

Coaching

Rapid Education – Key concepts in WW kayaking

The need for speed. Oh, and angle...

Last month, we discovered that there are three important factors in white water kayaking – Balance, Accuracy and Timing (commonly referred to as B.A.T) and looked at balance in depth. This month, we'll be focusing on the idea of accuracy...

An important thing to remember about white water kayaking is that the kayak is a form of transport – a way of getting from A to B. A good thing to remember in all forms of kayaking is that if you point your boat towards your target and paddle, eventually you'll get there! Where your target is will determine where you point (the angle of your boat). How quickly you paddle and the speed of the flow will determine how quick you get there. So basically, accuracy covers two elements – speed and angle. Let's have a look at angle:

Try this experiment – find an eddy with a well-defined eddy line. Paddle in a big circle from the eddy into the flow and back into the eddy again. Now repeat this exercise but imagine a giant clock face. 12 o'clock is upstream and so on. Vary the time you point the boat at each time you enter and leave the eddy. Have a think about how the time you point at affects where you end up in the flow or the eddy...

Have you got it yet? Good – basically, the more across the flow you point, the sharper the turn and the closer you end up to the eddy line.

Sequence one: Wide angle break in

The less you point across the flow, the wider the turn and the further you end up from the eddy line. Now check out the next sequence.

Sequence two: Narrow angle break in

As you can see, the angles of the boat as you enter or leave the eddy affects where you end up. This is handy to know, since where we need to end up varies. So, if we understand how our angle can affect this, we have a greater level of control over our destiny! Let's quickly have a look at speed.

Try the same experiment as above, but select one angle for entering and leaving the flow. This time, vary how fast you are paddling when you enter and leave the current and think about

how the turn varies. You should find that the faster you paddle, the wider the turn and the further into the flow or eddy you travel. If you go slowly, the turn is sharper.

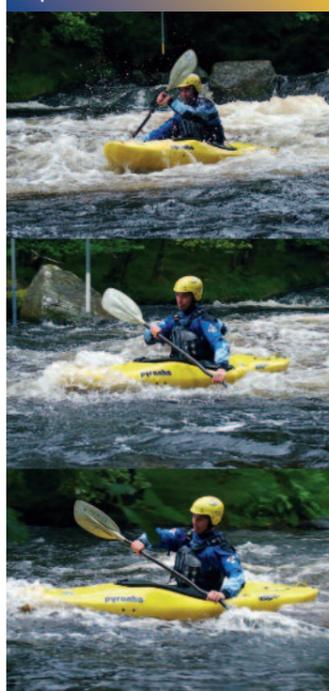
We've looked at the idea of speed and angle in the context of breaking into and out of the flow but understanding speed and angle on all the moves you make on the river is vital. Each destination has an ideal speed and angle combination to get you there.

More about speed

Rivers move, strangely enough. When we are in the flow, we move with them. However, if we are just sat in the flow, we have no speed, since we are travelling at the same speed as the water. We can generate downstream speed by paddling with the flow (appearing to speed up). We can generate upstream speed by paddling against the flow (appearing to slow down).

You see lots of people on the river always paddling as fast as they can, generating a huge amount of

Sequence 3: No lateral momentum



Sequence 4: Lateral momentum

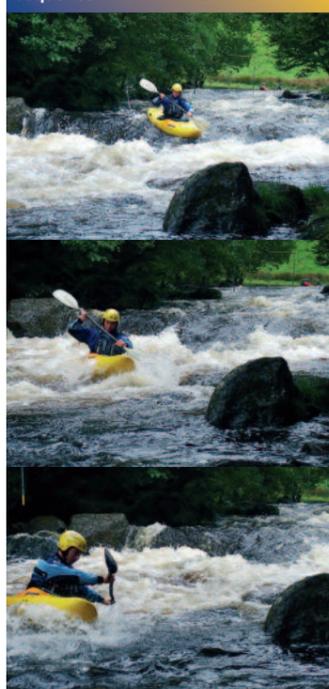


Photo 1: Vertical paddle stroke



Photo 2: Horizontal paddle stroke



Photo 3: Boater making boof eddy



You see lots of people on the river always paddling as fast as they can, generating a huge amount of downstream speed. There is no need for this! Think about it – the water is carrying us along, why do we need to always be moving faster than it?

downstream speed. There is no need for this! Think about it – the water is carrying us along, why do we need to always be moving faster than it? We don't – it's a big waste of energy. Only generate downstream speed when you need to. It saves energy and gives you more time to work out what on earth is going on.

Probably the most important type of speed is lateral speed – movement across the river. Have a look at these two sequences.

