

White Water

Advanced White Water Award

Award Description

This award is designed to advance your white water skills and your ability to make appropriate decisions for safe days out white water paddling on rivers of grade 4-5.

Extended Award Description

As an Advanced White Water Paddler you will have extensive experience of white water rivers. Your experience will include paddling a wide variety of rivers with different flows, volumes and gradients.

Award Content

1. Location

White water paddling is a dynamic and demanding activity which brings high rewards. To have an enjoyable day out on the river, we need to make some key decisions to ensure we choose the right river at the right time.

Key factors influencing our decisions include the water levels, the grade of water, the weather, our fellow paddlers 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: River conditions

We may need to know: What is the current water level? Is this level safe for our ability? What could affect this? What is the local water table doing? Is the river likely to rise or fall as we are paddling? Are there any tributaries that could affect the river we are paddling? How might we find out this information? What is the grade of the water we are going to be paddling on? How challenging will this make our day and is that what we want? Does the grade change at any point? Is this the correct grade for our ability? How can we find information on water grades? What features would we expect to see on Grade 4 or 5 water? Are there any hazards along our way that we need to be aware of?

Factor: Weather conditions

We may need to know: What is the forecast for the day? How will this impact our paddle? Will the forecast change our clothing decisions? Will the forecast impact on the safety precautions we take?

Factor: Access and environment

We may need to determine: 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? Are there any hazards along our route we need to be aware of?

2. **Getting Ready**

Before getting to the water we must choose suitable kit and equipment and have 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? How will the demands of the river impact on our choice of personal safety equipment? 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? Why have we chosen the craft and equipment we are using? How might different hull design/type impact our river descent? Have we chosen equipment suitable for our day? Might we need to change the way we are descending during our session and how might that affect our equipment choices?

What will we take?

What additional equipment might be useful to carry on the river with us? Do we have the kit we need to keep us safe and comfortable throughout our session? What safety kit would it be useful to have with us or available on the bank? Do we want to take any spare equipment? How and where will we store and organise our equipment so we can access it if required? How will we pack our kit to keep it dry? How will we outfit and set up our craft for this session? What equipment might be lost or damaged during the session and how would we deal with this?

3. **At the Water**

Before we set out on our journey we need to be confident in our ability to deal with the complications it might bring. A river 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 - we sometimes paddle in busy areas. We may need to share the water with swimmers, kayakers and anglers, amongst others. To do this safely, an 'etiquette' amongst these users has developed to minimise conflict and help everyone enjoy the environment. It is also important to know something about the others we are paddling with.

We may need to consider: Who else is in the area? Are we using a managed or supervised venue? What is the etiquette here? Where can we park and change considerately to other users? Who else is paddling with us? What is their current skill level and experience and are they appropriate for the planned session? Are we aware of their motivations? Do any group members have specific needs? What is the group size and is it appropriate? What are the group aims for the session? How will we communicate as a group during the session?

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? What additional safety equipment might be useful to carry and have access to? How can we set up our craft to help us in the event of capsize? How are we going to summon help if needed when on the water?

Consideration: Getting to the water

We may need to determine: How are we going to get to the access point and do we need to organise a shuttle? 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? Are the water and weather as expected? What river factors do we need to take into consideration before we get on? Where is the best place for us to launch? How can we work as a team to get safely and efficiently onto the water? Do we have the kit needed to aid us with this?

4. **White Water Skills**

When white water paddling at this level we should be able to call upon a high level of situational awareness to make appropriate decisions. Monitoring our own performance and wellbeing to assist us in staying relaxed and in control. Planning ahead to use external forces to our best advantage. Utilising our observational and communication skills to work well with other team members.



Understanding how our body, mind and boat can be best set up for any given manoeuvre. Skills we may call upon for this could be:

Skill: Decision making - we need to gather information and make good decisions on the move so we can journey safely and efficiently.

We may need to know: What changes in our environment do we need to look out for as we journey down the river? How can we evaluate features and use them to our advantage? How can we evaluate hazards and decide on the most appropriate strategy to control or mitigate their impact? Can we decide on the most appropriate travelling method at any given time and change in situ if required? What adaptations to our methods might environmental demands require? How can we identify safe areas and pathways and use them to our advantage?

Skill: Running the river

We may need to consider: How can we best choose our route down river and identify features that we want to use that aid us? What features do we need to avoid? How can we effectively use our forward paddling skills to drive the boat with intent and purpose to stay on top of the water and to be where we want to be? How can we identify areas to traverse to achieve success?

Skill: Tactical Awareness

We may need to consider: What tactics might we need to run the river? How would we use these to position and control our craft? When would we employ these tactics? Which tactics are we likely to need today?

Skill: Assessing and adjusting to our environment

We may need to consider: What elements of the river topography do we need to be aware of during our session? How can we translate the knowledge we gained in our planning to the actual river? How can we use our knowledge of the topography of the river to aid our session?

Skill: Maintaining direction

We may need to consider: What factors will we need to consider to keep our craft tracking? How will we effectively use linked strokes to maintain direction? How can we use the water to help us maintain direction? Can we perform all tasks bilaterally?

Skill: Changing direction

We may need to consider: Which river features can we use to assist us in changing direction? How will we spot and use them? Which strokes might we use to change direction? How else can we aid a change of direction?

Skill: Navigation

We may need to know: How will we identify our position whilst travelling? How will we monitor our progress whilst travelling? What features can we use to help with this? How can we adapt our plans and use escape routes if needed?

Skill: Working as a team

We may need to consider: How can we work as a team to create a successful session? Do we have a group strategy for the session? How can we monitor and maintain our own and the group's wellbeing? How can we provide safety for each other? What equipment might we require for this? How can we use positioning and environmental awareness to work well as a team? Are we and the group coping with the conditions and able to cope with future conditions? Are we attending to our needs and the needs of others? Are we communicating effectively as a group? Do we need to adapt our methods to suit the group dynamics? How will we deal with ill or injured group members?

Skill: Dealing with mishaps

We may need to consider: What is our strategy to get back on course and in control? How do we maintain balance? We need to be able to roll in a variety of advanced conditions. How do we relocate and re-focus after a roll to complete the rapid or get to safety? How will we deal with being out of the boat? How would we safely get ourselves, or others, back to shore or into the craft? What techniques should we use to swim in white water? How would we retrieve loose kit, equipment or boats? What factors might affect our decisions on how we retrieve these? How would we deal with pinned kit? If a mishap does occur, do we have mental strategies which will help us to stay focused and resilient? How can we position ourselves to assist other paddlers if they capsize? How will we get to a boat or paddler in the water? How would we rescue a paddler and their kit at the bottom of a rapid? What equipment could we use to assist us in rescue? Can we select an appropriate place to protect a rapid from the bank?

5. After the Trip

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

Review the day: When we're back we can think back about the session. Did anything unexpected happen or did anything change whilst we were out? If so, how and why? How did we deal with that?

Watching what others do: It might be useful to spend some time watching other paddlers. How was our session in relation to others? Why did we/they have good lines down the river? Are we able to relate their skills to ours?



Consider what you will take away: What have we learnt today? Can we identify what went well and what didn't? What can we focus on next time?

6. Future Development

Each day we spend paddling 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 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.