

Open Canoeing For Beginners

- First of a series with Estelle Leyshon.



Many open canoes can take two or three adults or two adults and two young children with ease. Many canoeists also use them for extended camping trips on rivers. Canoes have a completely open deck so there

is less fear of entrapment should you accidentally capsize. They are very comfortable to paddle all day because you can change your sitting position, or even stand up and have a stretch if you wish! Like kayaks, they can also be transported on a normal car roof rack.

Open canoeing, (often called Canadian canoeing), is becoming much more popular in NZ.

It is an ideal activity for anyone who wants to get on the water in a really manageable boat with friends or family.

Open canoes offer some distinct advantages over kayaks. They are generally more stable than kayaks and have a much greater carrying capacity. This article is based predominately on the canoe being paddled in tandem. In another issue we will go into detail of how to solo paddle a canoe.

All models of Novacraft Canoes

Now available by special order

Choose the model and length, with the hull shape to suit your needs. Choose the construction material - SP3 plastic, Arimid, Spectra, Blue Steel, Royalex Royalex Lite or Fiberglass.

View all possible combinations and specifications on www.novacraft.com.

Below a selection of the models available through Novacraft's Canadian factory.



Talk to your nearest kayak retailer about your options
For more specifications: www.novacraft.com
Allow 3 months for delivery

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TANDEM FORWARD PADDLING:

When two people paddle an open canoe there is often a tendency for the boat to veer off towards the bow paddler's side. To understand good forward paddling technique it is important to understand both good individual stroke work and the relationship between what each paddler does.

PRINCIPLES OF GOOD INDIVIDUAL FORWARD PADDLING TECHNIQUE.

- Swivel on the seat towards the side of the boat you paddle on.
- Twist your body from the waist and push your "on side" shoulder (the one on your paddle side), forward.
- Hold your top hand on top of the paddle vertically above your lower hand.
- Pull the paddle back through the water by untwisting your body.
- Recover the paddle by slicing it 90° away from you as it passes the seat.

Things to note:

- The paddle should be vertical throughout the power phase of the stroke
- The paddle should follow the centre line of the boat

PRINCIPLES OF GOOD TANDEM FORWARD PADDLING:

Both paddlers should paddle in perfect time with each other so the bow paddler needs to set the paddling rate.

The bow paddler must develop a feel for what is happening at the stern of the boat because the stern paddler often has to apply a combined power and steering stroke to keep the boat straight.

Good communication is important; if the stern paddler needs the bow paddler to slow down they need to say so!

The stern paddler cannot see right in front of the boat (bow paddlers unfortunately don't come with windows) so the bow paddler needs to let the stern paddler know if anything is right in front of the boat.

The stern paddler needs to let the bow paddler know if they need help steering the boat.

There is only one Captain in the boat and that is the stern paddler!

Swapping positions helps each paddler to understand better what effect their paddling has on one another.

STEERING THE CANOE ON THE MOVE: - TWO PADDLERS

Because the stern paddler has more leverage than the bow paddler when paddling forwards, there is a natural tendency for the boat to veer off towards the bow paddler's side.

To correct this, the stern paddler must learn to combine a steering stroke with each power stroke. There are two ways of doing this, by using a stern rudder or a J stroke. The stern paddler should do a normal power stroke followed by a steering stroke: -

THE STERN RUDDER.

Place the paddle blade in the water just behind the hips. The blade edge should be pointing vertically upwards and the paddle shaft should be parallel with the centre line of the canoe. Either pull or push the paddle towards or away from the canoe to adjust the steering.

Things to note:

Usually you will be pushing away from the boat to correct the steering when forward paddling. If it helps you can support the paddle shaft against the edge of the canoe. The paddle blade should be completely under water.

J STROKE - STERN PADDLER OR SOLO PADDLER

Another method of keeping the boat running in a straight line is the "J" Stroke.

12ft Trapper by Novacraft Canoes

Total weight only 18kgs



This canoe was originally built in Canada in the early 1900s. Called the Chestnut, it's design was to enable outdoorsmen to paddle everything from creeks to large lakes while being small and light enough for easy portage.

For the modern canoeist, both the primary and secondary stability of the Trapper are reassuring, though its stability does not sacrifice speed.

