



THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH'S AWARD

Paddle Expeditions



Paddle expeditions

Paddle expeditions are on the increase as an alternative to walking, as they offer a wide range of varying environments and craft where the participant can develop their skills both personally and as a member of a team. The expedition could be as wide-ranging as a journey along the local canal network, or down one of the rivers such as the Severn, Wye or Thames to a remote wilderness expedition or abroad.

One of the elements that may attract participants to undertake a paddle expedition is that you do not have to carry a rucksack on your back!

A paddle expedition gives an entirely new perspective on journeying, and the subsequent development of new skills and experience frequently leads young people into an activity which may last a lifetime. However, the levels of skill and experience may be realistically acquired in the time it takes to achieve a Bronze, Silver or Gold Award.

Paddle expeditions lend themselves very readily to exploring and provide an opportunity to engage in fresh areas of study in a stimulating environment. They also offer an exciting form of travel, which can lead to new interests, and awareness of oneself and the environment.



The craft

The open canoe with its origins in the Canadian canoes of the North American Indians and the Voyageurs is an ideal craft for expeditions. It is an excellent vehicle for carrying equipment. It allows for companionship, usually carrying two or three people, and are safe insofar as if you fall in, you fall out. Rafted open canoes or similar craft that can accommodate the whole team can be used as they provide a very stable platform.

The sea kayak is an excellent craft in which to undertake a camping expedition. With their length and keel they are easy to paddle in a straight line and there is ample room for camping equipment. Though designed for the sea, they are suitable for use on the type of river involved in DofE expeditions, and paddlers who camp and travel long distances prefer them.

There are also an increasing number of purpose-built touring kayaks becoming available, which are ideal for DofE expeditions. The low volume white water kayak, though providing excellent sport and used in vast numbers throughout the country, is not a very suitable craft in which to carry out a journey, as there is rarely enough room to carry camping gear and food. Many young people find them difficult and tiresome to paddle in a straight line for hours at a stretch. They are exciting and very good for training and mastering kayaking skills but, as far as the DofE is concerned, they are more suited to the Physical section.



Team composition

For those undertaking paddle expeditions the minimum number in any expedition team should be four. Where tandem canoes/kayaks or craft designed for multiple occupancy are used the maximum team size should be eight (otherwise seven as for other modes of travel).

The number of craft in the team must be agreed by the Operating Authority/Approved Activity Provider after an appropriate risk assessment has been undertaken.

Water

Access to canals is easy in the UK. Many young people will start their DofE canoeing experience in this type of environment and even in large urban areas canals can offer unique opportunities. Access to rivers in the United Kingdom is often difficult, except where they have been turned into navigations or there is a tradition of access. Navigations usually involve the lower reaches of rivers which, in many cases, are still used for commerce and recreational boating. They include many local canals and rivers, such as the Severn, the Wye, the Yorkshire Ouse, the Great Ouse, the Thames and the Trent.

Paddlers require licences for all English and Scottish canals and some canalised rivers. The British Canoe Union has negotiated a special arrangement with the British Waterways Board/Thames Licence whereby their waters are included in the BCU Licence, which is included as part of BCU membership. Separate licences are required for many of the larger rivers, such as the Great Ouse. The relevant details may be obtained from the local BCU Access Officers.

On the continent there are thousands of miles of suitable rivers used by tens of thousands of touring paddlers on a scale difficult to imagine in Britain. Most have their source in the Alps or the Massif Central. While their upper reaches have limited place in the Expedition section and their lower reaches are frequently polluted and highly commercialised, the middle sections, often extending for hundreds of miles, are a delight for paddlers.

The Dordogne, the Ardèche, the Rhine, the Rhône and the Danube are typical examples and provide wonderful, stimulating environments for paddle expeditions. Some rivers have been canalised with locks, and licences may be required.

Where to carry out the expedition

Participants should choose water which is suitable for the aim of the expedition and the type of craft and, above all else, that is well within the competence and experience of the participants. One of the principal conditions of the Expedition section is that **all expeditions should be self-sufficient and unaccompanied.**

The choice of where an expedition is carried out will depend to a large extent on its aim, but referring to guides will assist choice. These guides provide detailed advice on rivers as well as details of access and rights of passage. The BCU will also be able to give advice on many of the overseas waterways, or tell you where the information is available.



