

Surf Kayak

Surf Kayak Award

Award Description

This award is designed to develop your ability to apply appropriate decision making skills for a safe day out surfing.

Extended Award Description

Your Surf Kayak Award endorses your skill, judgment and the decision making required to have a successful day in the surf. You will be confident in gentle surf with sloping and spilling waves with proficient skills to be in control throughout. Your award should be seen as a sound basis for building the experience and knowledge associated with Progressive Surf Kayak Award holders.

Award Content

1. External Factors - Where do we go surfing?

In order to have an enjoyable day out surfing we need to make some key decisions to ensure we are in the right place at the right time.

Key factors influencing our decisions include the swell, the weather, the tide and features of the location we choose. We can take each of these factors into consideration and ask ourselves some questions to ensure the correct decisions are made.

Factor: Swell – we need swell, this generates the waves that we are going to surf. Choosing the right beach for the swell that has been generated is important.

We may need to know: How is swell generated? How can we find out what swell is affecting the section of coastline that we are nearest to?

Factor: Weather – wind speed and direction has a big impact on us as surfers.

What we might observe: Which direction and how strong is the wind? Is it due to increase or decrease? Is it going to change direction? How will the forecast wind speed impact on the beaches that we can choose from?

Factor: The tide - some surfing locations are best when the tide is full on high or low (depending on the beach or surf spot), understanding this will give you a better and more enjoyable day in the surf.

We may need to know: What time is high water? What time is low water? How will this impact on the beaches that we can choose from?

Factor: Places to surf – we can surf in a range of locations. Some places have more potential dangers than others. Sandy beaches are generally the locations with least potential issues for us and therefore are a good place to start. The shape of the beach; its profile will affect the shape of the waves formed. Knowledge about how the shape of the land affects the waves is called 'bathymetry'.

We may need to know: How would the shape of beaches that are available affect the swell that is forecast?

Additional questions we could ask: Are there other factors that we might need to consider before we choose a location? Nesting birds? Seal pups? Water quality?

When we put all of this information together we can decide on suitable locations for our level of skill, to help us achieve the aims of our day.

2. Equipment

Once we have chosen where to go, we must decide on equipment suitable for our location. Key points we could consider are:

What will you surf?

There are different options available to us as surfers. What are these? Why might we choose one over another?

What will you wear?

There are different options available to us as surfers. What are these? Why might we choose one over another?

What safety precautions could be considered?

How can we protect ourselves from any other potential hazards? What damage to our health might repeated immersion in cold water cause? How can we help prevent this becoming an issue? What additional equipment might it be useful to have access to on the beach? What if you or somebody you're surfing with gets really cold or overheats? What potential injuries might we need to treat? How might we do this?

3. Getting to the Beach

Having decided upon our equipment for the day, we must get it to the beach without damage to it or ourselves. Some surf craft are relatively light and fragile, others are heavier but more robust.

We may need to determine: How best to carry, load and secure our craft to protect ourselves or others from injury and prevent unnecessary damage.

4. At the Beach

A beach is usually a shared space. We must be aware of other users and any rules and restrictions by considering the following:

Consideration: Other users - the surf zone can be a very busy area. We may need to share the waves with swimmers, board surfers and kite boarders, amongst others. To do this safely, an 'etiquette' amongst these users has developed to minimise conflict and help everyone enjoy the surf zone.

What we might observe: Who else is at the beach? Is the beach a managed or supervised beach? Is surfing restricted to certain areas? How would we know? What is the 'etiquette'? How does this affect us?

Consideration: Wave height - for most people surfing a kayak or ski, we're looking for waves no bigger than head high to us when sitting in or on our craft.

What we might observe: How big are the waves here? How are the waves breaking and how might that affect our surf session?

5. Surfing Skills

When surfing a kayak or wave ski we should be in control. Key features of being in control include us staying relaxed, understanding how to travel along a wave and how to deal with being moved sideways. But before we can do that we need to get out into the surf.

Consideration: The surf zone is broken up into different 'zones'; broken waves, green waves, the secondary surf zone, rips or 'out back'.

What we might observe: Can we identify these places at the beach that we've decided on? Where are the other water users? If we're surfing with other people, how can we keep an eye out for each other and still get some waves?

Skill: Paddling out through the surf

There are a range of techniques and tactics that we can use to get out through surf. These include use of differing boat speeds and angles, changes of direction and an ability to move forwards and hold position without being pushed towards the beach.

We may need to consider: How we are going to get through the surf in the most efficient manner in order to conserve energy and surf for longer?

Skill: Catching a wave - where to position ourselves and choosing which wave to catch is a skill. All forming our decision of whether to try to catch it or not. When we decide to catch a wave we need to amend our paddling speed and

style. We also need to ensure that we will be heading in the right direction according to the individual wave's characteristics.

We may need to observe: How big is the wave? Where is it peaking? Which way is it breaking?

Skill: Riding the wave - to get the most from each wave you'll want to be able to ride along the wave face. This might require you to go left or right as the wave dictates. When turning, think about looking where you want to be. 'Future water' is a term often used to describe this. The shape and speed of the turn can be affected. Whether you're edging or learning, how you engage your body in the turn, the timing and type of stroke you choose, all will affect your turns.

We may need to know: What body positions we can use to get the most from each wave? What other factors could come into play to extend our ride and enjoyment? What strokes can we use to be as efficient and effective as possible?

Skill: Finishing our ride - all rides will come to an end but we can choose how to finish our ride. Exiting a wave or being able to deal with moving sideways in the 'white water' or 'soup' are useful skills to have.

We may need to consider: How can we maximise our surfing time? How can we use body position to support effectively?

Skill: Dealing with mishaps - the surf is a dynamic environment and, at times, we will make some mistakes and end up either out of the boat or off the ski. Knowing how to swim safely back to shore is therefore a key skill. It might not be us in the water but someone we're surfing with.

We may need to consider: How would we safely get ourselves or others back to shore or into the craft? How would we deal with loose kit?

6. After the Surf Session

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

Look around: When we're back on shore we can look back at the beach and the waves. Has anything changed whilst we've been out? If so, how and why? Looking at the shape of the uncovered sand we can try to match this up with the characteristics of the waves we experienced.

Watching what others do: It might be useful to spend some time watching any other kayak/ski surfers. Where are they positioning themselves relative to the waves? How are they getting out back? Do they seem to be catching waves more effectively than we were? Can we see why? Think back to our waves, can we identify why those that felt good differed from those that didn't?

Consider what you will take away: What have we learnt today? What can we focus on next time?

7. Future Development

Each day we spend kayak surfing further expands our skills and knowledge, creating a more enjoyable experience on the water. With no two surf experiences 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 the Progressive Surf Kayak Award.