

Notes from July 2023 Training

SET UP

4 points of the rectangle: both shoulders, both hips. Start facing forward, rotate/twist so that whole torso faces diagonal. The 4 points move as one unit.

Paddle side hip rotates forward. Other hip rotates back with buttock lifted slightly

Paddle side shoulder rotates forward and other shoulder rotates back

Paddle side leg is forward with foot flat on floor

Lower arm mostly straight – slight bend. Upper elbow bent enough to see over bicep but not tucked into side. The elbow is not sticking out

Armpit over the gunnel. Should see the yellow of the gunnel but not the white of the hull

Paddle is forward at an angle (approximately 45 degrees). Paddlers are mirroring the angle seat 1 has

CATCH

Blade is fully buried in water before pulling/rotating back

If a 'kerplunk' sound or splash at the catch, paddler is pulling back before blade is fully immersed

STROKE

Paddler is hinged slightly forward at the reach/catch

Paddler sits back up as they rotate/pull blade through the water (demonstrate with intertwined fingers). The torso is doing the work, not the much smaller muscles of the arms

Upper hand pushes down; the blade remains at the same depth as at the catch throughout the stroke

Front foot is flat on the floor – push from toes. Back foot is under the seat, heel up

Knees are moving back & forth

On the return, paddle is making a "D" shape in the air, rather than totally vertical

TIMING AND SWITCHES

Watch the lower hand of the paddler you are following; focus on exiting the water at the same as they are

As a drill, have paddler on same side as paddler in front of them mirror what they are doing (e.g., seat 2 on same side as seat 1 to get timing and technique the same)

During switch: when “ho” is called, paddlers push down paddle (not a full stroke) before lifting to start switch, e.g., “bouncing” or “pole vaulting” the paddle back up

Pass the paddle shaft from one hand to the other in front of you – in center of canoe. The receiving hand grabs the shaft under the other hand

DRAWS, PRIES, HOLD

To draw, lean upper body out to left. Arms are **not** fully extended – lower arm has a bend. Blade is buried in the water

Left foot is braced against the right side of the canoe. Left knee is braced against the left side for stability. Right leg can be held parallel to left leg, if comfortable

While holding the paddle, lean upper body back up into the canoe so that the torso is doing the work and not the arms

Paddle shoves the water under the canoe

Draws can be done at different angles, forward and backward, to help steer the front

To pry (Method 1) hold the shaft a couple of inches away from the side of the canoe with left forearm braced on the gunnel and upper arm tucked into your side

During pry, use left hand as the fulcrum, rather than the top of the gunnel – mostly to prevent damage to the shaft of the paddle. Hand/wrist is held rigid (like an oarlock). Blade is completely buried in the water

At the end of the pry, turn the blade sideways in the water and keep it in the water to return to start position

(Method 2) Left arm is tucked in and braced on the gunnel, same as Method 1, but the blade is held against the side of the canoe and the left hand holds the shaft tight against the top of the gunnel. Top of the gunnel is used as the fulcrum; hand/wrist held rigid with thumb over the gunnel. The return is the same as Method 1

Steersperson yells “hold” and all paddlers immediately shall completely bury the blade in water, bracing the paddle shaft across/against their torso and leaning back a bit

TIPS FOR COACHES

Role: to be positive and keep paddlers engaged. Be “Switzerland” in handling conflicts

Ask new paddlers how water-confident they are if immersed in the river. Ask if there are any medical conditions for coaches to be aware of with potential symptoms to watch for and any meds on hand for emergency use

One of the first things to teach paddlers is to “Hold” the canoe, as outlined above

Try to understand each paddler’s personal expectations for practices, e.g., recreational, fitness, race preparation, etc.

Use a variety of teaching approaches: verbal discussion, demonstration, videos, other visual aids

Have paddlers watch video of themselves and first ask them what they think of what they’re seeing before giving suggestions

Use video with slo-mo to show paddlers in detail what they are doing

When assigning seats, think about which paddlers might benefit from mirroring the paddler in front of them

Pick 2 to 3 techniques for crews to work on at beginning of practice

Emphasize that we are teaching these skills in this manner to ensure paddlers have a consistent paddling stroke as a team and so that the crew blends well and the canoe glides smoothly. There are other ways to achieve a good paddle stroke but this is the method that we use

Only coaches will provide feedback to paddlers. Paddlers do not critique other’s efforts unless specifically asked