The weight and bulk of camping gear and food should be kept to a minimum when paddling. Portages are not only at the beginning and end of the day but frequently during the journey itself around weirs, locks and some rapids. British Waterways does not allow some craft to use locks, unlike the Environment Agency, Thames Region.

You will need to check with the relevant agency/authorities with regard to whether you can access locks or whether they have to be portaged. Portage can be a strenuous activity, especially for younger participants, and frequently involves several trips between the place of disembarkation and re-embarkation.

It is important, for health and safety reasons, to train all participants in effective lifting procedures.

Paddling requirements

The requirements for paddling expeditions are the same as those for all other DofE expeditions. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award has developed a set of guidelines to assist coaches/trainers of paddle expeditions in developing their own training programmes, set out on page 8 of this document.

A number of these key elements have been taken directly from the BCU awards that are appropriate to the expedition being undertaken. The training requirements programme has been developed to identify the additional training required to ensure that participants can expedition safely with remote supervision in the chosen environment.

The coach/trainer should identify and use those elements of the training programme that they feel will fulfil the 20 conditions of the DofE's Expedition section.

The nature of paddling expeditions is such that the minimum training requirements for all expeditions is the Silver Expedition Training Framework.

Conditions

Participants using inland waters must observe the Countryside Code. All participants must know the Water Sports Code, the basic rules of the water – priorities, the sound signals used on water and distress signals.

They must also know the courtesies, customs and etiquette associated with boating and sailing.

All participants must be adequately trained to:

- Demonstrate that their equipment is waterproofed.
- Satisfy the Assessor that their craft, equipment and clothing is suitable for the expedition.
- Satisfy the Assessor as to their competence.
- Ensure they meet the 20 conditions of the Expedition section.

Training

The requirements are split into three sections:

- The Expedition Training Framework, which is compulsory for all expeditions.
- Core Paddling Skills, which are compulsory for all paddling expeditions.
- Skills that are specific to the environment.

The trainer will need to develop the programme to meet the aim of the expedition and the needs of the participants. Trainers will need to select the appropriate elements specific to the environment in which the expedition will take place. Reference must be made to any additional Operating Authority/AAP requirements. Many Operating Authorities/AAPs will require appropriately qualified coaches, such as those holding BCU qualifications, to deliver this training. There is no substitute for experience and days should be spent on the water until the craft becomes an extension of oneself or the team and the paddler is at home in the environment. When the basic skills have been acquired, it is essential that experience be built up using the same kind of water that is to be used for the qualifying expedition.





Equipment

All craft must be sound, suitable and fitted out for the conditions in which they are to be used. They must have integrated buoyancy, or buoyancy which is securely attached to the boat. Boats must have bow and stern toggles, or loops, or buoyant painters fore and aft which are properly secured.

Personal and expedition equipment

Participants should refer to the equipment list on www.DofE.org/go/expeditionkit. Most equipment is the same for all modes of travel with adjustments being made where necessary.

The list below is intended as a starting point when considering additional equipment for paddling expeditions:

- Buoyancy aid or life-jacket as appropriate, with whistle attached
- Repair kit
- Bivvy bag (poly-bag)
- Waterproof or water-resistant watch
- Knife
- Maps/charts in or with water resistant protection
- Matches in waterproof container
- Personal first aid kit
- Throw line/towline
- Emergency rations
- Water-resistant torch with spare bulb and batteries
- Notebook and pencil
- Spare paddle (per boat)
- Coins/phone card for telephone
- A bailer and large sponge
- Compass
- Flares (if relevant to the environment)
- Helmets should be considered where relevant to the environment.

Clothing

The list of personal equipment given on www.DofE.org/go/expeditionkit will provide a basis for the kit list for paddling expeditions. This equipment can be supplemented with appropriate specialised clothing. Considerations must be made for the environment that the participants will be working in. Shade is often unavailable and therefore protection for the head, hands and feet is particularly important. Feet must be protected at all times – old trainers may be used. The ability to carry and keep a complete change of clothing dry is essential.

