



**OUTDOOR**  
**OUTREACH**

# **Kayak**

**LESSON PLAN**

**Risk Management  
&  
Emergency Protocols**

# Kayaking Lesson Plan

## Introduction, Name Game, Rules & Boundaries

### Why is this important?

- Establishes a tone for the day
- Sets goals and expectations for a fun and safe experience
- Clearly lays out rules & boundaries for good risk management

### Key Points

- **Greet Participants** - Greeting the participants is an important part of the day! It sets a tone for the trip, opens the door for relationship building and provides an opportunity to make an initial assessment of participants' comfort level and needs
- **Name Game** - Pick an icebreaker that is both fun and short and will help leaders connect with the participants and get to know their names
  - Example 1: "Say your name and your favorite food, animal, etc."
  - Example 2: "Memory" 1<sup>st</sup> person says name, 2<sup>nd</sup> person repeats 1<sup>st</sup> person's name and then says his or her name, 3<sup>rd</sup> person repeats 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> person's name and so on ...
- **Trip Overview** - Share a general goal for the day and basic overview so participants know what to expect throughout the day
- **Rules & Boundaries**
  - **"4 R's"** - respect self, others, equipment & environment (LNT)
  - **"Rule of 3"** - groups of 3 with one instructor when leaving boundaries for (emphasize communication)
  - **"Challenge by Choice"** - instructors will respect a participant's choice regarding his or her level of participation in the activity
  - **Site boundaries** - general area near the canopy - personal belongings should be kept together in a designated location. Participant's may not enter the water without an instructor. (More specific water boundaries will be covered in the Ocean Safety Lesson.)
  - **Bathroom** - location and procedure (varies based on site)
  - **Sun protection** - teach the importance of applying sunscreen for ALL participants regardless of skin color and regardless of cloud cover, hats, rashguards, shade
  - **Hydration** - drink a cup before you get in, before and during lunch, before cleanup. This will prevent dehydration which makes people tired and agitated!

### Teaching Tips

- This lesson is best delivered in a circle. Strive to keep it concise, fun, and interactive. Avoid distractions and establish "buy-in" to keep participants from tuning out.

# Stretching & Energizer

## Why is this important?

- Get's group moving and interacting
- Helps minimize muscle injuries while on the water
- Models good exercise habits

## Key Points

- **Energizer Game** - Depending on the group and trip timing it might make sense to play a game before getting into lessons. Play is often the most effective way to get the participants moving and interacting. There are many games that could work. Get creative! Here are just a few suggestions:
  - Seaweed tag
  - Blob tag
  - Seagull Run
  - Evolution
  - Ninja
- **Basic Stretch Circle** - Circle up on the sand and spend 5 - 10 minutes stretching major muscle groups, explaining why stretching is important, and what muscles are being stretched. Here is a basic outline you could follow:
  - Neck roll
  - Shoulder circles
  - Arm circles
  - Triceps side stretch
  - Touch your toes
  - Butterflies
  - One leg over the other back stretch
  - Any other additions or favorite stretches
- **Variation Stretch Circle** - Have students take turns choosing a stretch for the group.

## Teaching Tips

- Keep this part of the day concise, fun, and interactive.
- Choose a game that is appropriate to your group's age and energy level
- Creatively engage students who aren't participating

# **PFD and Rash Guard Fitting**

## **Rash Guards**

Participants are asked to wear rash guards in order to protect them from the sun, reduce the risk of hypothermia and cold, and to help instructors and other groups identify our participants out on the water. Rash guards come in various sizes. Have participants try on sizes until they are comfortable.

## **PFDs**

According to California State law, all persons out in a kayak are required to wear a life vest or PFD. PFDs come in different sizes. Demonstrate to students how to put on a PFD by doing the following:

- Zip front zipper
- Loosen side straps and shoulder straps
- Put PFD on like a vest
- Zip front zipper all the way up
- Tighten side straps and shoulder straps as needed
- Check for proper fit by pulling up on shoulder straps
  - If the shoulder straps are able to come above your ears, it is too loose

It's important to mention that proper PFD is important to reduce the risk of drowning. A properly fitted PFD will keep your head above water and your airway unobstructed. Ensure that you or other instructors are going around and examining participant's PFDs for proper fit before moving to the next lesson or activity.

