

Wild Water Racing

Wild Water Racing Excel Award

Award Description

This award is designed to develop your ability on moving water to apply appropriate decision making to underpin your skills for advanced waters.

Extended Award Description

Your Wild Water Racing Excel Award will apply your choices to an enjoyable training session on grade 3-4 water. You will have extensive experience creating a high level of skills, enabling harmony with the water and being in control throughout your training session. You will also develop your physical and psychological conditioning to achieve your peak racing performance.

Award Content

1. Location

In order to have an enjoyable training session we need to make some key decisions on our location.

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

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? Are there enough daylight hours left for us to achieve our aims?

Factor: Water conditions

We may need to know: What is the current water level? Have the levels affected the grade of water? Are the levels expected to change during our run? What is the water colour and what does this tell us? Could the water colour be concealing any hazards? How can we minimise the risk from these? Will they change the line we take? Has the venue got flow? How is this being generated? What time is high and low water? Will the flow increase or decrease? What potential dangers do we need to consider when choosing a location? Which types of water have the least potential issues for us? What is the nature of the river? Will the topography affect our run? What is the current water quality? Do we know where to access local knowledge and information on the water we are using?

Factor: Access and environment

What restrictions might there be on the water we are paddling on? How would we find this out? Has the venue got a pontoon or other man-made surface? Where will we access/egress the water? What environmental factors might affect this decision? How far are we going to be from paths and roadsides? How would we direct support to us in an emergency situation? How can we reduce our impact on the environment and animals around us?

2. Getting Ready

Before getting to the water we must choose kit and equipment suitable to our location 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? How might being on advanced water affect this decision? 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 and why might we choose one over the other? How might we set our boats up to get the best from our session? What is the likelihood of the water conditions causing damage to our craft or equipment? Are our craft and equipment in a suitable condition to cope with these demands?

What will we take?

What additional equipment might be useful to carry on the river 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 for our training session?

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. 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 – 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? Are we able, as individuals and as a group, to cope with the expected water and conditions? Do we have a plan for today that is in line with our long term goals? How many runs can we make? Are there any challenging areas of the paddle we need to consider and plan for? What methods can we employ to get us into the right

frame of mind for the session; as individuals and as a group? How can we use individual, group member's skills and knowledge to minimise risk and make our training more enjoyable? Is anyone in our group familiar with the venue and how can we best use their knowledge?

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? How remote is the area we are paddling in? How can we use local knowledge to keep us safe in remote environments?

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. **Wild Water Racing Skills**

When paddling a wild water racing kayak or canoe on advanced water we should be in control. Being able to use complex features on the river requires the ability to read the water and use to our advantage.

Skill: Forward paddling

We may need to consider: What are the advantages of effective, rhythmic forward paddling in racing? How can we identify and appropriately negotiate complex rapids to paddle the fastest and cleanest lines with minimal steering strokes? How can we change our plans and deal with adversity if things are not going as expected?

Skill: Steering and using features

We may need to consider: What different techniques and tactics can we use to steer our boat? What is the best line to maintain speed? What water flows and features can we use to steer the boat? How will we do this? How will we regain speed quickly if it is lost?

Skill: Dealing with mishaps

We may need to know: 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? How would we deal with loose kit? How would we swim safely in white water? How would we get our craft back to shore in the event of capsize? Are we confident and able to roll on both sides in advanced water? How would we rescue and retrieve another paddler and their equipment in an advanced environment? When would we decide to chase another person's boat and paddle and when would we leave it and assist in their personal rescue?

5. After the Training/Racing 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.

Look around: Have conditions changed whilst we were out on the water? Was that expected? Did anything else occur which was not expected whilst on our session? How did we deal with that?

Watching what others do: It might be useful to spend some time watching others. How are they forward paddling on advanced water? How do they negotiate difficult rapids?

Consider what you will take away: What analysis performance tools might help with reflection and future planning? What have we learnt today? What can we focus on next time? How aware are we of our own strengths and weaknesses and how can we use this to assist our development?

6. Future Development

Each day we spend in a wild water racing craft further expands our skills and knowledge, creating a more enjoyable experience on the water. With no two moving water 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.