Sequence 3: No lateral momentum

In sequence three, the paddler has tried to turn at the last minute and charge into the eddy. But speed takes time to build. He has not given himself enough time and misses the eddy.

Sequence 4: Lateral momentum

The fourth sequence shows the paddler has planned ahead and started his move on the opposite side of the river to the eddy, giving himself plenty of time to build speed to hit the eddy. The idea of movement across the river is not only important for making targets; it's about avoiding hazards too!

The first paddler did not get enough speed across the river to avoid the hazard and got a shoeing for his efforts. The second paddler thought about things a bit more and avoided the trouble. We can gain lateral momentum by paddling or by accessing a chunk of water going in the appropriate direction – this links back to the whole idea of using the river's energy where possible.

Speed and angle on the move

Have a look at photos one and two above. Which do you reckon would be good for generating speed and which would be good for changing angle? **Vertical strokes** = speed **Horizontal strokes** = turning.

The two need to be distinct. If your stroke is a mix of the two, it will be a bit ineffective. Now, you have a luxury when you are in an eddy – time. Things happen quickly in the flow. Therefore, it's worth taking the time to plan your next couple of moves. Check photo three above: boater making boof eddy

Here, the boater knew his target, worked out where he needed to be to

get the correct speed and angle to hit the target, then worked out what speed and angle he needed when leaving the eddy to get to where he would go for his target. Basically, if you plan ahead and think about the speed and angle you need, you're far more likely to succeed.

Reading the river

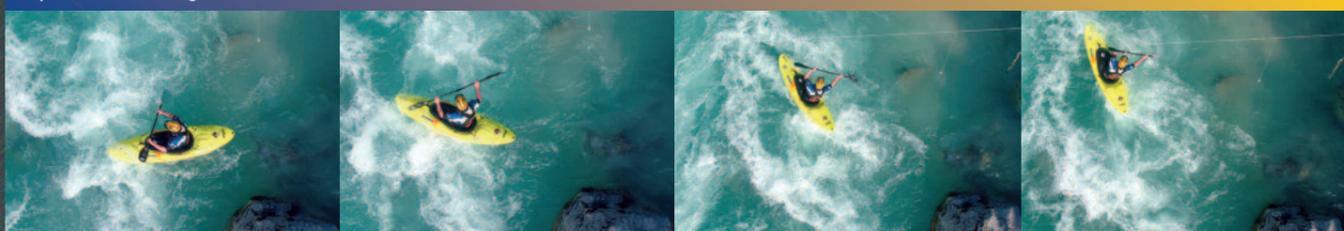
I know we've already looked at reading the river but it's important to bring this point in. Remember to take into account the effect that any water features, particularly waves and stoppers that are on the line to your target will have on your speed and angle. Check out sequence five. Both boaters are aiming for the eddy on the left.

The first boater hadn't anticipated the effect the diagonal wave would have on his boat. This meant he lost his chosen line and missed his target. The second boater, however, had anticipated the effect the diagonal would have on his boat and planned his speed and angle accordingly. The lesson? Think ahead and use the power of the water! ●

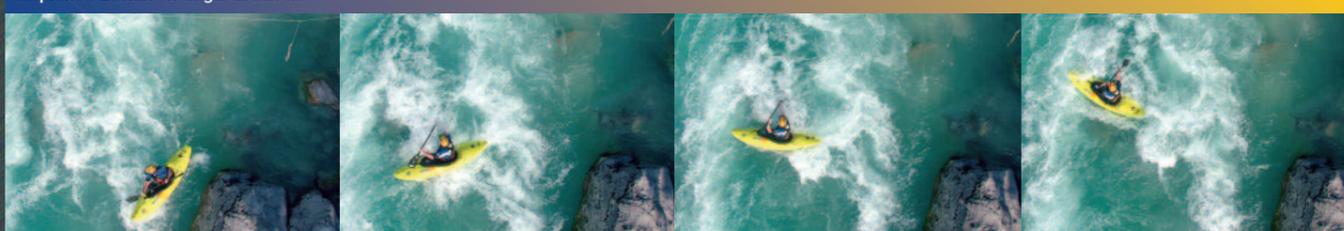
To recap: An understanding of speed and angle is vital to successful white water kayaking. Since there is no one set way of doing things, understanding the effects of speed and angle is really important in order to reach our targets. Take the time to think about the speed and angle you need for the move and you will reap the benefits. Right, go have an experiment with your accuracy. Next time we'll be looking at timing and commitment. Play safe...

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Sequence 1: Wide angle break-in



Sequence 2: Narrow angle break-in



Sequence 5