# **Kayaking Skills and Kayak Safety**

Instructors are expected to be proficient in the following skills and lesson topics so they effectively perform on-the-water assistance for participants whether through verbal instruction or direct instructor assistance. Keep in mind that our kayak vendor will be giving all initial instruction, ground school, and kayak safety information.

## **Kayak Safety Lesson**

### **Why is this important?**

- Teaches participants about hazards they might encounter in the ocean and how to safely manage themselves for the activity
- Reduces fear of unlikely hazards and increases confidence in the ocean

### **Key Points**

- **Rocks** - Participants should be instructed to stay well away from rocky shorelines. Make sure to explain that participants can get stuck on rocks and flip out of their kayaks onto rocks. This could cause injury to participants and damage to equipment. Explain to participants that hazardous

rocks can continue below the surface of the water, away from the visible rocks along the shoreline.

- **Currents/Wind** - Participants should be informed that currents are flowing through the water at all times, with variable direction and speed. Wind is also moving over the water at variable directions and speeds. Explain to participants that even if they stop paddling, they may be moved by currents in the water or by wind. Therefore, they should always be aware of their surroundings and the direction they are drifting as they float. Instruct them to paddle as needed to stay in one area.
- **Boats** - Explain to participants that they should stay well away from boats on the water. Point out any anchored boats and explain that they can still cause injury and damage to equipment as they move with currents and in waves. Additionally, these anchored boats may be houseboats and people may be living inside. Therefore, we would like to respect their privacy in the same way we would respect someone's house on land. Instruct students to stay away from windows and keep their voices down as they pass by anchored boats. Participants should be instructed to stay out of the middle of the boating channel and stay close to the shoreline with the rest of the group to avoid getting in the way of larger, faster moving vessels.
- **Sharks** - If sharks are mentioned let participants know that sharks rarely visit the shallow waters of the bay and attacks are very rare.
- **Sting Rays** - Sting rays are flatfish that bury themselves in the sand. Draw one in the sand to help students visualize. The stinger is a defense mechanism they use if you step on them. Use the stingray shuffle to warn stingrays that you are coming. Demonstrate the shuffle with participants. If you get stung, tell an instructor.
- **Jelly Fish** - Jellyfish are blobs of jelly that have tentacles that sting if they touch your skin. They look like a plastic bag and just float around in the water. They are usually purple or clear and they may look like a plastic bag floating in the water. If you spot a jellyfish, tell an instructor before approaching it. While we can get a closer look, we do not want to disturb the animal or touch it. Do not touch it, even with your paddle. If you get stung, tell an instructor. We do not have dangerous ones locally, but they are still to be left alone.
- **Humans** - There are your friends, instructors, other vessels, and swimmers in the water with you. Be aware of the space around you so you don't get hit and others don't get hit by you, with either paddles or kayaks. Do not let go of your paddle and kayak if you can help it. Watch out for other vessels and warn others of oncoming traffic on the water.
- **Self-Care** - Drink at least 3 cups of water today. The sun and water can cause you to burn so wear sunscreen and reapply at lunch.
- **Boundaries** - Participants should be instructed not to paddle ahead of the designated "lead" instructor on the water, or behind the "sweep" instructor on the water. This way, everyone will be accounted for and the group will not become spread out in a way that is unsafe.

### Teaching Tips

- Have participants sit at the ends of their surfboards in a tight half-circle to increase attention
- Ask reflective questions to get participants involved and assess understanding

# Paddling

## Why this is important?

This lesson teaches participants how to safely use the kayaking equipment and perform proper SUP techniques for a fun and successful kayak experience.



