

Racing

Racing Excel Award

Award Description

This award is designed to help you to advance your racing skills in all environments, becoming autonomous in all areas; technical, tactical, physiological and psychological.

Advanced Award Description

Your Racing Excel Award will give you the ability to apply your choices to an enjoyable racing experience, ensuring confidence to race and deliver your best performance in high level marathon, sprint and ocean racing competitions, through effective application of skills and well developed decision making processes. Your extensive experience ensures an advanced understanding of appropriate equipment usage and boat set up.

Award Content

1. Location

Racing takes place in a variety of water environments and conditions vary. In order to have an enjoyable training/racing session we need to have some key knowledge on our location. We take a variety of factors into consideration and can ask ourselves some questions to ensure appropriate decisions are made:

Factor: Weather – wind speed and direction have an impact on us as paddlers.

What we might observe: What is the wind speed and direction? Is it going to change direction and speed? How will this affect our training/racing session?

Racing also takes place on the sea and, if using such environments, we need to consider how might the profile of the coastline affect the forecast conditions?



Factor: Water conditions

We may need to know: What are the current water levels? Are they due to increase or decrease? How will this affect our training/racing session?

If we are on the sea, what is the height of the waves? How are these being generated? What time is high water? What time is low water? What directions are the tides flowing? How might the tidal movements affect our session?

Factor: Access and environment

What restrictions might there be on the water we are paddling on? Where will we access/egress the water? What environmental factors might affect this decision? How would we direct support to us in an emergency situation? How can we reduce our impact on the environment and animals around us? If we are on the sea, how might the coastline profile 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 appropriate knowledge to use it. Key points we may consider are:

What will we wear?

What are the clothing options available to us at this level? 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 at this level and why might we choose one over the other? How might we set our boats up to get the best from our session? What type of paddle might we choose to gain boat control or power? What technology can we use to measure and improve our performance?



What will we take?

What additional equipment might be useful to carry with us? What safety kit would it be useful to have with us or available on the bank? What drink and nutrition might we need during and after our training session? How will the appropriate drink and nutrition help our performance, recovery and general health? What technology might we use to measure and improve our performance?

What will we plan?

Do we have a race/training plan for this session which is relevant to our skillset? Are we fully confident in this plan? Are we able to use past experience to ensure this plan is suitable? Does the plan take our long term goals into account?

How will we prepare mentally and physically?

Do we feel mentally and physically prepared for the session/race? What techniques and methods can we use to ensure we are mentally and physically prepared in order to maximise our performance during a session/race? What training methods can we use to develop general and specific strength, power and robustness for our chosen event? Why is this preparation important? Why is it important that we communicate this information with our coach or crew mates? Are we open to the knowledge and advice of our coaches whilst also being able to make our own decisions? How will we use training zones to develop correct energy systems for our events? How might we plan this? What do we understand by RAMP protocol? How can we use this to plan an appropriate warm up and down? Why is this important?

3. At the Water

Before we start our session we need to be confident in our ability to deal with the complications it might bring. The water 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 – some venues can be a very busy area. We may need to share the water with rowers and accompanying motor launches, swimmers, fishermen and paddlers, amongst others. To do this safely, an 'etiquette' amongst these users has developed to minimise conflict and help everyone enjoy the water.

We may need to consider: Who else is in the area? Are we using a managed or supervised venue? What is the etiquette here? How might this affect us? Who else is paddling with us? What is their current ability? If paddling in a crew boat, do we have joint, agreed race/training plans for the session? How can we use positioning in the crew boat to maximise each person's strengths?

Consideration: Safety and rescue

We may need to know: How can we protect ourselves from 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? Can we carry out a dynamic risk assessment to measure if the environment is safe for our ability level and for others in our crew? How can we adjust our plans if needed?

Consideration: Getting to the water

We may need to determine: How are we going to get to the access point? 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? Is the weather and flow as expected? What signs do we need to look for to determine this? How can we adjust our plans if needed?

4. Racing Skills

When training and racing we should be in control. Key skills to achieve that control include us staying relaxed and understanding the effects of posture, connectivity, power transfer and efficient forward paddling.



Skill: Forward paddling

We may need to know: How can we use our body to propel our craft forward, smoothly and efficiently, whilst minimising all other boat movement? How can we set up and time our stroke to enable efficient connectivity and power transfer when training? How can we use our forward paddling stroke to maximise our full physical potential? How can we develop a high degree of accuracy and skill in stroke/movement pattern for all speeds and intensities in training? How can we develop our stroke to make it highly efficient in single or crew boat situations? Are we proficient in a wide range of racing strokes? When changing speed, how do we efficiently maintain our forward paddling stroke within a race situation? What factors will we need to take into consideration when doing this?

Skill: Steering and control

We may need to consider: What strokes can we use to steer our craft? How can we use these strokes to manoeuvre quickly and efficiently on the move, with minimal impact on our forward speed? How can we stay fully in control of our craft whilst applying full power from a standing start? What techniques can we use to stay in full control of our craft in a range of different racing environments? How will we keep our craft stable whilst using connectivity and power transfer? How can we stay in perfect balance and control of our craft when portaging in a racing environment?

Skill: Working as part of a crew

We may need to know: What techniques can we use to steer the boat efficiently as part of a crew? How can we ensure we all work together to do this? How can we keep our stroke perfectly in rhythm with the rest of the crew? Are we able to maintain a highly efficient stroke in a variety of positions in a crew boat?

Skill: Dealing with pressure

We may need to consider: What are the specific mental and life demands racing will put upon us? Do we have techniques and tactics to cope with these



and achieve our goals? How will we maintain our focus when racing and training under pressure to make appropriate decisions? How will we use our mental focus to deliver our best race plan?

Skill: Dealing with mishaps

We may need to know: Are we able to self-rescue in all racing conditions? What recovery strokes and techniques can we use when we go off balance? How would we safely get ourselves or others back to shore or into the craft? What can we do to overcome mishaps and continue racing/training?

5. Racing Rules, Techniques and Tactics

We should gain an understanding of the specific rules, techniques and tactics for racing to do well in competition. We will have racing plans in place and be clear on how we will use them.

Consideration: Rules and regulations

We may need to know: What are the rules and regulations for racing at this level and in this discipline? What other knowledge of the sport will help us when racing? How can we fully use this knowledge to maximise our performance? How might we find this information?

Consideration: Racing plan

We may need to determine: Can we consistently deliver our race plan, under pressure, in all racing environments? Is the plan we have for the race still achievable? Are we able to adapt our plans for the conditions on the day? How does our plan fit into our long term goals?

Consideration: Techniques and tactics

We may need to know: What techniques and tactics will help us to win at this level? What does wash hanging do to help us? How can we utilise this? How can our portaging skills help us gain advantage in a race? How can we use our knowledge and adaptation skills to minimise the negative impact of adverse environmental conditions?



6. After our Training Session/Race

Every session is an opportunity for learning and improving. We can create a positive impact on our future experiences by performing a good post-session assessment. First, we must ensure we perform a good warm down.

How can we use performance technology to analyse the training session/race?
What could we have done differently? What went well?

It might be useful to spend some time considering other paddlers' results and data. Can we learn anything from other's performances?

Consider what we will take away: We could also think about things from a personal perspective. What skills would we like to focus on next time? How does this session fit in with, or affect, our long term goals? What do we need to develop further to be at the top of the sport at this level? Are we taking enough responsibility for our outcomes?

7. Future Development

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

Continually evaluating the choices we make creates a natural evolution of decision making ability helping us to link training to racing. When we reach a certain point in this, it may be worth considering moving on to British Canoeing Race Coach qualifications.