

Freestyle

Advanced Freestyle Award

Award Description

This award is designed to advance your skills to enable you to become a competent, all round freestyle paddler.

Extended Award Description

Your Advanced Freestyle Award gives you the ability to surf almost any style of feature and perform a range of cool tricks. You will create proficient use of skills and equipment to enjoy and be in control throughout your freestyle session and will be confident looking at the factors which affect our decisions on where and when to go out. Advanced Freestylers will try the wide range of tricks available, giving you the confidence to discover and try further tricks and become an adaptable freestyle paddler.

Award Content

1. Location

To have an enjoyable day play boating we need to make sure we choose a suitable spot to play. There are a wide range of easily accessible spots for us. We may use an indoor pool or a lake, a flat section of river or sheltered part of the sea.

We can take some key factors into account when choosing our venue and deciding if it is suitable:

Factor: Water depth

We may need to know: How deep is the water? Is the water deep enough for us to go on end or upside down? Are there parts that are shallower than others? What moves will we be practicing and is the water deep enough for these? Are there any objects under the surface to avoid?

Factor: Features

We may need to know: What features does the water we are going to be paddling on have? Are they safe to play in? Are any weirs safe to play in? How would we find this out? How sticky is this feature? Do the features change as the water levels change? Are the features affected by tide or wind direction? Are the features suitable for our ability level? Can we tell which tricks are suitable for a feature just by looking at it? Is this a good place to practice the

skills we want to? What makes a feature good for cartwheels, loops or blunts? What factors might make those moves easier or harder?

Factor: Rapids – some freestyle features are part of a longer rapid

We may need to know: What is the rest of the rapid like? Are we able to safely paddle the rapid to get to the feature? What is downstream of the feature? Why is it important for us to know this? Is it easy to get back to the feature we want to play on once we wash off? Is there eddy service?

Factor: Weather

What we might observe: What is the air temperature? What is the water temperature? How strong is the wind? What direction is the wind blowing? Is it going to rain? Will that affect the features we are playing on? How might the weather affect how long we play for?

Factor: Water quality

We may need to know: What is the water quality like? Are there any factors that could make the water quality worse? What could the consequences be for us if the water quality is poor?

Factor: Access and environment

We may need to know: What restrictions might be in place on a piece of water and why? If this is an artificial course, do we need to sign in and pay to use the site? Are there any rules we need to stick to? Are there larger, powered boats using the area we plan to use? Will this present us with any issues? How can we reduce our impact on the environment and animals around us?

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 freestylers? Why might we choose one over another? Would the location or weather affect these choices? Are we confident in the use of our chosen personal safety equipment? What clothing can we choose to ensure our freedom of movement to perform tricks?

What will we use?

What are the different equipment and boat options available? What difference does the shape and size of our boat make? What different materials might our boats be made from and why would we choose one material over another? How will we choose a boat which is the right size for us? How will we ensure

the boat is outfitted and the seat positioned to suit us? How would we use an over-thruster and what are the pros and cons to using one?

What will we take?

What additional equipment might be useful to have with us? What safety kit would it be useful to have with us or available on the bank?

3. At the Water

Before we get on the water we need to be confident in our ability to deal with any complications it might bring. We must also consider how we will safely get on the water.

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 and what extra equipment would we need? Where and when would we want our extra equipment in the event of an incident?

Consideration: Getting to the water

We may need to determine: 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. Freestyle Skills

Freestyle is about throwing your boat about on every possible axis while having lots of fun. This award takes us through some of the moves we can do on waves and holes once we have covered the fundamentals in the Freestyle Award. There are plenty of other moves we can try and it is important in our evolution as a paddler to watch others and give new tricks we see a try.

Skill: Good posture

We may need to know: How might bad posture affect what we are able to do? How can we experiment with our posture to help with strength and rotation? What injuries could bad posture cause?

Skill: Warming up

We may need to determine: What are the benefits of doing a warm up? What makes a good warm up for freestyle? What difference might we see in a good

freestyle warm up, compared to a warm up for a different sport or paddlesport discipline?

Skill: Loop - one of the most impressive tricks to watch and the one everyone wants to do!

We may need to consider: How will we perform this move? What are we looking for from the move? How can we keep the boat straight throughout the move? How can we maximise the height of this move? How can we finish this move off effectively? Is our body position correct and safe?

Skill: Cartwheel

We may need to know: How will we perform this move? What are we looking for from this move? What different methods might we use to initiate this move? How can we initiate the move both on a feature and flatwater? What does our body position need to be to perform smooth, linked cartwheels? Where would we be looking throughout the move?

