

# Paddler Competencies

By Tim Sindle and Lynn Parker

Each additional/higher grade must include all the previous skills, experience, gear to progress forward. This information is to be used for informal self, peer and leader assessment of RCC members and is not part of any formal qualifications.

GRADE	SKILLS	EXPERIENCE	GEAR	RIVER EXAMPLE
<b>Flat water</b>  <b>SO1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Setting up the boat</li> <li>Getting in and out of boat, the launch and active paddling posture</li> <li>Forward / Reverse and turning paddle strokes, emergency stopping</li> <li>Basic hazards awareness – boating rules</li> <li>Basic swimming in buoyancy vest</li> <li>Wet exit, and take craft to the bank, empty it and get back in</li> <li>Canoes – J stroke</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Watch the PNSW/Boating Paddle Safe Video</li> <li>Read the PNSW &amp; Waterways Guide website: Introduction to Paddling</li> <li>Refer to the AC Safety Guidelines for details</li> <li>Remain within reach of shore when swimming</li> <li>Never paddle alone (until very confident maybe?)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sit on top or open cockpit kayak or Canadian canoe with sufficient bouncy to float</li> <li>Paddle/s</li> <li>Fitting bouncy vest for non or weak swimmer</li> <li>Clothes for swimming including footwear &amp; sun protection &amp; cold</li> <li>Drinking water</li> <li>Whistle</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flat Water 10-20m from banks</li> <li>Cooks River</li> <li>Wolli Creek</li> <li>Nepean River</li> <li>Lane Cove River above Fig Tree Bridge</li> </ul>
<b>Open Water</b>  <b>SO2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brace Strokes (low)</li> <li>Forward backwards paddling</li> <li>Draw strokes</li> <li>Manage motor boat wakes</li> <li>Deep water rescues assisted</li> <li>Towing</li> <li>Above average swimming ability</li> <li>Planning for a day on the water – maps, weather, group management, departure/return times, rests, food &amp; drinks, extra clothes, equipment suitability,</li> <li>Leave a trip plan with responsible person</li> <li>Understanding of tides</li> <li>Understanding of the effect of wind and weather forecasts on open water</li> <li>Understanding of hypothermia</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multiple flat water trips</li> <li>Ability to paddle 20 km</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Skirt for closed cockpit boats</li> <li>Towline</li> <li>Knife</li> <li>pump</li> <li>Emergency clothes for changed conditions</li> <li>First aid and personal medication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inland Lakes and Estuaries greater than 20m from the bank.</li> <li>Myall Lakes</li> <li>Tallowa Dam</li> </ul>
<b>Sea Kayaking</b> <b>SO3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Surf Entry and Exit methods</li> <li>Reading waves, tides, weather</li> <li>Deepwater boat rescue/empts</li> <li>Ability to paddle water chop, waves and strong winds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multiple Open Water Trips</li> <li>Ability to paddle over 20km easily.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enclosed or sit on top boat</li> <li>Pump/bailing device</li> <li>Paddle Leash</li> <li>Group Emergency Communication Device*</li> <li>Group spare paddle*</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sydney Harbour and Jervis Bay and seas effected by tides, waves, rebound off land.</li> </ul>
<b>Sea Kayaking</b> <b>SO4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ability to paddle steepening swell and breaking seas, wind against wave or tide effects.</li> <li>Complex Surf Entry and exits and involve negotiation of surf up to 2m.</li> <li>Paddle fast currents &lt;7km/h and &lt;10km crossings or from safe landing sites</li> <li>Deepwater boat self rescue</li> <li>Eskimo roll or paddle brace</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multiple SO3 Sea Kayaking Trips and surf landings in various conditions.</li> <li>Ability to paddle over 30km easily</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enclosed or sit on top boat</li> <li>Personal Emergency Communication Device and spare paddle</li> <li>Group Flares*</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unsheltered water - the Seas within sight of land. Palm Beach across Broken Bay to McMasters Beach</li> <li>Jervis Bay around Point Perpendicular</li> <li>Broughton Island</li> </ul>
<b>Sea Kayaking</b> <b>SO5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ability to paddle large, steep swell, breaking waves and complex fast currents.</li> <li>Possible dangerous surf entries and exits &gt;2m</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multiple SO4 Sea Kayaking trips.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enclosed boat</li> <li>Personal Flares</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unsheltered coastal waters, isolated remote areas and ocean with crossings or distance from safe landing sites of up to 30km.</li> <li>Sea crossings</li> <li>Bass Strait</li> </ul>

This is not legally, morally, or bureaucratically binding, but should set a general competency indication for people to work from.