## Key Points

- **Basic Paddling Position:** If you are not sure how far apart to have your hands, raise your paddle and rest the middle of it on top of your head. When your hands are the correct distance apart, your elbows should each make a right-angle, with your upper arm horizontal and forearm vertical.
- **Paddle Strokes:** As one paddle blade dips into the water, the other comes out of the water. Ensure that the paddle blade is fully inserted into the water to maximize your stroke and maximize distance. Also the torso should be rotating to minimize arm exertion.
  - **Forward Stroke:** This stroke is used to move the kayak forward. Using your lower hand (nearest to the dipping blade) you must *pull* on the shaft (with the help of your rotating torso, not arm strength). At the same time, however, your upper hand (nearest to the airborne blade) should *push* forward (again, with the help of your rotating torso, not arm strength). Keep the blade of the paddle close to the body of the kayak as you pull the blade through the water.
  - **Backstroke:** This stroke is used to move the kayak backwards. Use a reverse motion from forward stroke, pushing the water forward with your paddle in the water. A few backstrokes can be used to stop the forward motion of a kayak. This is especially useful to prevent collisions on the water.
  - **C-stroke:** This stroke is used to make a turn. Reach out towards the front of the kayak and put your paddle in the water. Then, with your paddle still in the water, make a sweeping motion towards the back of the kayak in a wide arc. This should allow you to turn faster than you would by using a regular forward or back stroke.

Figure SEQ Figure 1\* ARABIC 1.  
Basic Paddling Position

## Proper Kayaking Technique

### Why is this important?

This lesson teaches participants how to maximize their paddle skills while promoting a safe and successful kayak experience.

## Key Points

- **Roles of Kayakers:** The kayaker in the front seat is generally smaller than the kayaker in the backseat. Since the front seat kayaker should be facing forward and watching for obstacles, it is the responsibility of the rear seat kayaker to follow the lead of the kayaker in the front seat. Therefore, the front seat sets the pace and the rear seat mirrors their movements. This prevents kayakers from hitting paddles together, which could cause damage to equipment, harm to participant and waste energy while on the water. (Have participants line up in imaginary kayak configurations and practice paddling in sync without clipping their paddles together).
- **Launching:** Kayaks will be pulled down to the edge of the water by the kayak vendor, when the conditions are safe to do so. Instructors may assist the vendor as needed. Once the kayaks are in position for launch, the front seat kayaker will sit down in the kayak. After the front seat kayaker is securely seated, the kayak may be pushed further into the water by the vendor or OO instructors. Make sure that the kayak is not pushed so far into the water that the rear seat kayaker has trouble entering the kayak. Once the kayak is properly positioned, the rear seat kayaker will sit down in the kayak. Once both kayakers are securely seated with paddles in hand, they can launch. Kayak pairs may be able to paddle away on their own, or they may need a push from the kayak vendor or OO instructors.
- **Landing:** When ready to land as a group, participants will be instructed to paddle straight into the landing area. An OO instructor or the kayak vendor will land their kayak first in order to assist the participants in their landings. Often times, participant's kayaks will need to be pulled further onto shore by an OO instructor or the kayak vendor before the kayak is stable enough for the participants to exit safely.

## Kayak Rescues

### Flipping a Kayak on the Water:

- **Self-assisted Flip:** In the event that a kayak flips, coach the participants to reach the opposite rail of the kayak (Figure 1). Using their own weight, have them lean back to allow the kayak to rotate to the upright position.



Figure 3. Example of two kids flipping a kayak

- **Instructor-assisted Flip:** With the instructor kayak perpendicular to the nose of the flipped kayak, the instructor can rotate the kayak by grabbing it from the bow and flipping it to the upright position.

#### **Re-entering a Kayak on the Water:**

- **Coach:** Encourage the participant to first calm down from the commotion of falling into the water. Once they are ready, instruct them to place their dominant hand on the rail furthest from them and the other hand on the opposite rail. Next, coach them to fallen kayaker to get their hips up close to the surface of the water; finally, encourage them to kick hard and hoist themselves up to their belly. Once they have their torso on the kayak, instruct them to get their legs up on the kayak toward the bow. Once they have their entire body on the kayak, have them carefully position themselves into the seat.
- **Parallel Stabilization:** The coaching method is highly effective but may require some assistance of stabilizing the kayak. To do this, paddle alongside the unmanned kayak and help stabilize the kayak while coaching the participant through the reentry process.
- **In-water Assistance:** If the participant continues to struggle and cannot enter the kayak. As a last ditch effort, enter the water on the opposite side of the unmanned kayak and offer your hand to help pull up the participant onto the deck of kayak. Remember, this is a last resort method.