Personal and team camping equipment

This equipment list is the same for land and water expeditions, although paddlers are often able to carry more equipment for comfort. Craft, paddling and portaging (if required) must be considered when equipment is selected.

Food and drink

Paddle expeditions offer the opportunity for a wide and varied menu. This can include fresh produce and tinned food which could not be carried on a foot expedition. Teams are also able to take water filtration units for wilderness expeditions. Expeditions on salt water will have other issues.



Waterproofing equipment

All clothing, plus much of the camping gear and food, will need to be protected in waterproof containers or dry bags. Large plastic drums with an efficient seal are popular with open canoeists. Waterproof bags inside rucksacks are an alternative, being particularly useful at portages and adjusting the trim of the craft. Whatever method of waterproofing is used, it must be effective. Spare clothing and sleeping bags should be given the additional protection of being individually sealed by whatever waterproofing method is chosen.

In all craft the storage of equipment affects the trim and stability. Equipment should be stored to ensure that the craft is appropriately trimmed for the prevailing conditions, and heavy items stored as low as possible to increase stability.

Supervision

The Supervisor must be approved by the Operating Authority and is the person responsible for the safety and welfare of the participant whilst on their expedition. They must be familiar with their role and responsibilities.

Supervisors must have considerable experience of water similar to that being used, be competent in assessing water and weather conditions and must be approved by their Operating Authority/AAP. For all paddle expeditions the Supervisor must be in the area of the expedition.

The BCU offers appropriate qualifications for paddlesport coaches to operate in the environment of the expedition, but these should not be seen in isolation and experience should also be seen a valuable asset.

Rivers and canals:

Assessed expeditions should be self-sufficient and unaccompanied. It is usual in this environment to supervise teams by meeting them at checkpoints during the day. Supervisors do not need to be on the water to do this, and should not need to shadow or follow teams on the water. If Supervisors feel that this is necessary then either the team is not sufficiently well trained, or the team is in an inappropriate environment.

Sheltered estuaries or sheltered coastal waters:

The Supervisor must provide safety cover afloat. Contact should not be made with the team during the expedition except for the needs of supervision. The safety cover must be sufficiently remote from the participants to avoid destroying the team's sense of remoteness and self-sufficiency and yet be able to render assistance in an emergency within a reasonable amount of time. The safety cover may consist of the Supervisor and the Assessor, who will be appropriately qualified and experienced, shadowing the team at an appropriate distance. Where a safety boat is used it must be sufficiently seaworthy and fitted out to cope with any water conditions which may arise in the sea area being used. It is desirable that all craft used on open water should be highly visible.



Assessment

The Assessor must be familiar with their role and responsibilities and must be accredited through the DofE's Expedition Assessor Accreditation Scheme. Assessors must be technically competent and authorised by either the Operating Authority or the AAP to assess on water.

Many of the DofE's Assessor Networks have expert paddlers among their members who are qualified and willing to assess paddle expeditions.

At Bronze and Silver the Assessor should not be involved in any training or instruction of the team. At Gold level they must be totally independent of the DofE centre and not associated with the team in any way.

Assessors need to be flexible to cope with changes of plan and should have sufficient time at their disposal to enable them to adapt to the needs of the expedition. As with all expeditions, there should be close liaison with the team and the Supervisor before, and at agreed times during, the expedition.

Holding a BCU coaching qualification does not give the automatic right to assess DofE expeditions.



Who can deliver a paddle expedition?

When an Operating Authority or DofE centre does not have the necessary paddlesport coaches to be able to deliver the training required for an expedition they can use the help of BCU-approved coaches, clubs or centres. The delivery of the practice or qualifying expedition must, however, be delivered by DofE Leaders or staff who are registered with the Operating Authority, or by an Approved Activity Provider (AAP).

