



NEW FOREST KAYAK AND CANOE CLUB

Club trip grade descriptions

(with leader descriptions and equipment requirements)

Created on:	4 th April 2022
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Reviewed 24 th April 2023 by:	Committee: Justin Davis, Robert Salmon, Annie Hallam, Ya Huang, Duncan Gray, Mark Shakespeare Vicky Burden
Reviewed 28 th March 2024 by:	Committee: Justin Davis, Jane Chapman, Rachel Hughes, Mark Shakespeare, Robert Wright, Richard Payne, Annie Hallam
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Reviewed 4 th Jun 25 by:	Committee Annie Hallam, Carolyn Thomson-Easter, Craig McCullough, Duncan Gray, James Neill, Jane Chapman, Jeremy Mortimer, John Taylor, Mark Shakespeare, Rachel Huges, Richard Shelly, Robert Wright & Ya Huang.
Next Review due:	June 2026

Important safety rules

- Every trip should involve a **minimum of 3 paddlers**

- *Every trip should have an **appropriate co-leader/assistant** who would be happy leading the same grade of paddle.*
- *Every trip should have a **designated shore contact** (this could be another member, a partner or a committee member who would be able to alert the coastguard and describe the trip plan in the event of emergency). Please share this information on the forum and with your group.*

There MUST be a first aider on the trip (qualified within the last three years (at least the 8 hour outdoor course) *Please also check with your group who is first-aid trained and make everyone aware.*

The leader MUST have completed the online 'Introduction to safeguarding training' within the last 3 years.

- *Every trip should carry the **safety/communications equipment** described in the grade descriptions. The club has full leader kit available to borrow from Annie Hallam (message her on the forum if you need it).*

Grade A trip - limits of operation

General club paddle on sheltered water with light wind F3 or less). Open to all paddlers in the club. A leisurely trip with plenty of stops, scenery, etc. Not a strenuous outing, but hopefully good fun... (if the wind is stronger or finishes in darkness this would become a grade B trip).

Examples: Beaulieu river from Bucklers Hard to Beaulieu river

Hamble river Swanwick to Curbridge

Itchen Bridge to Woodmill

Equipment

A club trip at grade A would be expected to carry **at least** a mobile phone, towline, spare paddle and a first-aid kit and spare warm clothing. If the trip might involve paddling after dark, paddlers should carry a light - this would turn a grade A trip into a grade B trip.

Leaders

The leader should always have experience of paddling in conditions more severe than the trip they are leading. The leader could:

Hold a touring/ sea kayak award/be qualified at BC 'Sea kayak leader' level (or above).

or

The leader has extensive recent experience of paddling in level A conditions in the location and experience of leading groups of paddlers in the possible conditions. The leader can demonstrate an assisted rescue and how to tow another paddler (e.g. in club rescue practice sessions).

There MUST be a first aider on the trip (qualified within the last three years (at least the 8 hour outdoor course) Please also check with your group who else is first-aid trained and make everyone aware.

The leader MUST have completed the online 'Introduction to safeguarding training' within the last 3 years.

Grade B trip - limits of operation

Generally coastal paddles staying close to shore - potentially some slightly choppy seas, wind below force 4, tide approx 2 knots max. Plenty of opportunity for landing and resting. You are not required to be able to roll or self-rescue. These trips **will not** involve open crossings (e.g to the isle of Wight). It will be specified if any specific previous experience is required.

It is helpful if participants have practiced rescue and towing techniques and some may carry their own towline.

Examples:

Lepe to Calshot, Lymington-Keyhaven, Lymington – Lepe

Hillhead-Gilkicker point, Warsash – Hillhead, Poole harbour,

Eling-Hythe (although this is a busy shipping/boating area and the leader/participants should be vigilant about shipping movements and other smaller craft)

Equipment

A club trip at grade B would be expected to carry at least a mobile phone, first-aid kit, towline, spare paddle and spare warm clothing. If the trip might involve paddling after dark, paddlers should carry a light. The leader may also decide to carry a VHF radio and an emergency shelter under certain conditions.

Leaders

The leader should always have experience of paddling at the grade above the trip they are leading. The leader could:

Hold a touring/ sea kayak award/be qualified at BC 'Sea kayak leader' level (or above).

or

The leader has extensive recent experience of paddling in level C conditions in the location and extensive experience of leading groups of paddlers in the possible conditions. The leader can demonstrate current skills in essential rescue/towing skills (e.g. in club rescue practice sessions). They may have completed the BC sea kayak leader training and the coastal navigation/ tidal planning courses **or** have extensive experience of planning trips close to the shore in tidal conditions in this location.

There MUST be a first aider on the trip (qualified within the last three years (at least the 8 hour outdoor course)) *Please also check with your group who else is first-aid trained and make everyone aware.*

The leader MUST have completed the online 'Introduction to safeguarding training' within the last 3 years.

