

Environmental Definitions and Deployment Guidance for Instructors, Coaches and Leaders



This document provides guidance and environmental definitions that can be applied when choosing paddlesport activity. British Canoeing promotes and endorses best practice and recognises that instructors, coaches and leaders become more experienced over time. This experience enables them to draw on a wealth of knowledge and skill sets to determine both their own, the individuals within the group and environmental factors.



Factors to take into consideration when making decisions are determined by the current experience of the individual coaching or leading, their qualifications and any additional training received. It is vital that appropriate decisions are made on the day as environmental conditions change (e.g. wind, sea states, river levels, etc.). A dynamic approach to decision making is recommended which considers the diverse nature of the environment, individual abilities and the group. The recording of decisions made is encouraged and seen as good practice.



British Canoeing recommends that these guidelines are followed in conjunction with appropriate safety management systems, risk assessments and codes of practice relevant to the activity concerned. British Canoeing recognises that deployers may need to adopt differing **ratios and/or qualifications** for specific activities. If mixed fleets are used, the person leading the session should have appropriate experience in leading and rescuing different types of craft.

NOTE: Ratios are given as suggestions in this document and refer to newly qualified and less experienced instructors, coaches and leaders.

For the purpose of this document, the definitions of an Instructor, Coach and Leader are:

- **Instructor:** provides introductory/taster sessions
- **Coach:** specifically concentrates on the individual's skill and knowledge development
- **Leader:** leads a group of paddlers in appropriate locations and environments, ensuring safety of the individuals within the group.

Beaufort scales, river grading and surf height guidance can be found on page 6.

A full list of Coaching and Leadership Qualifications and Awards and associated environments can be found on page 7.

Very Sheltered Water

Definition

Quiet canals with easy bankside access and egress; small lakes, which are not large enough and do not have difficult landing, where problems could occur if there is a sudden change in conditions; gentle, slow moving rivers. The definition implies weather conditions that are not in themselves likely to cause problems. At any point, the paddler should not be more than 50 metres from the bank.

Enclosed swimming pools are also defined as very sheltered water environments.

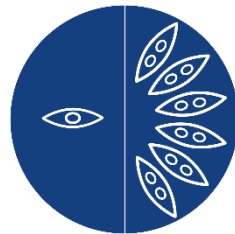
Note The definition implies normal conditions and care is advised when water and air temperatures are low.



Suggested Coach/Leader to Participant ratio



Solo Craft 1:8



Crew Craft 1:12

Factors to take into consideration



Experience of the Instructor/Coach/Leader



The individual group members' age/competence/experience



The ever-changing environment

Suggested Minimum Qualifications (Full list on page 7)

British Canoeing Paddlesport Instructor / British Canoeing Paddlesport Leader

Sheltered Water

Definition

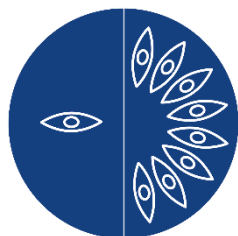
Ungraded sections of slow moving rivers where the group could paddle upstream against the flow (not involving the shooting of, or playing on, weirs or running rapids). Areas of open water (e.g. lakes and lochs) where the paddlers are no more than 200 metres offshore and the wind strength does not exceed Beaufort force 3, avoiding the group being swept/blown out of the safe working area. Slow moving estuaries (less than 0.5 Knots)

Examples: Small enclosed bays, enclosed harbours where there is minimal possibility of being blown offshore, defined beaches with easy places to land throughout, no tide races, overfalls or surf.

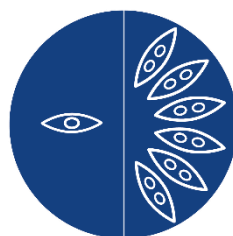
Note The definition implies normal conditions and care is advised when water and air temperatures are low.



Suggested Coach/Leader to Participant ratio



Solo Craft 1:8



Crew Craft 1:12

Factors to take into consideration



Experience of the Instructor/Coach/Leader



The individual group members' age/competence/experience



The ever-changing environment

Suggested Minimum Qualifications (Full list on page 7)

British Canoeing Paddlesport Instructor / British Canoeing Paddlesport Leader

Moderate Water

Definition

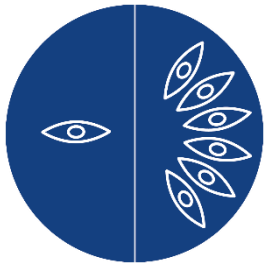
Inland: Large areas of open water that exceed the sheltered water definition, where the paddlers are no more than 500 metres off shore and in wind strengths that do not exceed Beaufort force 4.

