

4 Star Open Canoe Leader Training Notes

Technical Syllabus

The British Canoeing 4 Star Leader should be trained to appreciate the importance of maintaining an active posture whilst adopting a variety of positions within the boat. This supports effective power transfer between the paddler and their boat.

The paddler should be trained to perform all the tasks on both sides i.e. bilaterally. It is expected that training should also help the paddler to develop a range of effective cross-deck strokes as well as a range of techniques suitable for paddling on the upstream and downstream side of their boat. Training should enable paddlers to select which of the available techniques is best suited to any given situation.

Training should also include paddling as part of a tandem crew as well as paddling solo. When paddling as part of a tandem crew the paddler is expected to be able to paddle at both bow and stern and it is expected that the other crewmember will be of a similar standard.

The essence of the requirement to be able to paddle solo and tandem is that tandem paddlers can cope if their partner becomes incapacitated, falls out, or is needed to join another crew. Whilst a solo paddler may need to be able to bring another paddler into their craft to help them. Paddlers would normally participate in their 4 Star course as per their normal paddling preference (i.e. solo or tandem), but would be required to spend a short amount of time dealing with 'what if' type incidents.

For example;

- For tandem paddlers, could they solo paddle a rapid of the appropriate grade and recover their swimming partner back into their canoe.
- For solo paddlers, could they carry a passenger and paddle a rapid of the appropriate grade, to reunite them with their own craft, or manoeuvre into position to rescue a pinned boat.

Candidates are also expected to lead/look after both solo and tandem crews, they therefore need to understand the differences between solo and tandem boats. One way this may be assessed is to have tandem and solo paddlers to lead on the assessments.

Part A – Personal Paddling Skills

A.1 Lifting, carrying, launching and landing

Paddlers should develop an understanding of the principles of safe lifting and carrying.

Training should look at how to communicate and how paddlers can ensure that their group follow these principles.

Moving and handling techniques: paddlers should be coached in understanding and using appropriate lifting and carrying techniques e.g. sharing the load, spine in line, slide and glide.

Training should cover launching and landing in a variety of environments and how to minimise damage to the bank.

A.2 Efficient and effective open water skills:

Paddle effectively up, down and across a force 4 wind: Training should allow paddlers to develop an appreciation of wind speed and direction, and how it affects the boat. They should understand how boat trim, paddling side, wind speed and direction affect performance. Paddlers should experience a range of techniques to enable them to adjust their trim and optimise their performance e.g. their seating position, carrying a load etc. Paddlers should develop an appreciation of the impact of these different techniques on the fundamentals of paddling. This awareness should include experience of winds of up to force 4 as well as paddling a range of types of canoe and whilst paddling solo and tandem. Training could include the use of a triangular course, which may be of use when developing this awareness of trim. Trim should be a key underpinning point throughout training.

Training should allow paddlers to develop an awareness of how the shape of the land affects the wind speed and direction, and an understanding of the effect of wind direction in increasing the likelihood and the consequences of capsizes.

Rafting: Training should include construction of rafts with spars, and safe raft shapes without spars, and develop the paddler's understanding of the merits of different styles of raft. Providers should make paddlers aware of all the key safety issues of rafting, including choice and consistency of knots.

Sailing: Training should include the use of a simple downwind sailing rig for use with rafted boats. Paddlers should develop awareness of wind speed, and the effect of land shape on the wind speed and direction. It is essential to be able to instantly de-power the sail, consideration should be given to construction methods which will assist when recovering from an all-in swamped rig recovery. Several options for preventing and dealing with a man over board should be practiced.

A.3 Efficient and effective grade 2 river running skills:

Upstream manoeuvres (ferries and S-turns): Paddlers should be helped to discover the importance of speed; angle and boat tilt, so that they are able to cross a consistent and moderate grade 2 flow with an effective ferry glide. During an effective ferry glide the boat should remain within the paddler's control and there should be minimal loss of height; training should help paddlers to achieve this. Training should explore the same factors crossing a current using S-turns.

Checking, setting and reverse ferry gliding: Checking involves slowing the descent of the canoe in anticipation of avoiding an obstacle, going for an eddy manoeuvre or moving to the bank. Setting is the initiation of a reverse ferry glide, and involves putting the appropriate ferrying angle on to go in the direction desired. Setting into eddies is achieved from facing downstream and by reverse ferry gliding into the eddy.