Skill: Splitwheel

We may need to consider: How will we perform this move? What are we looking for from this move? How do we start the move? How is this move similar/different to a cartwheel? How do we use our paddle throughout the move? When practising on flatwater, how can we use markers to help us?

Skill: Carving and Cut-backs - carving around on a wave can be one of the most blissful and relaxing parts of freestyle.

We may need to practice: How is carving done? How are cut-backs done? Why are these skills important to us and what are they useful for? How can we use our edge and trim together to maximise speed and control? How can we use carving and cut-backs to get to the top of the wave?

Skill: Blunt or Roundhouse

We may need to know: How do we perform a blunt or roundhouse? What is the difference between a blunt and a roundhouse? What techniques can we use to initiate a blunt? How can mixing these different techniques help us? What do we call it when we mix the different initiation techniques? Can we do this on both sides? What difference does our body position make? How do we use the paddle throughout this move? How can we time different parts of our move for a smooth overall trick?

Skill: Back Surfing - controlled and consistent back surfing is practiced less than front surfing. As such, it's usually later in our paddling that we become skilful at it. However, it is fun and satisfying to be able to do.

We may need to practice: How can we perform this skill? Why is it a valuable skill? What does it set us up for? How long are we able to perform this skill for? Where is the best place to look whilst performing this skill? Can we improve our skill by closing our eyes and practising it by feel alone?

Skill: Back Blunt or Back Roundhouse (a.k.a. Backstab) - as the name indicates, this is the reverse version of the blunt or roundhouse.

We may need to know: How do we perform this move? Why will the ability to be in a controlled back surf help us? What techniques can we use to initiate this move? Can we practice on the flat to perfect this?

Skill: Blasts

We may need to practice: How can we perform this move? What techniques might we be able to use to help us? What parts of our body are actively engaged to hold the boat in the blast? What more advanced move do we often see starting with a blast?

Skill: Rolling - being able to roll back up from any position gives us more chance of staying on the feature and allows us to try any move we want!

We may need to consider: Can we roll quickly from any position? Have we practiced capsizing unexpectedly in a variety of positions? Can we use the momentum as we capsize to continue and roll back up on the other side? How can we use our bodies and momentum to help with this? What advanced rolling technique, without using our paddle, can we learn? Can we roll on both sides?

Skill: Correcting balance mid-move - we purposely put the boat into off-balance positions all the time in freestyle – it's what helps us to get the boat to do those funky tricks!

We may need to practice: Can we put the boat off-balance and correct it? Can we do this on any axis? What techniques will we use to regain our balance? Can we use our body movements to adjust our balance in every plane? Where are the balance points? What can we do with the paddle to help correct our balance? How can we correct our balance on specific moves? Can we use a poolside or jetty to experiment with feeling the balance point with the boat on end?

Skill: Bow Stalls

We may need to know: How can we perform this move? Why is it useful to us as freestyle paddlers? How would we initiate this move? How can someone else assist us in practising this move? What other things can we do to the boat to help us in practising this move? How might leaning back affect this move?

Skill: Stern Stalls

We may need to know: How can we perform this move? Why is it useful to us as freestyle paddlers? How would we initiate this move? How can someone else assist us in practising this move? What other things can we do to the boat to help us in practising this move? How might leaning back and forward affect this move?

Skill: Dealing with the mishaps

We may need to consider: How would we safely get ourselves or others back to the side or back into their boat? How would we deal with loose kit? What do airbags do and why is that useful? Is there any other kit we might use to help with rescues in moving water?

5. After our Session

Every time we go paddling, we have an opportunity to learn and improve. We can maximise how much we learn from our session by thinking back and reflecting on what we did, even if it seemed like all we were doing is playing and having fun!

What did we do: What skills did we play with today? Have we improved on any of them? If so, what helped? Did we find anything particularly challenging? Were we able to do everything as well on both sides?

Using video: Video is a great way to watch back what we do. It can help us see if something is working and what we need to change. It can also be handy to spot our good examples of a skill and weaker performances. Does our left and right version of the same move look the same?

Watching what others do: It might be useful to spend some time watching other freestyle paddlers doing tricks on flatwater. YouTube has loads of cool videos and can be a great resource.

What next? What can we focus on next time? Are there any games we can play to practice the skills we've learnt? How would we use these skills on different features or sections of river? What moves do the skills we have learnt move on to? Can we link any of our moves together? Can we plan a ride containing all of the moves we can do on any given feature?

6. Future Development

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

Continually evaluating our skills creates a natural evolution of ability. When we reach a certain point in this, it may be worth considering moving onto British Canoeing Leadership or Coaching qualifications.

