

FOUR STAR TEST

CLOSED COCKPIT KAYAK

AIM

The test is designed to indicate that the candidate has sufficient proficiency to undertake a journey as a member of a group being led on grade 2 water.

Holding the 4 Star Test is a requirement for attending a training course for the qualification of Level 3 Coach

PRE-REQUISITES

BCU 3 Star Test. Where a candidate does not hold this award a small cross-section of the 1 to 3 Star tests techniques should be incorporated at the assessor's discretion.

ASSESSMENT AND VENUE

The emphasis is now on skills suitable for moving water and exposed open water, requiring the paddler to perform appropriate and effective manoeuvres rather than to be able to perform a set repertoire of strokes.

A perfect performance is not required, more importantly the candidate should satisfy the assessor that he or she is competent to handle the kayak safely as a member of a group being led on a one day trip down grade 2 water. Assessment should ideally take place over a day trip on a river containing grade 2 sections or sites of equivalent difficulty.

ASSESSOR

Level 3 Kayak Coach or higher with A1* Assessor status

THEORY

- a question or two of a similar level should be asked under each heading

Equipment

Show a good knowledge of kayak, paddle and personal equipment

Safety

Be aware of the dangers and problems associated with paddling on moving water, and the position which should be adopted if swimming in fast moving water.

Hypothermia/first aid

Show a good understanding of immersion hypothermia, its causes and symptoms. Be able to deal with basic first aid incidents - eg, a cut forehead or hand - or hold a first aid certificate.

Access

Be aware of the difficulties of paddling on British waters, and how to gain information on access to rivers and lakes. Be aware of the problems of canoeing on private waters and how great sensitivity needs to be shown when launching and landing: ie, towards residents, land owners, farmers, anglers.





Environment

Be aware of the policy set out in the BCU leaflet '*Earning a Welcome*' and show appreciation of the need to avoid obvious disturbance to wildlife such as playing 'hide and seek' around reed beds.

Planning

Show an understanding of what is involved in planning a trip down a river, such as access and egress, equipment requirements, significance of a weather forecast, shuttle procedures, lunch stops, contingency plans.

General

The candidate should have a good understanding of the types of canoeing in which they are involved, and know something about the range of activities which the sport incorporates, together with an awareness of one or more of the competitive forms of canoeing which have World Championships or Olympic status, and Britain's performance in them.

Group awareness

The candidate to show that he or she has an understanding of the importance of self control when travelling with a group on grade II or open water, and the problems which could occur without positive group discipline.

Map and compass

The candidate should be able to align a map, work out the distance between two points, and identify any particular features which would indicate position, comprehend compass 'variation', and have an understanding of how to use a transit when paddling on open water.

CANDIDATE'S KAYAK AND EQUIPMENT

Each candidate will present him or herself suitably equipped for the test. All equipment should be both suitable and serviceable, and borrowed equipment will be judged as though it is the candidate's own. Where equipment is found wanting then the candidate should not be assessed. If the open water work and river work are tested on different days, full equipment should be presented on both occasions.

The following items of equipment should be presented for inspection:

1. **Kayak and paddle.** The kayak MUST be fitted with a minimum of 6.5Kg (60N) securely fixed buoyancy at each end of the kayak, but it is recommended that boats are fitted with total buoyancy (eg inherent buoyancy supplemented with air bags). End grabs must be provided and be suitable for carrying out rescues without trapping the hand. Where safety lines are used they must be taut and not capable of coming loose accidentally, or fouling the cockpit area.
2. **Personal clothing.** Personal clothing should be appropriate to the expected conditions, and should include windproof and waterproof clothing.
3. **Buoyancy aid, helmet and spray cover.** A buoyancy aid of minimum 50N inherent buoyancy should be worn. A lifejacket may be substituted in which case the candidate should know under what conditions it should be inflated, and should demonstrate its inflation and deflation. Helmets must provide adequate protection for the

head and be securely fastened. The spray cover must be fitted with an efficient release strap

4. **Simple first aid kit and repair kit.** The first aid kit should be appropriate to the level of first aid knowledge required under the *Theory* section. The repair kit should be appropriate to the type of kayak used.
5. **Spare clothing.** Adequate spare clothing should be carried. The clothing should be applicable to the prevailing conditions and suitable for use in a bivvy bag to prevent hypothermia.
6. **Packed lunch.** A packed lunch and equipment for providing a hot drink (may be a vacuum flask) should be carried.
7. **Emergency equipment for personal use.** This should include: emergency food; whistle; exposure (bivvy) bag of minimum size 1.8m by 0.9m (6' by 3'); torch; matches or lighter.
8. **Waterproof kit bag(s).** Spare equipment must be stored in appropriately secured, waterproof kit bag(s) and must remain dry even after a capsized.