It has lots of space, for everything from a day of fishing to a week away and can also be used with a single or double blade paddle.

The Trapper combines the enjoyment of a stable fishing platform with light weight for easy portaging into your favourite back country waterways .

Specifications: Royalex construction, Wooden seats and fittings, Length 12', Beam 34", Depth Center 13", Weight 18Kg.



Talk to your kayak retailer about other canoe options

For more specifications: www.novacraft.com

One Trapper 12 foot available for immediate delivery.

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Do a normal power stroke and, leaving the paddle blade in the water, roll your top hand over so your thumb points downwards. Bring your top hand just inside the gunwale as required.

The steering effect comes from the water pushing on the drive face of the blade whilst it is being held away from the canoe. The drive face will be pointing away from the boat. The blade angle at this stage should be not quite vertical, with the upper wrist twisted down at a comfortable angle. The pressure on the lower arm, which is holding the blade away from the boat, can be eased by gently levering off the gunwale as required.



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Waitara River Tours

For those who are slightly more adventurous at heart, this is a scenic trip with the excitement of Grade Two rapids. Midway down, we paddle under the historic Betran Road Bridge where we will stop for a snack.

Allow 2 hours paddle only.
Priced at \$70.
Phone: 06 769 5506

Open Canoeing For Beginners

- Part two of the canoeing series with Estelle Leyshon.



In the last issue we looked at the forward stroke and steering strokes allowing you to get out on the water while having some degree of control.

We now need to look at a few more strokes so that we can gain full control and more confidence to paddle further.

Stopping the canoe – two people:

To stop the boat moving forwards it's simply a matter of paddling backwards.

From a good forward paddling position, twist your body round and place the paddle blade in the water level with your hips. Push the blade forward in the water by untwisting your body.

Keep the paddle vertical and your top hand immediately above your bottom hand.

Recover the blade - slice it out at the end of the stroke.

Things to note:

Make sure the boat is travelling at normal speed before practicing this.

Using shorter strokes in quick succession works well.

The boat should be travelling in the opposite direction within two boat lengths.

Turning the canoe on the spot

– two people.

We can do this by what is known as a "sweep stroke". It is called a sweep stroke because, instead of following the centre line of the boat, it sweeps out on an arc.

The bow paddler places the paddle at the front of the canoe and "sweeps" the paddle through a 90 degree arc and recovers the paddle level with the hips.

The stern paddler places the paddle at the back of the canoe on the opposite side and using the back of the paddle, (i.e. the non drive face), simultaneously "sweeps" the paddle through a 90 degree arc and recovers the paddle level with the hips.

The boat can then be spun round on the spot by applying several strokes with the stern paddler following the timing of the bow paddler.

Things to note:

The paddle shaft should be as near horizontal as possible whilst still keeping the whole blade area in the water.

Twist and untwist the body whilst performing this stroke

Don't sweep the paddle round more than 90 degrees since this will end up moving the boat backwards and forwards at the same time, which is

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Trapper, 12ft, 18kgs, Royalex Lite



Teddy, 12ft, 13kgs, Aramid Lite



Supernova, 14ft, 10", 22kgs, Spectra



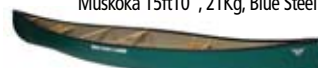
Rob Special, 15ft, 26Kg, Royalex Lite



Pal, 16ft, 26Kg, Royalex Lite



Muskoka 15ft10", 21Kg, Blue Steel



Tripper, 16ft, 27Kg, Royalex Lite



Cronje, 17ft, 27Kg, Royalex Lite



Prospector, 15, 16, 17, and 18ft



Outfitter, 15, 16 & 17, SP3 Plastic only



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just a waste of energy!

The strokes can be reversed so the bow paddler sweeps from the hips to the front of the boat and the stern paddler sweeps from the hips to the stern of the boat.

Trimming the canoe:

This sounds complicated but in fact it's very simple. All it means is that the bow should be slightly raised above the water line when paddling forwards and the stern should be raised slightly above the water line when paddling backwards. So how do we achieve this? Well unlike a kayak we can move our weight forward on the seat or if necessary kneel in front of the seat to achieve this. We can also move any gear we have in the canoe back forwards or backwards to achieve the right trim.

