

Principles of Teaching

The Instructor

Instructors have the task of teaching a group canoeing in a safe manner and in a safe environment in such a way that both he/she and the group enjoy the experience. Concurrently he/she has to teach the group skills and assess that the students have learned properly. If they have not then corrective action has to be taken and re-assessed. Each and every course/session should

**BE SAFE
INVOLVE LEARNING
BE TECHNICALLY CORRECT
BE ENJOYABLE**

Learning / Teaching

If the students are to learn then the Instructor must be effective. To be most effective requires a great deal of practice and commitment. An Instructor must have an in-depth knowledge of canoeing -an understanding of how the person, the canoe and the water interact with one another in the various situations a canoeist could find him/herself.

The less informed the Instructor the greater the limits, put on the students potential.

Knowledge, its application, good decision making skills and personality would probably be the most important traits of a good Instructor.

Knowledge, Decision Making and Personality

Each Instructor must have knowledge of and be able to make informed decisions on the following:

- Teaching methods
- Teaching skills
- Learning methods
- Students- ability
- Aims and Objectives
- Teaching models

Teaching methods

These include:

- Training** - *improving* all round performance through practice
Instruction - *directing* actions and drills
Teaching - new skills and concepts. The teacher is a facilitator for learning

Teaching methods are more appropriate or less appropriate depending on the objectives / the activity or the group. Each session will involve various combinations of all three at different stages. For example, to what degree would each teaching method be employed in achieving each of the following objectives.

1. The students will enjoy themselves and develop as safe efficient paddlers.
2. The students will enjoy themselves and improve their forward paddling technique.
3. The students will go from 'A' to 'B' using skills they have already learned.
4. The students will go from 'A' to 'B' using skills they have not yet learned. .

Objective three as an instruction requires little from the student and neither has (s)he much to gain from it.

Objective four as an instruction requires a lot from the students, it can take some time to achieve yet there are a lot of benefits if the disadvantages are realised beforehand and addressed early or they are overcome.

Teaching skills / styles

These are generally adopted as a result of the way in which the trainee instructor was him/herself taught. Whilst they may be satisfactory it is important that each Instructor develops and builds on his / her experience through working with other Instructors. Teaching skills / styles are also influenced by an Instructors' knowledge of the sport and human interaction / communication.

The following is a list of considerations for all Instructors:

- Command authority through confidence, ability and planning
- Be enthusiastic and appear enthusiastic. Do not (feel inhibited to use plenty of body language
- Develop a good rapport early with students
- Use language at a level appropriate to the students
- Be non-sexist
- Use appropriate humour
- Use appropriate method of correction. Avoid negative criticism / sarcasm
- Give plenty of reward/praise
- Listen to what the students have to say
- Be aware of the dangers of rejection / attraction
- Treat students as Individuals
- Begin a session with an activity that is amusing or can bring almost instant success
- Employ plenty of variety
- Appraise each session
- Establish eye contact with everybody
- Avoid shouting
- Avoid distractions
- Speak with everyone's attention only
- Reprimand should be clear, brief and direct
- Address negative comments quietly and to the individual

Learning methods

**“Most of what you hear you forget
Some of what you see you remember
What you do sticks!”**

Students will learn by hearing, seeing and doing. The amount of learning that takes place for each varies from student to student. However the 'sean-fhocail' highlights the fact that student activity is most important and cannot be replaced by explanations and demonstrations. Both explanations and demonstrations should be used as support strategies to introduce and develop skills/concepts, but not as the core of any learning. The Instructor as a teacher should adopt a minimalist role and at the same time deliver the necessary information.

Whole Learning

The 'whole' method is when a student attempts a new stroke in its total from the beginning having been shown a demonstration. For those students who can visually interpret a skill well and reproduce it then this is a very acceptable method. However it is unlikely to happen on a regular basis.

Part Learning

The 'part' method is when a stroke is 'broken down' into its individual elements. These are then re-assembled gradually to form the complete stroke. For example:

| | | |
|-------------|------|------------------------------------|
| Draw Stroke | 1st) | Trunk rotation |
| | 2nd) | Hand & Paddle movement |
| | 3rd) | Angle of kayak |
| | 4th) | Lower body control comes with time |

Chaining

The 'chaining' method is when a stroke is divided into different elements. Each is taught individually as skills on their own and when learnt they are linked together to complete the chain / stroke. 'Chaining' is very similar to the 'part' method. For example:

| | | |
|-------------|------|--|
| Draw Stroke | 1st) | Trunk rotation (previously taught) |
| | 2nd) | Hand & Paddle movement (previously taught) |
| | 3rd) | Hand & paddle movement |
| | 4th) | Angle of kayak |

Shaping

The 'shaping' method is when a stroke is simplified by omitting some of the parts. The simplified version is practised and gradually the elements left out are re-introduced to eventually make the complete stroke- For example :

| | | |
|-------------|------|-------------------------------------|
| Draw Stroke | 1st) | Hand & paddle movement out of water |
| | 2nd) | Hand & paddle movement in water |
| | 3rd) | Trunk Rotation |
| | 4th) | Angle of kayak |

The sequence in which the elements of a skill are presented is very important and have a direct influence on the time taken to perform a skill properly

Discovery Learning

'Discovery Learning' is when a stroke is learnt by the student working with the skills already acquired and without the instructor's direct input.

For example a beginner will learn how to grip a paddle and use it properly. The beginner will also figure out the most secure way of getting on the water without getting wet, etc...

