paddling with.

We may need to consider: Who else is in the area? What is the etiquette here? Who else is paddling with us? What is their current ability? Are we aware of their motivations? What communication strategies can we agree upon to be used throughout the trip and in case of an incident?

Consideration: Safety and rescue

We may need to know: How can we protect ourselves and others from any potential hazards? What damage to our health might repeated immersion in cold water cause? How can we help prevent this becoming an issue? What would we do if someone we are paddling with gets really cold or overheats? What potential injuries might we need to treat? How might we do this? What additional safety equipment might be useful to carry and have access to? How will we summon help if it is needed? Do we have the equipment we need to look after ourselves and help others during the trip? How will we ensure it is accessible when we need it?

Consideration: Getting to the water

We may need to determine: What are the different launch sites available to us? What are the advantages and disadvantages of these? Which launching sites are appropriate for our skill level and that of the others we are paddling with? How are we going to get to the access point and do we need to organise a shuttle? What is the best way to carry, load and secure our craft to protect ourselves or others from injury and prevent unnecessary damage? How will we get our craft and additional equipment to the water?

4. **Sea Kayak Skills**

When sea kayaking we should be in control. Key features of being in control include us staying relaxed and keeping our actions within our abilities.

Skill: Effective forward paddling

We may need to know: Using a paddle of your choice, understand the advantages and limitations. How can we use different parts of our body for an efficient forward paddling technique? How can we adapt our forward paddling technique for different conditions?

Skill: Negotiating confined spaces

We may need to know: What techniques and tactics can we use to get in and around rocks? Are we able to move forwards, backwards and hold our position to negotiate a confined space? How can we use our positioning in a confined

space to ensure our safety and help others? How does your boat characteristics affect your ability to manoeuvre?

Skill: Maintaining direction

We may need to know: What techniques and tactics can we use to maintain our direction? How can we use the water and environment to help maintain our direction? How can we use our edge and paddle position to help maintain direction?

Skill: Changing direction

We may need to know: How can looking where we want to be when turning affect our turn? What techniques, tactics and types of stroke can we use to change direction as efficiently and effectively as possible? What body position can we use to get the most from each turn? How can we stop and reverse our craft?

Skill: Moving sideways

We may need to know: What techniques and tactics can we use to move sideways when we are static and on the move? How can we maximise our blade effectiveness to move sideways? How can we use our body position effectively to help us?

Skill: Working as a group

We may need to know: How can we monitor and maintain our own well-being and performance and help other people to maintain theirs? Are we, and the people we are paddling with, coping with the conditions? Are we attending to our needs and the needs of others we are paddling with? Are the methods of communication we set up working effectively?

Skill: Dealing with mishaps

We may need to know: How can we support ourselves when off balance? Can we self-rescue? How would we safely get ourselves or others back into the craft? How would we deal with loose kit? How can we be proactive when being rescued or rescuing others?

Skill: Towing

We may need to know: What different tows can we use? How can we release from a tow? What are the dangers with towing?

5. After the Sea Kayak Session

Every sea kayak trip is an opportunity for learning and improving. We can create a positive impact on our future experiences by performing a good post-trip assessment.

Look around: When we're back on land we can look back at the water. Has anything changed whilst we've been out? If so, how and why?

Watching what others do: It might be useful to spend some time watching any other paddlers. Where are they positioning themselves when moving around rocks and obstacles? Do they seem to be paddling more effectively than we were? Can we see why?

Consider what you will take away: What have we learnt today? What can we focus on next time?

6. Future Development

Each day we spend sea kayaking further expands our skills and knowledge, creating a more enjoyable experience on the water. With no trip experiences ever the same, we never stop learning.

Continually evaluating the choices we make creates a natural evolution of decision making ability. When we reach a certain point in this, it may be worth considering moving onto the Coastal Sea Kayak Award.