Things to note:

Because of their size, as open canoes are affected by wind more than kayaks it is good idea to trim for wind conditions as well. We do this by moving weight forward if we are paddling into a head wind and moving weight back if the wind is behind us.

Moving the boat sideways

– two people:

The easiest way of moving the boat sideways is for both paddlers to do a "draw stroke" on the same side.

Twist round on the seat to face the side of the canoe.

Place the blade in the water at right angles to the canoe.

Make sure the drive face of the blade is facing towards you.

Your top arm should be almost straight and the blade submerged.

Keeping the top hand in the same position, pull the blade in towards the boat.

Recover the blade by rolling your top wrist away from you through 90



degrees whilst allowing the paddle shaft to rotate through your bottom hand, and then slice the blade back through the water to where you started the stroke.

Rotate your wrist again and repeat the stroke.

Things to note.

Don't rush this stroke, technique is much more important than speed or power here.

Keep in time with the other paddler.

The paddles should always be pulled in at right angles to the canoe.

If the bow or stern starts swinging round, just adjust the power you are putting into the stroke accordingly.

Reversing the canoe – two people:

Twist your body round and place the paddle blade in the water level with your hips.

Push the blade forward in the water by untwisting your body.

Keep the paddle vertical and your top hand immediately above your bottom hand.

To recover the blade, slice it out at the end of the stroke.

Look over your shoulders to check where the boat is going.

Things to note:

Remember to "trim" the boat by adjusting your seating positions or kit so the stern of the boat is now a little higher in the water than the bow.

When reversing, the stern and bow paddlers' roles are "reversed" and it is the bow paddler's responsibility to keep the boat straight. The bow paddler can then adjust the steering by using a "reverse J stroke".



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Allow 2 hours paddle only. Priced at \$70. Phone: 06 769 5506

Reverse J stroke:

Do a normal reverse stroke followed by:

Pushing the blade forward in the water and keep the blade fully submerged.

At the same time, roll your top hand over so your thumb is pointing downwards and your hand is touching or almost touching your shoulder.

Steer the boat by levering off the edge and moving your top hand away from or towards the edge of the boat.

Lean forward if needed.

Swimming to shore with an open canoe:

Sometimes it is quicker to swim to the shore with the canoe rather than be rescued. This would usually be the case where the shore is close at hand and the river depth near the banks is shallow enough to stand up in, making emptying the boat easy.

Tandem paddlers:

Once in the water, take a few seconds to get orientated, then, whilst hanging onto your paddles, swim to each end of the canoe and hang onto the boat. DO NOT attempt to right the boat.

Use one hand to hold onto the canoe, and the other to hold on to your paddle.

Make sure you communicate with the other paddler so you both know which point of the bank you are aiming for.

Holding onto the canoe at the bow and stern, swim to the bank with the boat.

Emptying open canoes:

Once you have reached the shallow water near the bank, (the water should ideally be knee to waist depth), both paddlers should gently lift the gunwales on one side of the boat up about six inches to break the "air lock" under the boat.

Then lift the opposite gunwales up six inches above the water so the boat is level - and still upside down. The boat will now quickly drain of water.

Lift the boat up to waist/chest height.

Now quickly flip the boat over and place it back in the water.



Things to note:

Timing and communication with your paddling partner are critical when emptying a canoe.

Remember to apply the principles of good lifting technique; Open Canoes full of water are heavy!

An advertisement for Tahe Marine kayaks. It features a vertical image of a white and red kayak against a blue background with splashing water. A red banner with white text reads "Take a moment... Enjoy the spirit of Tahe Kayaks." Below the banner is the Tahe Marine logo. At the bottom right is the Great Stuff logo. Text at the bottom provides contact information for a demo paddle and model specifications.

Take a moment...
Enjoy the spirit of Tahe Kayaks.

Tahe Marine

Find out more and organise a demo paddle:
Phone Great Stuff on 022 049 5434 or Canoe & Kayak on 09 476 7066 during business hours and discuss Tahe's kayak range or your personalised demo.
Model specifications: www.tahemarine.com

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