

First Up

Most of these skills are best learnt 1 to 1 with an instructor or in a small group. Don't try to learn or practice all of this in one session but do try to practice a range of these skills every session. You can download a copy of this from the AUCC website.

Setup + Warm-up

Do some stretches!

Paddle position – Key (lump on shaft) in right hand punching forwards, right hand blade vertical. Equal hand to blade distances.

Loosen your hips – Hold the paddle horizontally and rock the boat from side to side to get the feeling of your body and the boat being independent. Remember: “Stiff hips sink ships”.

Twist your torso - Hold the paddle horizontally and turn left and right as far as you can – twisting the torso helps to paddle fast and turn effectively.

Rescue

Hip Flick – Practice on side of pool – practice both sides – get boat as far over as you can – fully upside down if possible.

Barrel rescue – Bang on boat, hug boat both sides, keep head down until fully upright and balanced.

The swim (and holding on) – Practice holding on as long as you are comfortable, count to 10, 20 or more while upside down. Get comfortable with being upside down. Have a look around while upside down. Learn to find the swim tag with your eyes closed (rivers can be murky or foamy, especially in rapids) get someone to jerk your boat about while you are upside down to get used to the feeling of being upside down in a rapid and holding on during this. If you hate water getting up your nose get nose plugs/clips or keep water out of your nose by humming.

T-Rescue – Bang on boat, sweep hands back and forth both sides of the boat, get both hands on boat, get head out and take a breath, reposition your hands to make motion easier, keep your head down while you hip flick the boat up, hold onto rescuers boat until instructed to let go.

The white water swim position – Face and body up, feet out, hand cross across chest, or out for stability (like floating on your back) this way you will meet rocks in the river feet first.

Throw Bagging – In the white water swim position with your hands wide to make you a large target. Grab hold of the rope (Not the bag) and hug it allowing the rope to run over one shoulder so you are pulled back first towards the shore. Practise throw bagging as well as being throw bagged.

Paddle Strokes + Technique

Forward strokes – Paddle in at toes, out near hip running alongside boat, torso rotation, near vertical paddle to begin, look where you are going. Use forward sweep strokes to correct direction – do not use stopping strokes to change direction. Look where you want to go.

Low braces – Punch down onto the water with paddle while edging to bring the boat level.

Edging/railing - Tilt at the hips to keep body vertical while edging the boat. Use your knees to pull the edge of the boat towards your chest. Hold for several seconds, practice both sides. Remember “Stiff hips sink ships” This is an essential skill for moving about on the river, ferrying and crossing eddy lines. Master this and you will spend a lot less time upside down. It is better to have a small amount of steady rail (10°-20°) than a steep angle you can't hold. Practice paddling around and turning on edge.

Turning Strokes

Sweep strokes (The good way to turn your boat) – In at toes, out at hips, sweep a smooth wide circle with the paddle; look where you are turning to. Focus on using torso rotation to turn the boat. This stroke keeps momentum on the river. The paddle is near horizontal throughout this stroke.

Rolling

Learn the T-Rescue and barrel roll first. Get comfortable with spending time upside down in a kayak.

Go to Uni and watch the Video – Watching the video helps a lot. If you haven't seen it then go next week.

Commit to roll training for several weeks - You can't learn the roll in one session and coming back every week for a while is better than attending the occasional session. Though coming occasionally throughout the year will help keep your skills fresh.

Practice hip flick on side of pool – You should be able to feel that you only need light support from the side of the pool and that the hip flick does the majority of the work in righting the boat.

It helps if you can open your eyes under water – get goggles if you need to, also nose plugs can help.

Don't over practice the roll. Practice one aspect thoroughly each session. Don't push so hard you start making mistakes and undoing your hard work. Don't come to pool training just to get learn to roll. Practice your other skills too.

Watch some other people roll well – This can really help understand the motion of the roll.

Terminology

Leading – this is your dexterous side – right handed people, your right hand is your leading hand

Trailing – Your non- dexterous side – right handed people this is your left hand

The Setup Position

Setup position – Wrists rolled forward, body curled over the side of the boat, head down towards deck and over the side, looking at the leading paddle blade. You can jam the end of a flat boat in the gutter at the side of the pool to practice this position without tipping over. Or have an instructor brace your boat.

Test setup position – Slap the water with your paddle, if the paddle slaps it's good, if it dives it's wrong and needs to be corrected. If needed, run your hand out to the blade to check the angle. Roll your wrists to adjust the blade angle and make the blade skim through the water, rather than dive under it.

