

# Slalom

## Slalom Excel Award

### Award Description

This award is designed to advance your ability to apply appropriate decision making skills to deliver a plan in an advanced slalom environment, using techniques appropriate to the environment and gate sequence. You will deliver with conviction and speed whilst demonstrating the ability to adapt your plan and take on appropriate opportunities in the moment.

### Extended Award Description

As a Slalom Paddler, you will be able to demonstrate the capacity to associate different moves and explore new boat, body, blade movements and trajectories. You will learn to handle the challenges that forces of nature may bring with precision and create high levels of skills to be in control throughout the training session.

### Award Content

#### 1. Location

To have an enjoyable slalom session we need to consider some key factors about our location. We can take each of these factors into consideration and ask ourselves some questions to ensure the correct decisions are made.

#### **Factor:** Weather

**What we might observe:** What speed and direction is the wind? How is this affecting the gates? Is the wind due to increase, decrease or change direction during our session? What changes might we need to make to our performance to take the wind into account?

#### **Factor:** Water Conditions

**We may need to know:** What is the current flow? What are the current water levels? Are these due to increase or decrease in the days leading up to our session? What is the current water quality? How might we find this information? How can we minimise our risk of infection and illness due to water quality? How might this information affect where we hang the gates?

**Factor:** Access and environment

**We may need to consider:** What restrictions and limitations might there be on the water we are paddling on? How would we find this out? Where will we access/egress the water? What environmental factors might affect this decision? Has the venue got a pontoon or other man made surface we can use for access? 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? 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 craft options available to us? Why might we choose one over another? What does a well-equipped boat look like for a session? How can we set the boat up to ensure we get the maximum from our session?

### **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?

### 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. A course 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 swimmers, fisherman and paddlers, amongst others. To do this safely, an 'etiquette' amongst these users has developed to minimise conflict and help everyone enjoy the water.

**What we might observe:** 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?

**Consideration:** Safety and rescue

**We may need to know:** What are the potential hazards at this location and how can we protect ourselves from them? 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 equipment might it be useful to have access to during our session?

**Consideration:** Getting to the water

**We may need to determine:** How are we going to get to the water? 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. Pre-session

Before we get on the water we must ensure we are physically and mentally prepared for our session. We could do this by contemplating the following:

**Personal readiness:** Do we feel mentally and physically prepared for the session? How can we ensure we are physically and mentally prepared for the session? Are we using a mobility program to help us prepare? Why is this important? What are our warm up and warm down plans? Why is this important? Do we understand the purpose of this session and know how we can get the most from it? Do we have clear aims, areas of focus and a plan of attack for this session? How might we plan this? How will we deal with areas we find challenging? How can we use our mistakes to advance our future paddling? How will we use our time between sections/runs to reflect and prepare for future runs?

**Communicating with others:** Are we open to the knowledge and advice of our coaches? Are we able to formulate a clear plan of attack during the course walk and communicate this to our coach? What techniques would we use to formulate this plan? Why is it important that we do this? How can we support others within our training group? Are we able to communicate and analyse our reflections with our coach?

**Understanding the course:** What course observations might it be useful to make before a session? Do we understand why our coach has chosen certain gate positions? Are we able to set a balanced, competitive slalom course in line with ICF rules and recommendations?

## 5. Slalom Skills

When paddling a slalom kayak or canoe we should be in control. Key features of being in control include us staying relaxed, balanced and understanding the application of the fundamentals. At this level you will be in pursuit of technical excellence in all aspects and consistent and reliable in your delivery.

**Skill:** White Water ability

**We may need to know:** Are we able to maintain balance and edge control on white water? Are we able to transition smoothly between edges? How can we use our boat and body position to do this? Do we fully understand the effects of our positioning and movement on the boat?

**Skill:** Advanced techniques

**We may need to know:** What techniques and tactics can we employ to reduce our time around the poles? How will we decide which technique to use when? How can we minimise our times through staggers? Are we able to choose the appropriate techniques for maximum efficiency and effectiveness throughout the course?

**Skill:** Decision Making

**We may need to consider:** Are we able to consistently make decisions to maximise our use of the water? Are we able to recognise and utilise our personal strengths to aid our performance?

## 6. Post Session

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

**Watching what others do:** It might be useful to spend some time watching others. How are they are linking strokes to turn the boat? Do they seem to be able to maintain rhythm and pace?

**Using Video to gain information:** We can use video for both personal reflection and confirmation of our plan, as well as for future learning.

**Consider what you will take away:** What have we learnt today? What can we focus on next time? Where could we have been more direct?

## 7. Future Development

Each day we spend in a slalom boat further expands our skills and knowledge, creating a more enjoyable experience on the water. With no two training sessions 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 British Canoeing Leadership or Coaching qualifications.

