Canoeing – Level 2

Overall Warning:
Canoeing is an inherently dangerous activity that can result in serious injury or death. We recommend that you seek proper training and equipment before attempting this activity. We also recommend that the first time out be with an experienced canoeist. A life vest is required for all who participate in this sport.

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Level 2 - How to Back Paddle a Canoe

Turn in your seat, and paddle the opposite direction to put your canoe in reverse. This paddling technique is especially useful for getting out of navigational mishaps.		

	Steps:
1.	Kneeling in your canoe, turn your shoulders 90 degrees toward your paddling side.
2.	Look toward the back of the canoe.
3.	Reach your paddle back, and insert the blade into water a foot or two behind you.
4.	Push with your top hand and pull with your bottom hand to draw water toward the front of the canoe.
	Tips:
1	Avoid bringing the shaft of the paddle across your body. Instead, keep the paddle shaft vertical to the water. This will give your stroke much more power.
2	Reach back as far as you can without altering your kneeling posture.
3	If you are canoeing with a partner, make sure you are working together as you reverse the direction of your canoe.

Level 2 - How to Draw-Stroke Paddle a Canoe

The drawstroke paddle maneuver is useful for moving the canoe sideways and for quickly changing the direction of the canoe.	

	Steps:
1.	Position yourself in a well-braced sitting or kneeling position.
2.	Hold the paddle with your inside hand on its top and your water-side hand 2 feet down the shaft.
3.	Reach out over the edge of the canoe as far as you can without losing your balance. To move the canoe sideways, reach on the side that is the same as the direction you wish to go. For quick turns, reach in the direction you want your end to turn.
4.	Insert the blade of the paddle into the water. Your lower arm should be fully extended and your top arm should be bent.
5.	Straighten your top arm and bend your lower arm, drawing the blade of the paddle toward you through the water.
6.	Pull the paddle inward until it is within 6 inches of the canoe. Imagine yourself pushing the water under the canoe.
7.	Slice your paddle backward and up to remove it from the water, then reach out for another drawstroke.
	Tips:
1	Watch your balance as you reach out. Make sure your base is well centered in the canoe.
2	For maximum power, use your whole body to do the drawstroke

Level 2 - How to Pry Paddle a Canoe

The pry stroke is excellent for turning your canoe quickly or, if you're solo, for moving sideways in the water. The opposite of a draw stroke, the pry stroke starts next to the canoe and pushes the water away.		

	Steps:
1.	Sit or kneel in a stable position in your canoe.
2.	Hold the paddle with your inside hand on top and your outside hand 1 to 2 feet down the shaft.
3.	Insert the blade of the paddle into the water directly next to the canoe on the side opposite the direction you wish to move.
4.	Hold your top hand out with your arm extended and your bottom hand close to your body.
5.	Pull with your top hand and push with your bottom hand.
6.	Use the side of the canoe as a fulcrum for the paddle to push against the water.
7.	Turn the blade of the paddle sideways, perpendicular to the canoe, and slide it back through the water to the starting position to begin another stroke.
	Tips:
1	The pry stroke is good for turning the boat in heavy rapids because the lever action against the boat is very strong.

Level 2 - How to Cross-Draw Paddle a Canoe

Used at the front of the canoe, or by a solo canoeist, the crossdraw paddle is a quick way of turning your canoe.	

	Steps:
1.	Sit in the front of the canoe, and hold the paddle as you normally would, with your inside hand on top and your waterside hand a foot to two down the shaft.
2.	Pull the paddle from the water, and twist your torso across the canoe to place the paddle in the water on the opposite side without changing your grip.
3.	Reach out and insert the blade of the paddle into the water away from the canoe and toward the front.
4.	Pull with your bottom hand and push with your top hand to draw the paddle through the water toward the front of the canoe. This will cause the front of the canoe to pull toward the direction you reached with the paddle.
	Tips:
1	Crossdraw paddle only from the front of the canoe or if you are canoeing solo.
2	Coupled with a stern pry (a pry stroke from the back of the canoe) this maneuver is extremely powerful and will cause the canoe to pivot quickly on its midpoint.
3	This draw is safe in shallow water, as the blade is inserted at an angle and does not reach deep down to catch on rocks.

Level 2 - How to Draw-Stroke Paddle a Canoe

The drawstroke paddle maneuver is useful for moving the canoe sideways and for quickly changing the direction of the canoe.	

	Steps:
1.	Position yourself in a well-braced sitting or kneeling position.
2.	Hold the paddle with your inside hand on its top and your water-side hand 2 feet down the shaft.
3.	Reach out over the edge of the canoe as far as you can without losing your balance. To move the canoe sideways, reach on the side that is the same as the direction you wish to go. For quick turns, reach in the direction you want your end to turn.
4.	Insert the blade of the paddle into the water. Your lower arm should be fully extended and your top arm should be bent.
5.	Straighten your top arm and bend your lower arm, drawing the blade of the paddle toward you through the water.
6.	Pull the paddle inward until it is within 6 inches of the canoe. Imagine yourself pushing the water under the canoe.
7.	Slice your paddle backward and up to remove it from the water, then reach out for another drawstroke.
	Tips:
1	Watch your balance as you reach out. Make sure your base is well centered in the canoe.
2	For maximum power, use your whole body to do the drawstroke

Level 2 - How to J-Stroke a Canoe

A canoe being paddled forward will veer to the side opposite the side on which the stern paddler is paddling. The J-stroke helps correct this problem without having to switch paddling sides.		

	Steps:
1.	Use the J-stroke only in the stern (back of the canoe).
2.	Do a normal forward paddle stroke. (See "How to Forward Paddle a Canoe.")
3.	During the forward paddle, begin turning the thumb of your top hand away from you body, causing the blade to angle slightly away from the canoe.
4.	Increase the angle as you complete the stroke.
5.	Point the thumb of your top hand straight down as you finish the stroke (it should almost be that way already), and pry the blade of the paddle slightly out to rudder the canoe.
6.	Shape the entire stroke like the letter "J." Use this stroke only as needed to maintain the proper heading.
	Tips:
1	You can use a normal forward paddle with a pry stroke at the end if that is more comfortable for you. The main idea is to rudder your canoe at the end of a normal stroke.
2	If you are paddling backward, the bow paddlers can perform a "reverse" J-stroke to rudder the canoe.

Level 2 - How to Hut Stroke a Canoe

Canoes don't paddle straight. The hut stroke, sometimes called the Minnesota switch, is a technique for quickly switching paddling sides to compensate for the canoe's veering.	

	Steps:
1.	Do a normal forward paddle. (See "How to Forward Paddle a Canoe.")
2.	Release your top hand from the paddle at the end of the stroke.
3.	Pull the paddle out of the water with your bottom hand, and pass it to your top hand.
4.	Grab the paddle with your former top hand just above your bottom hand.
5.	Release your former bottom hand, and put it on the top of the paddle.
6.	Reach forward, and do a forward paddle on the opposite side of the canoe.
7.	Switch your paddling side every six to eight strokes.
	Tips:
1	Practice switching sides so that you can do it quickly and smoothly. This will also improve your paddling technique on your weak side.
2	If you are canoeing with a partner, switch sides at the same time. Work out a signal so that you can easily coordinate this. The inventors of the hut switch used to say, "Hut," for their switch signal, hence the name.