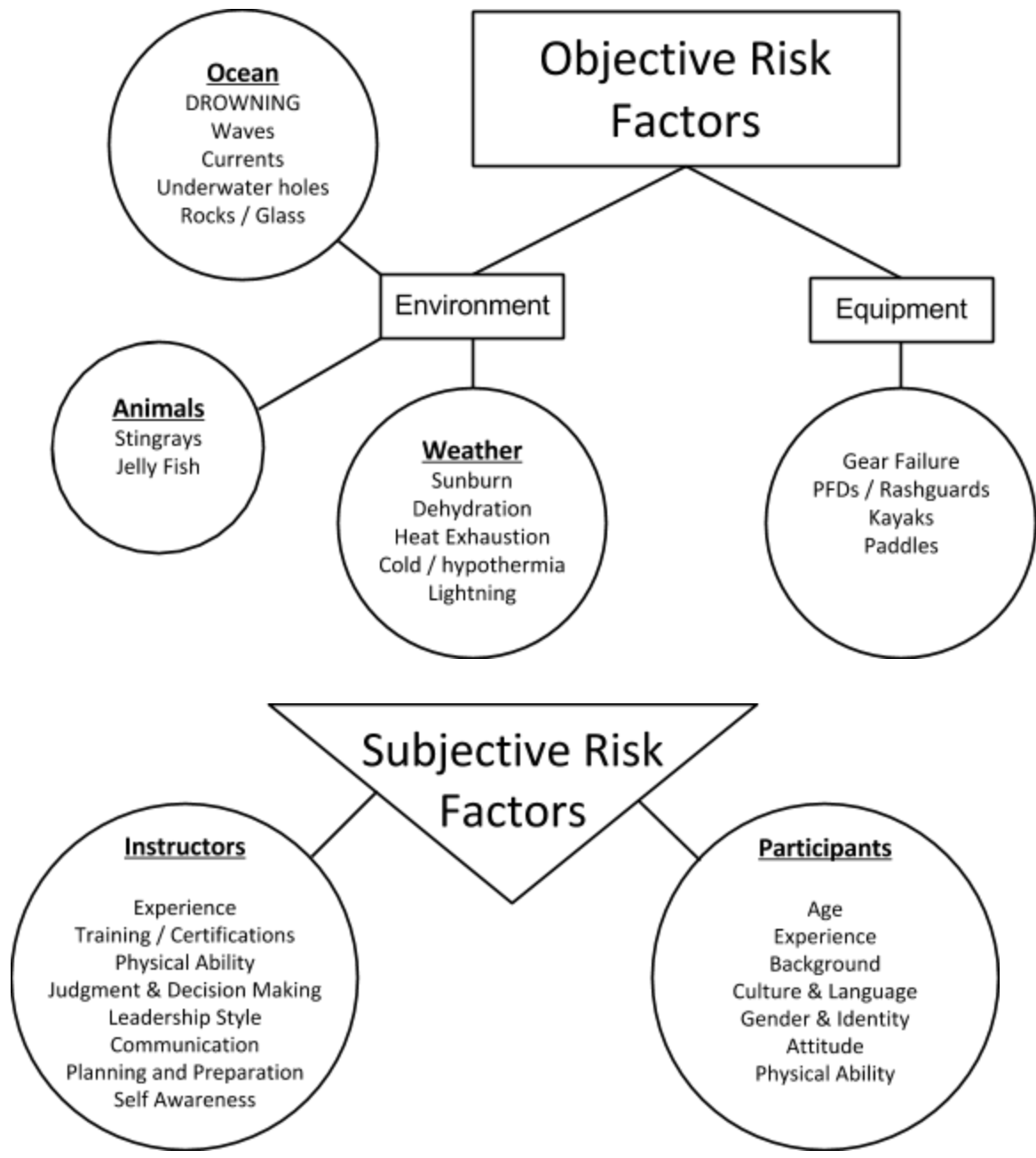
#### **Towing a Kayak:**

- **Encourage:** First, encourage the participant(s) to coordinate their paddling and persevere the difficult paddle by breaking up the necessary distance into small achievable goals.
- **Tow:** Given a strong headwind or severe sea sickness, the participant(s) may need to be towed. Preferably, use a tow belt attaching it to the bow of the kayak needing assistance and to your waist. If you only have a rope, tie it to the stern of your kayak and to the bow of the kayak needing towing; leave about 15-20ft between kayaks. Encourage the participants to help paddle. Have fun paddling and stay positive and encouraging.