White Water: Grade 2(3) white water or equivalent weirs.

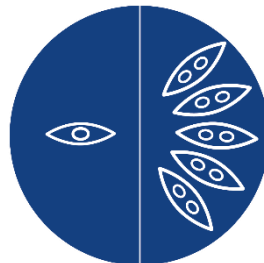
Sea: A stretch of coastline with some areas where it is not easy to land but there will always be straight forward land points a maximum of two nautical miles apart. Crossings not exceeding two nautical miles. Up to 2 Knots of tide (but not involving tide race or overfalls). Wind strengths do not exceed Beaufort force 4. Launching and landing through surf (up to 1 metre, trough to crest height).

Surf: Sections of sandy beaches free from significant hazard (e.g. rocks and strong rips) and easy access. Gentle, sloping and spilling waves, preferably peeling. Not pitching or dumping. Wave height should be no more than double overhead when seated in a kayak in the trough of the wave (head high for a stand up surfer).

Suggested Coach/Leader to Participant ratio



Solo Craft 1:6



Crew Craft 1:10

Factors to take into consideration



Experience of the Instructor/Coach/Leader



The individual group members' age/competence/experience



The ever-changing environment

Suggested Minimum Qualifications (Full list on page 7)

British Canoeing Coach Award (specific to moderate environments) / British Canoeing Moderate Water Leader

Advanced Water

Definition

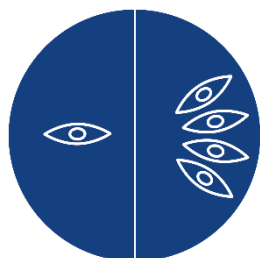
Inland: Large areas of open water which exceed Moderate Inland Water and/or have winds in excess of Beaufort force 4.

White Water: Grade 3(4) white water for canoe. Rivers up to and including grade 4(5) for kayak.

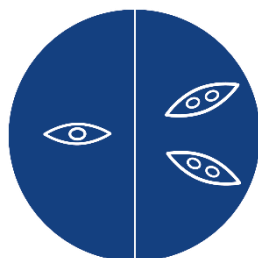
Sea: Any journey on the sea where tidal races, overfalls or open crossings may be encountered and which cannot be avoided; sections of coastline where landings may not be possible or are difficult; sea state 4 and winds above Beaufort force 4; launching and landing through surf (up to 1.5 metres trough to crest height).

Surf: Reefs, points, offshore breaks and sandy beaches, which may have significant hazards (e.g. rocks, strong rips, etc.) and may be remote and/or have difficult access. Waves may be powerful, steep, pitching, fast, hollow and heavy. Up to, and above double overhead when seated in a kayak in the trough of the wave (or head high and above for a stand up surfer).

Suggested Coach/Leader to Participant ratio



Solo Craft 1:4



Crew Craft 1:4

Factors to take into consideration



Experience of the Instructor/Coach/Leader



The individual group members' age/competence/experience



The ever-changing environment

Suggested Minimum Qualifications (Full list on page 7)

British Canoeing Coach Award (specific to advanced water environments) / British Canoeing Advanced Water Leader

Beaufort Wind Force Scale

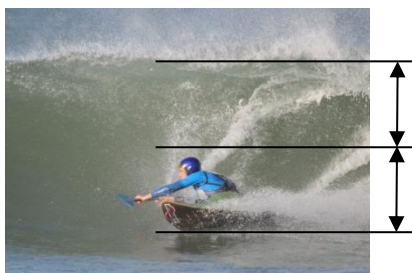
Beaufort wind force scale	Mean wind speed		Limits of wind speed		Wind descriptive terms	Probable wave height in metres at sea <small>Note: Inland waters are likely to be less</small>	Probable maximum wave height in metres at sea <small>Note: Inland waters are likely to be less</small>	Sea state	Sea descriptive terms	Land descriptive terms
	Knots	ms ⁻¹	Knots	ms ⁻¹						
2	5	3	4-6	2-3	Light breeze	0.2	0.3	3	Smooth (wavelets)	Wind felt on face; leaves rustle
3	9	5	7-10	4-5	Gentle breeze	0.6	1.0	3	Slight	Leaves and twigs in constant motion, light flags extended
4	13	7	11-16	6-8	Moderate breeze	1.0	1.5	3-4	Slight-Moderate	Raises dust and loose paper; small branches moved
5	19	10	17-21	9-11	Fresh breeze	2.0	2.5	4	Moderate	Small trees in leaf begin to sway, crested wavelets form on inland waters

