

Getting Technical ~ RACING KAYAK TECHNIQUE

Forward Stroke Technique

In a racing kayak, the paddler distributes his or her weight evenly over the seat, bends the knees at approximately 135-150 degrees (a comfortable angle) and places the feet on the footrest. This position allows the legs and hips to be used in conjunction with the torso and arms to apply power to the paddle. This is the key to effective racing kayak technique.



1. SETUP (right side)

The Setup is a very important part of the forward stroke that should be emphasized with paddlers as they work on their racing technique. As the paddler prepares for a stroke, he or she rotates forward at the hip, twists the torso, reaches forward with the shoulder and the lower arm for the Catch. The top arm is bent at approximately 90 to 100 degrees with the top hand at ear level. The paddle side leg is bent and is 'cocked' and ready to be straightened.

Demonstrate this position with the bottom arm straight just before the catch.

Note: Pausing just before the Catch can be a helpful drill to emphasize the setup position.

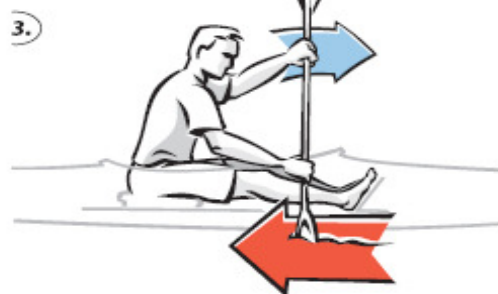
CATCH

The Catch is the beginning of the application of power. The blade is buried in the water by both arms pushing down on the shaft. The lower arm is kept straight. Words such as 'lock,' 'submerge,' or 'sink' the blade describe the need for intensity at this phase. The paddle side leg is pushing against the footrest.



3. DRAW

With the blade fully submerged and 'locked' in the water, pressure is continuously applied down the shaft by both arms. Simultaneously, the leg on the paddle side straightens and the foot presses against the footrest, the hip joint counter-rotates and the torso counter-rotates. These combined actions use the larger muscles to **Draw the paddler (and the kayak) to the paddle.** Throughout this phase, the paddle should stay parallel to the kayak. The lower arm is straight at the beginning of the phase but it bends at the elbow to allow the path of the paddle to remain parallel to the boat. As the paddle side shoulder counter-rotates back, the top arm and shoulder simultaneously extend forward.



Kayak Forward Stroke



Coaching Hints: Balance is often attained faster in the kayak due to lower body centre of gravity; consequently, technique can be addressed sooner. As with canoe, do not work on too many technical aspects at once. See balance drills in Appendix A. Try using a racing kayak without a seat to lower the centre of gravity until balance is established.



4. RECOVERY

Throughout the Draw phase, the top shoulder and arm are reaching forward in preparation for the Setup on the opposite side. At the same time, as the paddling side leg is straightening and the torso counter-rotating throughout the Draw phase, the non-paddling side leg is bending and the torso is twisting forward. In the recovery phase, these actions are being completed in anticipation of the Setup and the Catch phases. In the Recovery phase, there is a slight relaxation. The paddler should keep the head up, look forward and begin 'eying' the Catch.



5. EXIT

When the blade reaches the hip, it is pulled sideways and out of the water. The exit should not slow the boat.

SETUP (left side)



In General

Teaching hint: Have the paddler keep his or her chest parallel with the shaft of the blade, or use the analogy of the washing machine rotating back and forth.

Teaching hint: Think of the two arms and torso forming a 'U' shape, and as the paddler rotates, the 'U' never loses its shape, i.e. The arms, torso and paddle move as a unit.

Teaching principle: All force should be applied to the forward motion of the boat. Any sideways motions should be eliminated.