## **Risk Management & Emergency Protocols**

Like all water sports, kayaking has large inherent risks. It's important that all OO instructors possess an awareness of how to mitigate unnecessary risks and minimize risks in the field without taking too much away from the amazing experience participants have while kayaking. Managing risk involves using good judgement to make sound decisions in a dynamic environment. This section contains a general overview of common risk factors on kayak trips as well as recommendations for risk management. Additionally you will find the OO Emergency plan detailed step by step on what to do if you are faced with some common injuries while kayaking and also for emergency situations at the beach.





## **Risk Management Practices**

- **Site Selection:** As soon as you arrive at the location, observe the ocean conditions -- wave size, wind strength and direction, other groups and beach users, tide changes, etc.
- **Frontload Safety Information:** Providing clear direction around safety prior to engaging in the activity is one of the most basic and effective ways to manage a group.
- **Establish Boundaries:** Set clear boundaries to make sure the group stays together both in the water and on land.
- **Observe the “Rule of 3”:** participants must communicate before leaving the established boundaries and only if they are in a group of 3 with at least one adult / instructor
- **Participant & Instructor Rash Guards:** Participants and instructors are required to wear the appropriately colored rash guard for clear identification in the water
- **Ratios:** Instructors must not exceed a 4:1 student to instructor ratio in the water while kayaking. Ensure that an instructor is already in a kayak on the water before sending participants out in kayaks.

## **Group Management Recommendations**

- **Keep an eye on the Conditions/Weather:** Watch for any signs of inclement weather or changing wave heights, wind speeds, or currents before sending students into the water. If a potential hazard is identified, participant and instructor groups should be instructed to stay away from that area.
- **Group Spacing and User Etiquette:** As much as possible instructors in the water should avoid other groups on the water to minimize collisions. However, it is important to keep the group together within designated boundaries for the sake of communication. For example, establishing a lead kayak instructor on the water and a sweep instructor provides clear boundaries for participants to adhere to. This will become especially important in the event of emergency but also as instructors coordinate sending participants out on the water.

# Emergency Protocols

In the event that an injury is minor (minor sting, minor sprain, etc.), the instructor assigned as the medic will administer first aid while the group manager manages the rest of the group. The affected participant should be kept calm and comfortable. An instructor should remain with the injured participant until they are able to return to the rest of the group.

In the event that an injury is more severe (possible dry drowning, severe stingray sting, etc.) an instructor or volunteer should be sent to seek immediate assistance from a lifeguard. The medic will stay with the participant and assist while the group manager manages the rest of the group. The instructor assigned to incident command (if available) will make phone calls to the appropriate number below.

## **Communication in a Life/Limb Emergency or Property-threatening emergency**

### **DO THIS FIRST:**

1. Try the park-specific emergency numbers (refer to Local Emergency Resource Guide)
2. If no park-specific numbers exist, call **911**
3. If 911 does not work, check through below list for an appropriate number.

### **In ALL Emergency Situations, after care has been secured:**

1. Work your way down the phone tree, calling each number three times in succession.
  - 1) Program Operations Manager - Kim - 510.861.2324
  - 2) Outdoor Outreach Office - 619.238.5790
  - 3) Director of Operations - Joe - 310.893.6943
  - 4) Executive Director - Ben - 619.632.8361
2. If no one answers the three phone calls, wait 15 minutes, and move on to next person.
3. Director of Operations is your contact for Media Relations (in the case of a large incident)

If the incident ends participation in the activity, an incident and witness report should be completed. Take clear photos of any wounds or injuries when it is convenient.