AAPs are either individuals or companies who have been approved by the DofE and have had their expedition programme approved to ensure that it meets the requirements of the DofE. **It is not therefore possible for individual coaches to deliver DofE expeditions unless they are either registered with an Operating Authority, or are registered as an AAP.**

Training of Supervisors and Assessors

The Expedition Supervisors Training Course has been designed to help them understand their role and responsibilities and appropriate levels of supervision. The Expedition Assessors Accreditation Scheme provides an accreditation route for Expedition Assesors. All Assessors must be accredited before working on DofE expeditions. For details of training courses for Expedition Supervisors and Assessors please see www.DofE.org/opportunities All courses are appropriate for foot and water Supervisors/Assessors.

Training programme requirements

Training programmes should incorporate both canoe training and those skills specific to the environment.

Core training

Lift and carry

- Know how to safely lift and carry the craft. Lift and carry if boat allows. Safe portaging techniques relevant to the environment.

Launching and disembarking

- Know the importance of safe manual handling enabling participants to launch and recover craft from a variety of locations including steep, slippery banks.

Loading and storage of kit

- Know how to waterproof kit properly and how to load the craft efficiently and secure kit within the craft. Secure craft on to trailers or vehicles.

Forward paddling

- Demonstrate the ability to paddle forwards in an efficient and economical manner. Participants should demonstrate a fluent and rhythmical paddling stroke including, where required, simple steering strokes to enable them to maintain good cruising speed and control.

Reverse paddling and stopping

- Demonstrate slowing and stopping the craft using controlled reverse paddling strokes.

Turning

- Ability to turn the craft whilst stationary and whilst on the move using appropriate strokes (there is no requirement for specific strokes providing the craft can be manoeuvred effectively).

Moving sideways

- Ability to sideslip the craft to avoid obstacles in the way of the craft or to come alongside (there is no requirement for specific strokes providing the craft can be manoeuvred effectively).

Capsize and recovery

- Ability to self-rescue – swimming self, paddle and boat to shore, recover, empty and re-launch craft.
- Where the craft cannot be capsized demonstrate ability to recover paddlers and kit back aboard.

Rescues (where craft permits capsize drills)

- Demonstrate ability to be rescued from craft.
- Appropriate rescue techniques for rescuing paddler and craft – appropriate to the environment, for example throw line techniques suitable for moving water.

Rescues (where capsize is not possible)

- Be able to rescue a team member back on to the boat.
- Perform an all in rescue where all team members have to get back onto the boat.
- Man overboard drill.

Towing

- Simple towing techniques (flexible and adaptable).

First aid/health & safety

- This should include water borne elements including secondary drowning, leptospirosis and aquatic hypothermia.

Ongoing risk assessment

- The ability to make decisions based on the weather and water conditions, for example being weather-bound.

Equipment

- Selection and maintenance of equipment.
- Care and simple repair of equipment.

'No trace' camping

- Include methods of disposing of human, food, cooking and dirty water waste. Local advice on these matters should be sought and followed.

Skills specific to the environment

	Expedition Training Framework	Additional paddling/safety requirements <i>The skills here should be matched to the training requirements of the environment.</i>
Placid water	All elements of the Silver Expedition Training Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be able to recognise weirs and outflows and be able to avoid them. - Know how to manoeuvre the craft using painters or bow and stern lines to move around or through obstacles such as locks. - Understand the basic rules of travel on the waterways and how to approach and pass other craft. - The safe use of locks if appropriate for the type of craft. - Understand how to trim the boat correctly for different weather conditions. - Rafting boats together and constructing a simple downwind sail. - Be able to effectively rescue loaded boats in deep water.
Moving water up to Grade 2	All elements of the Gold Expedition Training Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be able to recognise weirs and outflows and be able to avoid them. - Know how to manoeuvre the craft using painters or bow and stern lines to move around or through obstacles such as locks. - Understand the basic rules of travel on the waterways and how to approach and pass other craft. - The safe use of locks if appropriate for the type of craft. - Understand how to trim the boat correctly for different weather conditions. - Rafting boats together and constructing a simple downwind sail. - Be able to effectively rescue loaded boats in deep water. - Have a basic understanding of river hydrology to be able to identify submerged rocks, strainers and similar hazards, selecting safe passages around obstacles. - Be able to break in and out of the flow. - Be able to make an eddy. - Demonstrate forward and reverse ferry gliding and the ability to hold position on the river in a flow. - Demonstrate the ability to line the boat through areas of shallow water or rapids and wading. - The ability to estimate the speed of the water. - Ability to determine if water levels are rising or falling.
Lakes and estuaries	All elements of the Gold Expedition Training Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understand how to trim the boat correctly for different weather conditions. - Rafting boats together and constructing a simple downwind sail. - Be able to effectively rescue loaded boats in deep water. - Be able to deal with multiple capsizes in deep water. - Canoe sailing (where appropriate). - Additional navigation skills appropriate to the environment - Use of flares. - Understanding tidal effects.
Large lakes and coastal conditions	All elements of the Gold Expedition Training Framework	<p>All of the elements from 'Lakes and estuaries' plus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Safe landing techniques, to include surfing for sea expeditions. - Reading the water (white caps/white horses, tides). - Maritime weather forecasts. - VHF radios.

