

PADDLER



BALANCE DRILLS

FLATWATER

OCEAN



BALANCE DRILLS

“Balance is power”

The two main goals in kayaking are to maximise propulsive forces and minimise active drag. To achieve this, paddlers need to maximise their balance and technique. Paddlers with good stability can apply more power to move the boat forward.

This resource has been designed to give paddlers ideas to develop balance, control, feeling, co- ordination and to have fun.

The following drills are a guide for coaches and athletes to use as ideas when practising balance drills. It is important to perform these drills in a safe environment and to have the skills to perform or teach these drills. Always consult an expert if you are unsure.



Why is it important to practice balance exercises?

- To develop feeling and co-ordination
- To develop connection and control with your boat and body
- The exercises are fun and challenging

In many cases, positions/movements that are associated with good technique also challenge balance, so without good balance it's hard to improve paddling technique.

What can influence balance and stability?

Core

- Ability to activate/recruit and control muscles. In particular abdominals, hip flexors, and glutes.

Sitting Position

- Sitting in the middle of the kayak seat

Type of Craft

- Wider boats are generally more stable as they increase the paddler's base of support.
- The height of seat influences balance by changing the height of the athlete's centre of mass relative to the water. The higher the seat, the more challenging for balance.

Neural Adaptation

- Balance can be improved with time and practice.

Connection

- With the foot rest and seat of the kayak
- Using opposite body parts to compensate either side of the center of gravity. For example, pushing down with one leg in your kayak but at the same time pulling against your foot strap or bar with the opposite leg. This also helps keep weight transfer onto the blade by lightening the load on the opposite hip which is coming forward.

What to focus on when performing the drills?

- Establishing a good connection with the footrest and seat
- Sitting upright, slightly in front of vertical and with a long spine
- Engaged lower abdominals and bring the centre of mass lower
- Keeping shoulders relaxed with shoulder blades set back and down
- Keep the neck and head relaxed, stationary and in a neutral position
- Slow, controlled, purposeful movements
- These drills should be fun and paddlers should be encouraged to push their boundaries and be outside their comfort zone. Falling in should be encouraged – you'll only improve if you challenge yourself.



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Remember, be patient, kayak balance takes a long time to develop

When should balance drills be performed?

Each drill can also be modified or progressed for specific needs and can be incorporated into the athletes training in two ways.

Daily warmup

Spending about 5-10 minutes at the start of the session and 5-10 minutes at the end of the session is a great way to incorporate technical development into an athletes training program. Ideally spend at least one minute on each drill.

Designated session

Balance can make up a session where the sole focus is working through the drills that need to be done to improve the paddlers technique and efficiency.

When performing the balance drills, start with smaller volume or duration. Slowly increase the volume, difficulty and the number of repetitions. Always focus on promoting 'good technique/posture/feel/control' when performing the drills.

Remember if you are not challenging yourself and slowly increasing your comfort zone you will not further develop your balance.

In order to develop your balance – don't forget to develop your control out of the boat. Functional movement, coordination and abb/muscle activation/control are critical components of balance.

Above all adapt and play – think of new ways to be innovative.

Ways to make the drills more challenging

- Perform balance drills in slightly choppy water/ light winds
- Perform drills with eyes closed
- Increase the height of seat
- Perform drills in a narrow kayak
- Perform drills with a swivel seat

Try to adapt the drills above and to perform with a partner

- Paper/scissors/rock – 1 handed – progress to two handed
- Start hold drill – who can hold the longest
- Air strokes – who can do 10 the fastest
- Hot potato – progress to throw left handed



More adventurous and challenging drills

Extreme caution needed when attempting these.

- Throw paddle above and catch behind you
- Take an extra thermal off while staying in the boat
- Holding the paddle vertically out to the side
- Juggling tennis balls
- Rotate 360 while staying in the boat
- Rolling the boat
- Standing in your boat
- Paddling with left handed paddles
- Paddling with different angles
- Paddling with back of the blades

Balance drills



Balancing with paddle in the water without the kayak moving



Balancing with the paddle out of the water



Balancing with paddle out of the water while rotating from the hips - try with no paddle



Balance with one hand on paddle



Play paper, scissors, rocks with a friend

Balance drills



Balance with no paddle in hands



Balance with hands above your head holding the paddle



Balance with hands above your head with no paddle



Balance with paddle above head and lean forward to back

Balance drills



Balance with hands above your head holding your paddle and rotate



Or try with no paddle, balance with no paddle above your head holding your paddle and rotate



Pass the paddle under the kayak from one side to another

Balance drills



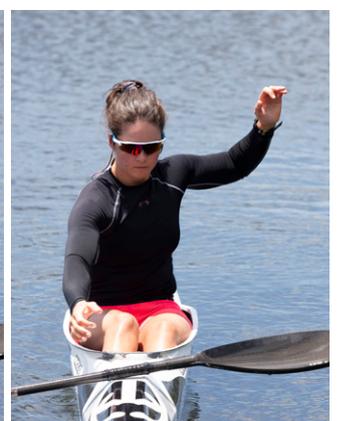
Start position hold with paddle



Start position hold without paddle



Start position hold with arm to the side



Imaginary paddling with your eyes closed

Balance drills



Heads, shoulders, knees and toes



Paddle spin 360 above your head



Hand paddling



Throwing a ball in your preferred and non preferred hand



Balance drills



Holding the paddle horizontal out to the side



'Javelin' Throw paddle in front of you



Sculling - scull performing small figure of eights while keeping the boat flat

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