

Victorian Sea Kayak Club

Introduction to Sea Skills Study Guide

About this guide

This study guide is developed by VSKC Instructors and complements material provided by Paddle Australia. It builds on Paddle Australia's guidelines to further reflect sea kayaking in Victoria. There are two sections to this Introduction to Sea Skills Study Guide:

- Part one – study material
- Part two – questions to test your knowledge.

You can also access training material published by Paddle Australia. This material is continually being reviewed and updated on the [Paddle Australia website](#).

Introduction to Sea Skills is not just about being recognised as an active participant on the club trip. It is also a recognition that you have skills and knowledge to plan and conduct personal day-based activities in sea kayaks in coastal conditions. Skills are a function of technique and fitness. Starting with a good foundation of stroke execution is best achieved with a qualified instructor. Then develop your skills by increasing your paddling fitness through getting out paddling and applying techniques.

Paddling technique review and development is ongoing even for more experienced paddlers. You do not need a perfect technique for Introduction to Sea Skills, but it certainly helps and however you paddle you need to have good technique to help prevent injury.

Use the Paddle Australia 'Introduction to Sea Skills Assessment Guidelines' to identify areas you need to learn about: <https://paddle.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Assessment-Guidelines-Introduction-to-Sea-Skills-3.pdf>

Most of all, get time on the water with a group of skilled paddlers, preferably qualified instructors or trip leaders.

Focused training

Attend focused training sessions to help develop a safe paddling technique. Within the club, refer to the club event calendar or contact the training coordinator for upcoming training events. You can find other Paddle Australia national training providers, instructors and courses on the Paddle Australia Education page: <https://education.canoe.org.au/>

PART ONE: STUDY MATERIAL

Paddling Skills

Paddle Australia has written material that covers most skills. Most paddling skills are 'basic skills' but applied in a different environment. Introduction to Sea Skills conditions are: below fresh wind conditions at sea (<17 knots); seas below 0.5m, surf up to 0.5m, and a maximum distance of 1.5 NM offshore. The NSWSKC's training videos - <https://www.nswseakayaker.asn.au/training-videos> - are an excellent resource. For surf skills, you should aim to be safe with regards to yourself and others.

You need to demonstrate holding a brace using the back of the blade. Shoulder protection is particularly crucial in the surf. Being able to brace effectively and rolling skills are related.

Rolling

Rolling is not a requirement for Introduction to Sea Skills. However we encourage you to put this skill high on your 'to learn' list. Being able to roll is a giant step towards becoming competent in your kayak and you will have more confidence in edging and leaning your kayak if you can roll. This is a practical skill and it is best to start with a good instructor to ensure you do not develop bad habits. Development of a reliable roll can take dedication but the results will boost your confidence and add to your safety at sea. For self-study 'The Kayak Roll' Tips and Techniques is a good place to start: <https://performancevideo.com/the-kayak-roll>. There are a number of website and social media videos out there for free on the internet and plenty of different rolling techniques. Don't overthink it. Any club sea or senior sea instructor is qualified to teach rolling. Learning to roll by attending a pool rolling session is a great way to start BUT remember once you get the idea in the pool you need to practice in the ocean to hone your roll.

Rescues

Assisted Rescues

The VSKC requires that all members should use and be familiar with the 'heel hook assisted rescue'. However rescues are situational (eg, near rocks, warm calm water, dynamic cold water) so you need to be familiar with modifications to this technique to suit the situation. The following link is a clear demonstration of the heel hook rescue. A good rescue is one that encourages safety to all involved and returns paddlers to their cockpit in a timely fashion: <https://www.nswseakayaker.asn.au/page-18315>

Self Rescue

As an Introduction to Sea Skills paddler you need to develop a reliable method of self rescue. The preferred method is a 'paddle float re-enter & roll': <https://www.nswseakayaker.asn.au/page-18323>

Paddle float rescue is a self-rescue recovery aided by a paddle float. It is not an alternative for developing a re-enter and roll. It is a backup in case you are tired, injured or exhausted. Scramble or 'cowboy' self rescues are generally unreliable in fresh conditions and therefore not encouraged.

Towing

You should carry and know how to use a long and short tow line. There are various tow set ups you need to practice and be familiar with.

Contact tow

Rescues without a line or rope. It is a raft where the towee holds onto the rescuer's kayak stern or bow deck lines and the tower paddles across the two kayaks moving the raft forwards or backwards. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=otEmFcTTrIU>

Single in line tow

The name says it all – standard length tow lines are 15 meters with a quick release at the tower's end and the other end is clipped near the bow of the kayak being towed

<https://nswseakayaker.asn.au/page-18335>

V- Tow

For longer distances and where you have more paddlers who can help out a V-Tow can be more efficient.