The expedition process

Preparation

The team will spend time planning what their aim is, where they want to go, what time of year is most appropriate, who will be in the team and what they will do during the expedition. They will also need to consider any specific needs within the team members.

Having done this then the in-depth planning will begin with the team members studying maps and guides, and preparing route cards. A water specific route card is downloadable from www.DofE.org/go/downloads. The route card helps the team ensure that their expedition is achievable and gives vital information for the team when on their expedition. It ensures that they know if they are keeping to time and highlights any hazards or difficulties in the stretch ahead.

The team will also record their plans in eDofE.

Training

The team will undertake training in the following areas:

- First aid and emergency procedures
- An awareness of risk and health and safety issues
- Navigation and route planning
- Campcraft, equipment and hygiene
- Food and cooking
- Countryside, and watersports codes
- Observation and recording
- Teambuilding
- Proficiency in the mode of travel.

Practice

The team will undertake at least one practice expedition. This will allow them to be unaccompanied, whilst being in a supportive environment, with any deficiencies in training or equipment being identified and corrected.

Expedition

The team will complete a qualifying expedition which meets the 20 conditions of the Expedition section. At the end of the expedition they will be debriefed by their Assessor and then sometime following this the team will give a presentation on their expedition.



Post-expedition

The team will upload their evidence from their expedition to eDofE along with photos and their Assessor's report.

For more details on the expedition process please consult the expedition chapter in *The Handbook for DofE Leaders (6th edition)*.

Timescales for qualifying expeditions

Level	Duration	Minimum hours of planned activity each day
Bronze	2 days and 1 night	At least 6 hours during the daytime (at least 3 of which must be spent journeying)
Silver	3 days and 2 nights	At least 7 hours during the daytime (at least 3½ of which must be spent journeying)
Gold	4 days and 3 nights	At least 8 hours during the daytime (at least 4 of which must be spent journeying)

The 20 conditions of the Expedition section

- 1:** All expeditions must be by the participants' own physical effort, without motorised or outside assistance.
- 2:** All expeditions must be unaccompanied and self-sufficient.
- 3:** All expeditions must be supervised by an adult who is able to accept responsibility for the safety of the team.
- 4:** The expedition must have an aim.
- 5:** All participants must be properly equipped.
- 6:** Participants must have completed the required training and practice expeditions.
- 7:** At least one practice expedition must be undertaken at each level of the programme, in the same mode of travel in a similar environment to the qualifying expedition.
- 8:** The team must plan and organise the expedition.
- 9:** Assessment must be by an approved accredited Assessor.
- 10:** There must be between four and seven in a team (eight for modes of travel which have tandem).
- 11:** All participants must be within the qualifying age of the programme level.
- 12:** Participants must be at the same level of assessment.
- 13:** The team must not include those who have completed the same or higher level expedition.
- 14:** Accommodation should be by camping.
- 15:** The expedition must be of the correct duration.
- 16:** The expedition should normally take place between the end of March and the end of October.
- 17:** The expedition should take place in the recommended environment.
- 18:** The expedition must meet the minimum hours of planned activity.
- 19:** A substantial meal should be cooked and eaten by participants each day.
- 20:** A presentation must be prepared and delivered after the expedition.



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