Visualisation

Visualisation is often used by top athletes both in training and events. It is a mental activity used to imagine performing a skill. In so doing the actual muscles move and the brain is making and practising the right connections. Although every canoeist is not a top athlete nor wishes to be, this is a useful technique for improving some of the more difficult skills such as rolling. For example visualisation:

- can be used when it is not physically possible to do the real thing.
- is used when discussing a skill having just performed it.
- can reduce practice of incorrect technique that constant physical practice can ingrain-
- can be used when watching a video of a skill being performed.
- of rolling can be used in anticipation of a capsize when practising other difficult skills.

It is important therefore to encourage discussion after each session to reinforce the learning that has taken place. It is also important to encourage students to teach each other from an early stage as this type of activity encourages visualisation, which not only reinforces the students' learning but also improves the students' visualisation skills. Furthermore when teaching a skill whilst learning it a student will identify the key points easier and can therefore highlight potential difficulties easier. Through this a student can improve without physical practice.

All these methods have advantages and disadvantages. It is the Instructors job to make the decision and apply the appropriate techniques. However without having experimented it is unlikely that the best decision will be made all the time. In fact experience is not always correct either, but it does allow for informed judgement and increases the likelihood of success.

Students Ability

It is important that an instructor develops the ability to establish a group's ability quickly. This is partly done ashore and more so as soon as the group gets on the water. Simple tasks should be set informally and an assessment made to determine the lessons content. Without established background knowledge of each individual's ability it is very difficult to create a successful lesson.

Aims and Objectives

Canoeing is taught for many different reasons. It may simply be introduced as an end in itself in which case the session will comprise of mainly teaching canoeing skills. However, canoeing can also be taught as a means to another end.

Canoeing can be the medium by which management skills are developed in which case the session will comprise mainly of posing problems for the students to overcome. Posing problems where communication is essential to arrive at a solution, and or posing problems where group work is an essential ingredient in finding a solution.

Canoeing can also be the medium through which personal and social skills are developed. With the development of self-esteem as an aim it may be necessary to include a lot of activity, which will result in a great deal of success. In addition reward and praise would be high on the agenda, etc...

The aims will also change depending on the type of course being offered. Obviously the longer the course, the greater the number, and the broader the aims. This is reflected in the content of each session and in the sequence in which the students are introduced to the various skills.

Once the aims are clear then an Instructor can proceed with and decide on the teaching/learning methods to be employed. With a knowledge of the group the Instructor can set the objectives for each individual. Objectives are more specific statements of intent. The objectives chosen for a course / session are generally that which the student will be able to do when the course / session is finished and should reflect the statement of aims.

For example:

Aim: The students will pass the Level 4 Kayak Proficiency Assessment.

Objectives: The students will be able to

- Forward paddle, Reverse paddle, and Emergency stop
- Forward Sweep, etc... etc... etc... These objectives reflect a long-term aim and are achieved on a long-term course

Objectives are not always specific to the physical skills. They may refer to:

- Fun
- Leadership
- Safety
- Teaching skills

Programmes/routines/skills and sub-skills

The objectives as stated are insufficient as they give no detail of the strokes to be learned. In order for a student to learn canoeing it is important that the Instructor has the knowledge to further divide each stroke and technique into the various skills and sub-skills. The Instructor must also choose suitable teaching methods as the following example/programme/routine shows.

The example highlights the fact that what may be recognised as a technique is actually composed of several skills and a selection of methods may be employed in its teaching.

Another example of a sub-skill is trunk rotation-used as part of forward paddling and the draw stroke.

It is not only important that an Instructor can 'break down' a technique or stroke, but (s)he must also have the ability to re-build the processes in an effective manner. Furthermore this system is not only applicable to the teaching of strokes and techniques but also the teaching of concepts.

Teaching Models

The following is a tried, tested and proven model, used as an aid to teaching a new skill.

EXPLAIN DEMONSTRATE IMITATE CORRECT TASK

Otherwise known as **E.D.I.C.T.** this model identifies five elements that should be present in the teaching of any skill, although the order in which they are used may vary.

When related to 'learning methods' .it can be seen that

- the explanation is where learning is taking place by hearing
- the demonstration is where learning is taking place by seeing and
- the latter three is where the learning is taking place by doing

This suggests that a greater emphasis should be put on the latter three. Explanations and demonstrations should be succinct and accurate. If possible these should be done by the more experienced students within the group. The Instructor need not always be the person giving the explanation or the demonstration.

Teaching models continued...

Explanation

- (a) Should be appropriate.
- (b) Should use students where possible.
- (c) Should be clear.
- (d) Should be accurate.
- (e) The important points should be highlighted.
- (f) Should be sufficient without being overboard
- (g) Should be easily heard.

Demonstration

- (a) Should be appropriate to the skill or sub-skill being learned?
- (b) Student should be used where possible.
- (c) It should be technically correct. .
- (d) It should be seen clearly.
- (e) The location, conditions, and water should be suitable.

Imitation

- (a) The location should be appropriate.
- (b) All the students should be active.
- (c) Group control is essential.
- (d) Students should be aware of their exact role

Correction

- (a) The source of all student problems / difficulties should be quickly identified.
- (b) The correction given should be appropriate to the level of the student.
- (c) The correction given should be appropriate to the level of the stroke / technique being taught.
- (d) All the students should be corrected.

Task

- (a) Tasks should be appropriate to the-students ability.
- (b) Tasks should be appropriate to the learning.
- (c) The Instructor should have a range of tasks suited to the stroke / technique being taught.
- (d) The Instructor should have a range of tasks suited to the elements of the stroke / technique being taught.
- (e) Games can be tasks but tasks are not necessarily games