Checking, setting and reverse ferry gliding should be used to alter the boat's position on the river, with a view to selecting a suitable line down a rapid and for avoiding obstacles. These techniques should be introduced and developed during training. Training should also include the safe negotiation of bends where the main current runs under trees.

Whilst demonstrating reverse ferry gliding, it is not envisaged that the paddler need enter and leave the main current, but rather that they should be able to perform the manoeuvres whilst in the main current. Training should include the opportunity to explore trim within the context of reverse ferries.

Eddy turns both into and out of the current: Paddlers should gain an understanding of the relationship between factors such as speed of current, size of eddy, tilt and trim, and the desired position on the river after the manoeuvre. Consideration should be given to the importance of initial positioning and the angle of the boat, allied to the correct degree of tilt and trim that is appropriate for the particular eddy.

Supporting and edging: Many of the above manoeuvres may lead to instability requiring a support stroke. Training should deal with methods to prevent swamping and capsizes using edging and bracing both towards and away from the paddle side.

A.4 Lining

Paddlers should develop an understanding of an appropriate line for the task i.e. floating, clean line, long enough and comfortable to operate. Paddlers should gain an appreciation of the context for lining on both moving and open water, and the use of various techniques to attach the line including bridles. Although not part of the assessed criteria, paddlers should have the opportunity to experiment with upstream travel using lines i.e. tracking, during training.

A.5 Poling

Paddlers should understand the practise of adopting the appropriate trim and an effective stance, so that they can pole with the current, against the wind. Paddlers should be introduced to simple upstream travel. Although not part of the assessed criteria, training should introduce paddlers to snubbing as part of the range of downstream poling techniques.

A.6 Navigation

Paddlers should gain an awareness of how to: use grid references, take and follow a bearing, and identify simple contour features.

Part B – Rescue Skills

B.1 Demonstrate skilful application of appropriate boat and bank-based rescue skills in open water

Self-rescue: paddlers should have the opportunity to experiment with a range of self-rescue techniques, which may involve using their own kit.

Deep water rescue: paddlers should be shown techniques that allow them to perform the whole manoeuvre without assistance.

Swamped raft rescue: paddlers should gain an awareness of the importance of safe lifting techniques. They should practice techniques suitable to rescue a swamped raft from another boat or raft, or as an all-in scenario.

Man overboard: options for rescue of a man overboard from a raft under sail should be discussed within the training course.

Towing: paddlers should experience a number of different ways to tow a canoe. They should understand the importance of a releasable system and the inherent dangers of towing particularly with reference to moving water.

B.2 Demonstrate skilful application of appropriate boat and bank-based rescue skills in moving water

Self-rescue: paddlers should gain an understanding of how swim lines are chosen, attached and utilised in self-rescue.

Throwline rescue: paddlers should develop the ability to accurately deploy a throwline in a range of situations and brace appropriately when the load is applied.

Boat recovery of person and equipment: paddlers should understand the practical and safety issues when picking up a swimmer into their boat or shepherding a swimmer to the bank.

B.3 Incident management and first aid in the 4 Star environment

The training course should include a range of simple training scenarios that illustrate issues likely to be encountered as a Four Star Leader (including calling emergency services).

B.4 Effective group leader and group member in rescues and incidents

Providers should utilise the training scenario to illustrate good practice.

Part C – Safety, Leadership & Group Skills

The overall aim of this section is for paddlers to develop an understanding that proactive paddling and avoidance is at the heart of an enjoyable and safe experience.

C.1 Skilful application of leadership principles (e.g. CLAP)

C.2 Appropriate leadership strategies, judgement and decision-making

Paddlers should learn how to be organised on the water, and develop the experience and judgment required to safely lead on open water where an irregular shoreline produces varying wind patterns, and on grade 2 white water. Paddlers should develop judgement and tactics associated with rounding more exposed headlands or crossing bays. Paddlers should gain experience in identifying hazards and in picking suitable lines for different designs of craft e.g. white water and touring boats.

Paddlers should develop and be able to demonstrate effective group control.

Paddlers should learn how to facilitate effective communications within a group.

C.3 Safety awareness and risk management

Paddlers should be able to effectively evaluate risks and manage risks in the moderate water environment.

C.4 Group control and management

Paddlers should be trained to use and understand risk assessment, group management, judgement and safe paddling techniques for class 2 white water and open water.