River Grades

Ungraded	Ungraded sections of slow moving rivers where the group could paddle upstream against the flow (not involving the shooting of, or playing on, weirs or running rapids).
Grade 1	Moving water with occasional small rapids. Few or no obstacles to negotiate.
Grade 2	Small rapids featuring regular waves. Some manoeuvring required.
Grade 2(3)	The overall standard of the run is grade 2, but there may be a few (normally one or two) grade 3 rapids that can be portaged if required.
Grade 3	Most rapids will have irregular waves and hazards that need avoiding. More difficult manoeuvring will be required but routes are normally obvious. Scouting from shore is occasionally necessary to maintain line of sight.
Grade 4	Large rapids that require careful manoeuvring. Scouting from the shore is often necessary and rescue is usually difficult. Kayakers should be able to roll before tackling these rapids. In the event of a mishap there is significant risk of loss, damage and/or injury.
Grade 4(5)	The overall standard of the run is grade 4, but there may be a few (normally one or two) grade 5 rapids that can be portaged if required.
Grade 5	Extremely difficult – long and very violent rapids with severe hazards. Continuous, powerful, confused water makes route-finding difficult and scouting from the shore is essential. Precise manoeuvring is critical and for kayakers, rolling ability needs to be 100%. Rescue is very difficult or impossible and in the event of a mishap there is significant hazard to life.

Notes:

- 1) Artificial courses provide a different level of risk to a natural river allowing appropriate ratios to be considered.
- 2) Due to the nature of Freestyle, coaches will choose suitable freestyle venues which do not involve A to B journeying.
- 3) Surf Height: Double overhead = double the height of the surfer when seated in a kayak in the trough of the wave (head high for a stand up surfer), for example:



Additional Training Advice for British Canoeing Paddlesport Instructors / Level 1 Coaches

The Paddlesport Instructor/ Level 1 Coach has appropriate skills and paddlesport knowledge to enable them to deliver sessions. However, in order for the Paddlesport Instructor/ Level 1 Coach to work **independently** in very sheltered, or sheltered water, they are required to have completed appropriate site/session specific training and assessment/ hold a first aid certificate and 18 years old or over, appropriate to the risk assessment for the venue, environment, session and participants.

Suggested Coaching Qualifications and Environment

Qualification	Very Sheltered Water	Sheltered Water	Moderate Water	Advanced Water
BCU Level 1 Coach	✓			
BC (UKCC) Level 1 Coach BC Paddlesport Instructor	✓	✓		
BCU Level 2 Coach	✓	✓		
BC (UKCC) Level 2 Coach	✓	✓		
BC Moderate Water Endorsement	✓	✓	✓	
BC Advanced Water Endorsement	✓	✓	✓	✓
BC Coach Award (Sheltered water)	✓	✓		
BC Coach Award (Moderate water)	✓	✓	✓	
BC Coach Award (Advanced water)	✓	✓	✓	✓
BCU Level 3 Coach	✓	✓	✓	
BC (UKCC) Level 3 Coach BC Performance Coach	✓	✓	✓	
BCU Level 4 Coach	✓	✓	✓	✓
BCU Level 5 Coach	✓	✓	✓	✓

- BCU refers to the qualifications taken prior to the UKCC qualifications.
- BC (UKCC) and the endorsement refers to UKCC qualifications.
- BC refers to the qualifications taken from 2018.

Suggested Leadership Awards and Environment

Award	Very Sheltered Water	Sheltered Water	Moderate Water	Advanced Water
BC Bell Boat Helm	✓	✓		
BC Paddlesport Leader	✓	✓		
BC 4 Star Leader BC Moderate Water Leader	✓	✓	✓	
BC 5 Star Leader BC Advanced Water Leader	✓	✓	✓	✓

Note: Apart from the Paddlesport Leader, the certificate awarded states both craft and environment that the coach/leader can operate in.