PRACTICAL ON FLAT WATER

1. **Rolling.** Where the kayak is of appropriate design the candidate should be able to demonstrate a roll. It is permissible to allow the candidate to set him or herself up before capsizing. A roll on one side only is required. Provided the rest of the candidate's performance is sound, an inability to roll is not a fail factor in itself.
2. **Rescue and tow as for white water.** The candidate to rescue a capsized canoeist by competently towing him or her a distance of 10m. A tow line is not required. At least two forms of carry should be shown and the candidate should show a knowledge of the advantages and disadvantages of both.

PRACTICAL ON GRADE 2 WATER

1. **Forward paddling.** A competent demonstration of forward paddling throughout the day trip, using strokes which should be polished, fluent and adaptive.

Throughout the test the candidate should demonstrate the elements of good paddling technique. A committed catch, good rotation, leg drive, upright comfortable posture at a fast cruising pace whilst maintaining accurate control of the kayak. Common sense should be applied when judging paddling technique taking into account variation in physique and personal style.

2. **Stopping and reverse ferry gliding.** Stopping and reverse ferry gliding should be used to alter the candidate's position on the river with a view to selecting a suitable line down a rapid and also for avoiding obstacles. The candidate's demonstration should also include the safe negotiation of bends where the main current sets under trees.

Whilst demonstrating reverse ferry gliding, it is not envisaged that the candidate need enter and leave the main current, but rather that they should be able to perform the manoeuvres whilst in the main current.

3. **Breaking out.** Breaking out of the main current into eddies should demonstrate anticipation and early positioning, and the use of appropriate strokes throughout the manoeuvre. The candidate should also demonstrate the correct speed and angle of approach, together with a positive and early grip of the stationary water in the eddy. The kayak should come to rest high up the eddy, just inside the eddy line and parallel to it.





4. **Breaking in.** This manoeuvre will be achieved by resolving such factors as speed of current, size of eddy, tilt and the desired position in the river after the break in. Initial positioning in the eddy and the angle of exit. Initial positioning in the eddy and the angle of exit allied to the correct speed and degree of edging should be evident and appropriate for the particular eddy. Be aware of a charge out that ends with either a stall in mid-current or an inadvertent entry into an eddy on the opposite bank.
5. **Upstream (forward) ferry gliding.** The candidate should aim to cross a consistent and moderate grade 2 flow that is 10m wide without any loss of height, or a 20m wide flow with no more than a kayak length loss. Allowance needs to be made for the specific water conditions. It is important that the ferry angle is appropriate and maintained through the manoeuvre.
6. **Use of throwbag.** Demonstrate throwing a throw bag to rescue a swimmer descending a grade 2 rapid, 10m from the bank. It is not envisaged that anyone should need to swim down the river (e.g. a twig could be used as the target) but the assessor should be satisfied that the rope would land over the swimmer, and that the rescuer would not be pulled off balance.

The candidate should be able to demonstrate a basic waist/shoulder belay for accepting a load.
7. **Surf small waves.** The candidate should show an ability to cross the current using a small wave (a 30cm or 1 foot wave is more than adequate).
8. **Paddle into and out of small stoppers.** It is crucial that the candidate (and the assessor) can recognise 'friendly' stoppers. Having identified such a stopper the candidate should be able to paddle into it and then leave it. An upright body position with a smooth but lightly held brace is important, the boat having a small but steady downstream edge. The brace should be active i.e. supporting and paddling the candidate either forward or backward towards the end or the break in the stopper. The candidate's ability to recognise friendly or difficult stoppers (particularly in weirs) is more important than the ability to be able to perform well in them.

Journeying

1. Provide evidence of at least 3 self contained journeys of at least 4 hours travelling time (equivalent to about 20km paddling under normal touring conditions). At least two different rivers must be involved, one of which must contain grade 2 sections. Different sections of a river may be counted as different rivers so long as there is no overlap. Where lakes are included as suitable trips then at least one of the journeys must have been on a grade 2 river.
2. Demonstrate a basic ability to follow a compass bearing and locate the position on an OS map.