

# Canoeing

## DESCRIPTION:

This field activity lesson introduces students to the fundamental concepts of paddling a canoe. Students will work in pairs and practice various strokes to move a canoe in all directions.

## OBJECTIVES:

1. Students will learn about the parts of a canoe and paddle.
2. Students will learn canoe strokes and maneuvers.
3. Students will learn to work with their paddling partner to move the canoe in the desired direction.

## MATERIALS NEEDED:

Each pair of students will need a canoe and a pair of canoe paddles and two pfd's.

Pairs of buoys are spread out in the south end of Lake Wapalanne for paddlers to go through.

## PROCEDURES:

1. Divide the group into pairs, these partners will share a canoe. 2. Distribute personal flotation devices (pfd's), and paddles.

## ON DRY LAND:

3. Demonstrate how to hold the paddle. Parts of the paddle - **Grip, Shaft, Blade. Tip, Powerface, Backface**. Hands should be about shoulder width apart with powerface facing the paddler. The only difference between the powerface and the backface is that the powerface has paint on it so that it can be easily recognized.

**C-P-R** – stands for the three phases of any paddle stroke. The “C” stands for the **catch** phase of a stroke; that moment when the blade catches the water. “P” is the **power** part of the stroke. “R” is the **recovery** phase, the process of returning the blade to the start for a new stroke.

4. The **forward stroke** is the primary stroke used in canoeing. This moves the canoe forward. Hold the paddle vertically, have both hands over the water, lean forward

slightly and twist your body so that your shaft hand is in front of the grip hand. From the catch, untwist and sit-up simultaneously for the power phase keeping both arms straight until the paddle is near your hips. Lift the paddle out of the water, and return to the catch. If you notice the canoe is turning then both paddlers switch sides to compensate, and repeat as needed.



5. The **backstroke** uses the backface and is the reverse of the forward stroke. It is used for those times when you need to stop or to back-up the boat.

6. **Rudder** or “**Sharkfin**” is a turning stroke. This stroke is only done by the rear (stern) paddler.

The above are the minimum to teach younger children. As they learn better control, add the following strokes.

7. **Draw stroke**. Is a turning stroke if partners are paddling on opposite sides of the vessel as they should. If they are on the same side it moves the boat sideways (abeam). Holding the paddle vertically, reach both hands over the water and pull the powerface of the blade toward your hip. As the blade approaches the boat, turn the grip hand away from you and slice the paddle through the water for the recovery phase of the stroke. If you wait too long, it is easy to “trip” over your paddle and this may cause the canoe to tip over. A less elegant recovery is to lift the blade out of the water and return to the starting position for the next draw stroke.

8. The **Pushaway stroke** is very nearly the reverse of the draw stroke and therefore uses the backface of the blade. It is also a turning stroke. Hold the paddle vertically, hands over the water and push the paddle away from the canoe. The recovery is also a slicing motion that returns the blade back under the canoe.

### **ON THE WATER:**

Instructor should demonstrate on the water and then have the class practice the above strokes in their canoes. When students enter the canoes, they should check to make sure their boat is **trim**, or sitting flat on the water.

### **PADDLER ROLES:**

Bow paddler – Power position. Sets the paddling pace, how many strokes per minute. They also keep an eye on what’s ahead to avoid obstacles, as well as controlling the bow end of the canoe.

Stern paddler – Steering position. Keeps pace with the bow paddler. Stern paddler also controls the rear of the canoe as well as the overall path of the canoe.

Corrective strokes are used primarily only by the rear (stern) paddler.

The **Stern Rudder Stroke** is a corrective stroke that is done by the stern paddler. At the end of a forward stroke, simply shift into a **stern pushaway stroke** which is applied as far behind as can comfortably reach. This is accomplished by twisting the grip-hand thumb upward, and applying pressure with the backface of the blade. This stroke starts out with a forward stroke using the powerface, but switches to the backface for a pushaway at the end.

When these basic strokes have been reviewed and practiced, then partners should switch sides of the canoe they are paddling on. When this second phase is complete paddling teams should return to the dock and switch positions.

### MANUEVERS:

Paddle in a straight line

Stop in a reasonable distance

Make a U-turn

Spin the canoe

Move the boat sideways without moving it forward (need draw and pushaway strokes first)

Try to paddle through the canoe course without hitting any of the buoys. Try timing yourself while going through all the "gates", add 15 seconds every time your boat touches a buoy.

### MORE ADVANCED STROKES:

As the instructor, don't feel compelled to teach every stroke here. When your students have mastered the strokes mentioned above, then you may want to add those listed below.



The "**J**" stroke is a commonly used corrective stroke and is only done by the **stern paddler**. While the vessel is moving forward but veering away from the stern paddlers side, the **stern paddler**, begins the stroke as if they are doing a forward stroke, but twists their thumb away from their body and pushes the paddle away with their shaft hand. The powerface is the only face that applies pressure to the water in this stroke. When done properly this stroke will steer the canoe back onto course.

**Sculling** is a fun stroke that partners use on the same side. This stroke moves the canoe sideways, toward their paddles, and forces paddlers to make small changes in the blade angle to the water.

Practice **sweep strokes**; forward and back. Hands low (paddle nearly parallel with the water), reach forward and far away then pull the water from the front to the back with

the powerface of the blade for a forward sweep. Practice the reverse sweep applying pressure with the backface.

The American Canoe Association lists at least 17 different canoe strokes, only about half of them are described above. However, if the strokes presented here are practiced and learned, they will serve you very well for your future paddling adventures.

### **References**

Guillion, Laurie. Canoeing and Kayaking, American Canoe Association. 1987.

American Camping Association. Camp Boating: Program and Curriculum Guidelines. 1993.

Mason, Paul. Tandem Canoeing Essentials. Canoe and Kayak magazine. November 23, 2011.  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qH3HnhEaeok>

Northern Tier. Parts of a Canoe /Paddle and Strokes. July, 11, 2011.  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i0n4KsRrYG8>

Canoeing TV. Should you sit or kneel in a Canoe. Undated.  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5lyRGXJsaGA>

May, 2014 Walt Myers