Separation between the two towers is critical. Too far apart is inefficient and too close restricts paddle efficiency.

You will need to practice all types of tows and be proficient in quick deployments and changes of towers whilst under way.

Navigation

Detailed navigation techniques and knowledge can be found in the 'Basic Sea Kayak Navigation' information on the VSKC website:

vskc.org.au/resources/Documents/Training/Basic%20Kayak%20Navigation.pdf

You will need to be familiar with most of the information contained within however NOT ferry glide angles.

For a guide to the rule of 12th's & 50/90 rule see:

vskc.org.au/resources/Documents/Training/Rule%20of%2012th%20and%2050-90%20rule.pdf

Rope work

As per the Paddle Australia Assessment Guidelines, with demonstration conducted on land. You should focus on the bowline and the Figure of 8 knot. Animated Knots is a useful phone app and website: animatedknots.com

Weather

Check out the Bureau of Meteorology's Marine Weather Knowledge Centre:

www.bom.gov.au/marine/knowledge-centre

Check marine weather definitions such as swell, sea, combined sea and swell, wave height, wind warnings, wind direction, significant wave period. Learn how to read a synoptic chart to determine wind direction and probable forecast conditions for a given area.

Surf

For the VSKC Introduction to Sea Skills assessment you will need to be able to self launch on a surf beach, safely paddle out beyond the surf zone and safely return to the beach in a repeatable manner. You will also have to perform a wet exit in the surf and return to the beach with your kayak.

PART 2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Environmental

The beach area includes a shore area and back to the dunes.

Why is this a fragile area? And what do you need to be mindful of to minimise your impact?

Campfires are a great source of enjoyment on a trip. Can you list 3 things that help minimise any impact from campfires?

Seaways and boating rules

- What do cardinal markers indicate?
- How are cardinal markers used?
- What shape is each type of cardinal marker?
- Why are they relevant to sea kayakers?
- Lateral markers are what colours?
- On what side of a channel should you paddle?
- What safety devices are mandatory for you to carry?
- What is a PLB? When would you use one?
- With whom does a PLB communicate with and what information should they have on you?
- How do you register a PLB or Epirb?

Marine VHF basics

- What are the benefits of carrying a VHF radio?
- Who can you expect to communicate with other than other pod members?
- Are there any licensing requirements to operate a VHF radio?
- What is the emergency channel?
- What do the following radio terms mean (each repeated three times): Pan-Pan, Securite, Mayday.

General sea kayaking terms

What is broaching?

What is weather cocking?

Indicate the following parts of a sea kayak and state their purpose:

- Deck
- Deck Lines
- Hull
- Chines
- Rocker
- Keel
- Deck Bungies
- Cockpit
- Coaming
- Thigh Braces
- Bulk Heads
- Hatch covers
- Foot Pegs/Rests
- End Toggle
- Bow
- Stern
- Gunwale
- Skeg

Weather

What is a hectopascal?

What is an isobar?

What is the 'right hand rule of thumb' in regard to isobars?

Explain the following terms:

- Fetch
- Clapotis
- Overfall
- Rebound

What is a 'Following Sea'?

What is a 'Quartering Sea'?

How many sources of weather information can you list?

What are three reliable methods of obtaining a weather forecast in the field?

Which is your primary weather forecast source at home and on an expedition?

Explain the term, 'Dress for the swim or dress for the paddle', and how it relates to sea kayaking in Victoria.

In which Coastal Forecast Area do you paddle in most of the time?

What is your paddling threshold for forecasted wind and swell?

What would you do if paddling in an electrical storm?

What is a cold front?

What are wind bullets and where might you encounter them?

Surf

How would you identify a rip on a surf beach?

Why is it essential for sea kayakers to identify rips?

When do waves break?

How shallow does the water need to get before waves break?

What is a 'dumping beach' and how can you identify one from the sea?

Is wave height measured from the front of a wave or the back?

Tides & currents

Explain the following terms:

- Tidal range
- High tide
- Spring tide
- Neap tide
- Ebb and flood
- Ferry glide

What is wind against tide and how might this effect sea kayakers?

Explain the 50/90 rule and how is it useful to sea kayakers.

Explain the rule of thirds and when you would use this.

How might you use 'transits' when paddling in an area effected by currents?

Navigation

Explain the following terms:

- Handrail
- Magnetic bearing
- Magnetic variation
- Aiming off
- Transits
- True north
- Nautical mile and kilometre
- Knot
- Latitude & longitude
- Contour line

What is a compass rose and where would you find one?

What is magnetic north?

What is true north?

What is compass variation?

What is compass deviation?

How do you measure distance on a marine chart?

One nautical mile is approximately how far in kilometres?

What is clock navigation?