Grade C trip - limits of operation

More testing/advanced conditions or longer paddles where paddle fitness is important. Potentially some choppy seas, wind force 4 or less, tide approx. 2 knots max. Swell up to 1m. Longer gaps (up to 2Nm) between landing opportunities (more committing paddles) with the potential for more difficult landings and some moderate surf on some trips. All trips across the Solent to the Isle of Wight will be at this level or higher due to the strong tidal flow in the Solent.

NB A trip to the Needles on the Isle of Wight could also expose a group to local stretches of fast-moving water (up to 4kts on Springs) through Hurst gap and also at the Needles race which would make it a grade D trip.

Paddlers on the trip would be well known to the leader who would have knowledge of their paddling skills before the trip. They would have recently practiced rescue and towing techniques and MUST be able to re-enter their boat in an assisted rescue in the conditions described. Participants MUST carry their own towline.

Leaders

The leader should always have experience of paddling in conditions more severe than the trip they are leading. The leader could be

Qualified at BC 'Sea kayak leader' level

Or

The leader has extensive recent experience of paddling in level C conditions in the location and extensive experience of planning trips and leading groups of paddlers in the possible conditions in the location. The leader can demonstrate a high level of current skills in essential

rescue/towing skills (e.g. in club rescue practice sessions). They are likely to have completed the BC sea kayak leader training and coastal navigation/tidal planning courses.

There MUST be a first aider on the trip (qualified within the last three years (at least the 8 hour outdoor course) *Please also check with your group who else is first-aid trained and make everyone aware.*

The leader MUST have completed the online 'Introduction to safeguarding training' within the last 3 years.

Equipment

A club trip at grade C would be expected to carry a VHF radio as well as a secondary means of attracting attention (e.g. mobile phone/plb/flares/electronic flare) and a first-aid kit, warm spare clothing, spare paddle, kayak repair kit and emergency shelter.

Examples:

Lepe to Gurnard

Lepe/Lymington/Keyhaven to Newtown Creek

Lepe to Wootton Creek

Lymington – Newtown Creek (Be vigilant as the Lymington-Yarmouth ferry operates in the area and tidal flows are strong).

Ringstead to Kimmeridge bay (F3/0.5m swell)

Grade D trip

Participants

These trips are for advanced/experienced paddlers who are capable of looking after themselves in fairly testing conditions.

These trips may well extend beyond the technical Sea kayak leader remit (old 4*). They may include wind at the top end of F4 or above and swell of more than 1 metre. Ideally you would have a reliable roll in 'moderate' seas (1 m waves and above), be highly proficient and well-practised at assisted rescues and towing techniques and be able to execute a self-rescue if required. The trip may involve landing through surf or paddling through tide-races. There may be extended stretches (above 2 Nm) without the opportunity to land.

Paddlers on the trip would be very well-known to the leader (or another leader with detailed recent first-hand knowledge of their paddling skills). Participants **MUST** carry their own towline and may well carry their own vhf/plb.

Examples:

The grade D trip covers all paddles above grade C. The level of demand will depend on the wind speed/direction and tidal conditions and season and there is likely to be a high degree of 'dynamic, on-the-water' risk assessment and decision-making in addition to detailed advance trip-planning. These are possible examples

Trips involving Tide-race conditions (if there is swell or wind):

Hurst gap tide-race

Needles tide-race

Peveril Point (Swanage) tide-race

Old Harry tide race

Exposed open-crossings

Keyhaven-Needles (crossing from spit to Fort Albert)

Keyhaven Spit-Needles across Shingles

Exposed stretches of coast

Needles - Freshwater

Kimmeridge – Swanage

Lulworth – Kimmeridge

Equipment

A club trip at grade D **MUST** carry a VHF radio and other means of attracting attention (e.g. plb/flares/electronic flare) and a first-aid kit, repair kit, warm spare clothes and emergency shelter. It is likely that most participants would carry their own personal emergency location equipment.

Leaders

The leader should always have experience of paddling in conditions more severe than the trip they are leading. The leader could be

Qualified at British canoeing 'Advance sea leader' level

Or

Qualified at BC 'Sea kayak leader' level with significant experience of paddling in the range of level D conditions in the location and significant experience of leading groups of paddlers in the possible conditions.

Or

The leader has extensive recent experience of paddling in level D conditions in the location and extensive experience of leading groups of paddlers in the possible conditions. The leader can demonstrate a high level of current skills in essential rescue/towing skills (e.g. in club rescue practice sessions). They are likely to have completed the BC sea kayak

leader training and open-water navigation/ tidal planning courses or have extensive experience of planning sea trips in tidal conditions.

There MUST be a first aider on the trip (qualified within the last three years (at least the 8 hour outdoor course) *Please also check with your group who else is first-aid trained and make everyone aware.*

The leader MUST have completed the online 'Introduction to safeguarding training' within the last 3 years.