C.5 Equipment

Paddlers should be helped to link the theoretical understanding outlined in D1 with practical application. They should gain an understanding of how to evaluate any equipment they use, and of the importance of how it should be maintained and carried or worn when in use.

Ideally through training the paddler will experience a wide range of both craft and paddles.

Personal clothing, spare clothing and waterproof kit bag. Paddlers should develop the skills to choose appropriate personal clothing relative to the prevailing conditions. Paddlers should gain knowledge of available suitable alternatives and how they may be carried within their boat.

Buoyancy aid and helmet. Training should enable paddlers to identify the key features of a suitable white water buoyancy aid and know how it should be worn. Helmets are not compulsory but the ability to risk assess their use, or otherwise, should be developed during training.

Simple first aid kit, repair kit and emergency equipment for personal use. Training should cover simple but effective solutions to the most common or most likely incidents that paddlers may have to deal with.

Paddlers should be able to choose appropriate food for the trips to be undertaken. Providers should make paddlers aware of the importance of good hydration and the benefits that might be gained from a hot drink.

Sling, karabiner, whistle and an appropriate knife: paddlers should gain knowledge of practical uses of each.

C.6 Structured evaluation of group's paddling abilities with regard to proposed trip

Training should include how to structure a practical observation that enables the leader to evaluate the suitability of the group members for the proposed trip. This observation would be used to establish a group member's ability to enter and exit the flow effectively, to ferry glide across an even grade 2 current without losing ground and their ability to paddle in a force 4 wind if applicable.

Part D – Theory

Paddlers should gain background theory as appropriate throughout the training and be shown a list of information resources.

D.1 Equipment

Paddlers should gain knowledge and experience of using a range of equipment including the most up-to-date. Paddlers should also understand how and why modern equipment has evolved and which use each piece of equipment best serves.

Providers should help paddlers link the theoretical understanding outlined above with its practical application. Through this paddlers should know how to evaluate any equipment they use and the importance of how it should be maintained, and carried or worn when in use.

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D.2 Safety

Paddlers should develop an awareness of the dangers and problems associated with paddling on moving water, and the position that should be adopted if swimming in fast moving water. Training should cover simple solutions to common problems that paddlers may encounter whilst paddling moving water and larger sections of open water in open canoe. This should include undertaking dynamic risk assessments for themselves and the group they are paddling with.

D.3 Weather

Paddlers should gain an awareness of a variety of sources of weather forecast. They should develop the ability to interpret such weather forecasts and be mindful of the conditions actually experienced. They should also gain an understanding of the impact of various weather conditions on the open water environment.

D.4 Wellbeing, health and first aid

Linked with sound safe judgement providers should ensure that paddlers can deal with the most likely injuries that may occur as part of paddlesport activities on the relevant grade of water. This training should complement any other first aid training where it exists.

D.5 Access

Paddlers should develop an awareness of the range of access issue that exist throughout the UK and where they can find additional information.

D.6 Environment

An appreciation of the environment we paddle in is a key underpinning principle for many in paddlesport. Paddlers should know how to gain maximum enjoyment from this natural environment and how to protect it.

D.7 Planning

Paddlers should gain an understanding of what is involved in planning a trip down a river, such as access and egress, equipment requirements, significance of a weather forecast, shuttle procedures, lunch stops and contingency plans.

D.8 Group awareness and management

Paddlers should be a productive member of the paddling group. As a productive member they should know what questions to ask themselves and others and how to go about organising a day out both on and off the water.

D.9 Navigation

Paddlers should understand how to: use grid references, take and follow a bearing, and identify simple contour features (this is normally covered practically).

D.10 Etiquette

Paddlers should be encouraged to promote a positive image for paddlesport with other river users and local residents.

D.11 General knowledge

Paddlers should develop their understanding of the types of canoeing in which they are involved, and develop their knowledge of the range of activities which the sport incorporates. This should include an awareness of one or more of the competitive forms of canoeing which have World Championships or Olympic status, and Britain's performance in them.

D.12 Leadership responsibilities

Paddlers should gain a clear understanding of their responsibilities as leader, especially with under 18s.

D.13 Water features and hazards

Training should include the identification of all water features likely to be encountered, as well as features that could become hazards and how to manage the risk these hazards present.

D.14 Injury prevention