<p><b>White water 1</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wet exit</li> <li>Getting in and out of boat</li> <li>Forward / Reverse and turning paddle strokes, emergency stopping</li> <li>Basic hazards awareness – boating rules</li> <li>Basic swimming in buoyancy vest</li> <li>Active/passive swimming (WW float position)</li> <li>Wet exit, and take craft to the bank, empty it and get back in</li> <li>Canoes – J stroke</li> <li>Stern rudder</li> <li>Knowledge of river signals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Watch the Paddle Safe Video</li> <li>Read the PNSW &amp; Waterways Guide website: Introduction to Paddling</li> <li>Refer to the AC Safety Guidelines for details</li> <li>Remain within reach of shore when swimming</li> <li>Never paddle alone</li> <li>Introductory course</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paddle</li> <li>PFD</li> <li>Helmet</li> <li>Deck</li> <li>Touring boat or sit on top</li> <li>Whistle</li> <li>Clothes for conditions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moving water with a few riffles and or small regular waves. Easy passage, but care may be needed with obstacles</li> </ul>
<p><b>2</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Basic hazards (trees, rocks etc)</li> <li>Can watch after self, can affect an out of boat self rescue with help.</li> <li>Brace Strokes (low / high)</li> <li>Negotiate an eddy line, breaking in and out</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5+ flat &amp; Gr 1 white water paddles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whitewater boat</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Barrington (Bindera/Steps )</li> <li>Wollondilly (Island Bend to Goodmans Ford)</li> <li>Mitta (Jokers Section)</li> <li>Lower Kanagroo River</li> <li>Murray (Tom Grogin)</li> </ul>
<p><b>3</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confidently break in/out eddies in grade 3 water</li> <li>Good edge control</li> <li>Forward backwards ferry gliding</li> <li>Can competently watch after self and nearby others, can affect a self rescue and gear retrieval</li> <li>Competent to use and be rescued by throw rope, and know issues.</li> <li>Identify hazardous river features–sieves, strainers etc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5+ Grade 2 rivers paddled</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Throw rope, and knife</li> <li>Boat repair kit (Ductape, bolts etc)</li> <li>Pin kit, pulleys, prussic, carabineers, etc.*</li> <li>First Aid Kit*</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moppy (&lt;1m)</li> <li>Upper Wingee (Berima section)</li> <li>Upper Kanagroo River</li> <li>Shoal Haven (Powerlines)</li> <li>Lower Munyang section</li> <li>Swampy Plains (low water)</li> <li>Barrington (Cobark)</li> </ul>
<p><b>3+</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>90% roll competent</li> <li>Confidently make small eddies</li> <li>River hazard perception</li> <li>Ability to follow leader river line.</li> <li>Group paddling, following and signaling.</li> <li>Whitewater rescue techniques</li> <li>Use river features to advantage</li> <li>Can link individual strokes to form complex stroke combinations – draw sweep</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paddle PWS confidently</li> <li>10 + grade 2</li> <li>5+ grade 3</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kayaking Specific PFD</li> <li>Break down paddle*</li> <li>Comms (EPIRB / Sat Phone)*</li> <li>Compact wood saw.*</li> <li>Maps, exit plans*</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moppy (1-2.5m)</li> <li>Nymboida platypus flat to junction (&lt;1m)</li> <li>Mitta gorge (to Hinoumanje bridge)</li> <li>Bundara</li> <li>Matakitaki NZ (lower)</li> <li>Brolgers Creek</li> <li>Buller Sections (NZ )</li> <li>Thredbo, 2 pipes, (Village to Ngarigo)</li> <li>Herbert River QLD, 1.23m</li> </ul>
<p><b>4</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ability to see, and make lines (and back up lines) through complex rapids. Use of effective combination strokes</li> <li>Team awareness, communication and rescue's.</li> <li>Bomb-proof roll (99%)</li> <li>Confidently make micro, and mid-stream eddies</li> <li>Reverse ferry / eddy in / out</li> <li>Boof stroke</li> <li>Rescue competency (course or experience what to do in life/death situations)</li> <li>First aid competencies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>50+ river days, (2-3+)</li> <li>50+ days at PWS</li> <li>Make every eddy at PWS</li> <li>Confident in holes at PWS</li> <li>Regular paddling (every week)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Suitable boat for river (e.g. creek boat for creeks)</li> <li>Rescue/Harness type PFD(with knowledge of how to use it)</li> <li>Emergency bag – warm clothes, food, if applicable.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cobungra, (To Anglers Rest Camp Site)</li> <li>Moppy (2.5m+)</li> <li>Nymboida Platypus Flat to Junction (&gt; 1m)</li> <li>Murray Gates</li> <li>Wingecaribee (Joadja to Island Bend)</li> <li>Eucumbene (Kiandra to lake)</li> <li>Glenroy (NZ)</li> <li>Swampy plains (High Water)</li> <li>Upper Nymboida (To platypus flat)</li> <li>Lower Hokitika (NZ)</li> <li>Upper Munyang (2 turbines)</li> <li>Tully 44MW (Power Station to Campsite)</li> </ul>
<p><b>4+/5</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All of the above at an advanced level</li> <li>Excellent risk management understanding</li> <li>Blessings of the trip leader!</li> <li>Realistic expectation of skill level and if this is a suitable section</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>100+ river days, (2-4)</li> <li>100+ PWS days</li> <li>Specific River experience i.e. Flood / creek / big water / cold water</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Titanium balls</li> <li>Updated insurance policy</li> <li>Camera to record proof</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Upper Styx (high water) NZ</li> <li>Most Upper Sections West Coast NZ</li> <li>Gwydir</li> <li>Upper Geehi,</li> </ul>
<p><b>NOTE</b></p>	<p>Each one you need all the above plus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is a guide only different people progress at different rates. If you have less time on the river, be warned!</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each one you need all the above plus.</li> <li>* Quantity per group not necessarily per person.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is average grade e.g Wingee / Nymboida has grade 4+/5 rapids that are usually portaged.</li> <li>Rivers change with levels, so this is only a guide!</li> </ul>