The Roll

The sweep – Sweep the leading blade out away from the boat. Look at the leading blade while you do this. Watch some other people do this to understand the motion. Sweep as far as you can, the further out you sweep the more leverage you have off the water.

The hip flick – When you begin sweeping, initiate the hip flick. Continue to sweep with the blade and pull with your leading knee while you un-twist your torso. Bring your trailing hand up towards your leading shoulder. The hip flick should do the majority of the work in righting the boat. It should feel like you are pulling up against the thigh brace with your leading leg.

The finish – Your leading blade should end up at the back of the boat with your wrists un-rolled. Your trailing hand, leading shoulder and chin should all end up in the same place. You should keep pulling with your knee and sweeping right until you are fully upright. This keeps your head low. You should still be looking at your leading paddle blade at the end of the roll.

Homework

You can practice the roll at home!

Get an instructor to show you the “grab him by the shoulders and knee him in the nuts” exercise

This is an exercise you can practice at home. It helps to commit the roll motion to muscle memory. Imagine you are holding a paddle(or get a broom handle and some room to swing it) Starting curled over in the setup position, sweep out then lift your leading knee as you sweep across your body and end up in the finish position.

Practice this for a minute or two a few nights each week. Focus on each aspect of the roll, the setup, the sweep, the hip flick (knee lift) and the finish position.

Advanced Techniques

Improving your roll - Getting up is one thing, staying up is better. The best way to stay up is to immediately start paddling forwards to get some momentum. Practice paddling forwards as soon as your boat comes fully upright. Don't wait for the water to clear from your eyes.

Paddling backwards – Turn head to look where you are going, keep even strokes both sides to go in a straight line. Use a dedicated pool lane. This works a different set of muscles and takes some practice to go straight.

Advanced railing - Practice combining edging/railing and forward, backward strokes and forward and backwards sweep (turning) strokes.

Back sweep strokes – Look back to where the paddle enters the water, this is also where you will turn to. Sweep out. The paddle exits the water at your knees. Focus on using torso rotation to turn the boat. This stroke can slow you down or stop you so must be used with caution. Practice linking forward and back sweep strokes to spin in a circle

Drawing – The paddle goes in vertically adjacent to the boat with the blade parallel to the side of the boat. The paddle is pulled towards the body, pulling the boat sideways. The paddle can be twisted 90° in the water and sliced back to the start position to repeat the draw.

Sculling - The paddle goes in vertically adjacent to the boat with the blade parallel to the side of the boat. The paddle is Skulled back and forth, pulling the boat sideways. Your paddle needs to twist back and forth to retain a climbing angle on the blade.

Bow Draw – The paddle enters the water vertically near the front of the boat, with the blade parallel with the boat. The paddle is then drawn towards the toes pulling the front of the boat around. This is a very fast and powerful turning stroke. Look where you are turning to, this will force some torso rotation and allow your torso to do the work. A draw stroke can also start further back from the bow to make it longer.

J - Stroke – Start with a bow draw but then as the paddle nears the front of the boat convert the draw into a forward stroke. This makes the J stroke very precise as it powerfully changes the direction the boat travels but then converts into a perfect finish, pushing the boat forward and halting the turning motion. A very useful stroke for fast accurate manoeuvres. Best practiced with some momentum. Can be linked over and over to spin in a circle in either direction or paddle in a straight line while only paddling on one side of the boat

Dufek – The Dufek is a combination of a strong forward sweep stroke followed by a static draw on the opposite side. The draw is initiated on the side opposite from the sweep stroke side. The draw needs to combine a vertical paddle next to the paddler's body which continues the motion of the sweep stroke. The draw can use an open, closed or neutral blade angle to cause the boat to turn faster or slow while turning. A good way to think of the Dufek is to think of the paddle being a pole you are swinging the kayak around. Vertical paddle blade, torso rotation, looking towards the paddle and placing the paddle in line with your hips are all crucial to a good dufek. The aim of the dufek is to extend the turning effect of the sweep stroke.

High braces – Pull down onto the water with paddle while edging to hit the water and force the boat back level. Practice with caution – this is a dangerous stroke for shoulders.

The Boof – Used to launch off waterfalls and over holes. Brace your feet hard against the foot blocks. Place the paddle in the water vertically near your toes and pull the paddle towards you while keeping it vertical, push hard on the foot blocks. This thrusts the boat forwards and launches it. Focus on keeping the boat going as straight as possible when boofing. Practice both sides.

Advanced Rolls

Offside roll – A normal roll only on your non-dextrous side.

Back deck roll – A special roll which is very fast but exposes your face to the bottom of the river. Must be started while tipping or with rolling momentum. Particularly useful for play boating.

Hand roll – A roll without a paddle.