

CANOE GAMES!

So much about canoeing is all about fun, as well as learning some basic strokes and skills. 'Just add water' seems to be all you often need without structuring any games. Still, sometimes you need a few games 'up your sleeve' and here are some examples:

On the Bank games

Port & stern

Have the group form a circle (shoulder to shoulder) & then have their paddles out in front in the middle of the circle.

The paddles must be vertical and balanced to not fall straight over. When the instructor calls out 'port' or 'stern' everyone has to let go of their paddle and grab the balancing paddle to the left or right of them, depending on the call. No doubt some don't make it & drop their paddle & they are now out of the game. Different commands include 'paddle spin' where the student lets go of their paddle and does a 360 degrees turn before hopefully re-grabbing their paddle. As 'holes' appear in the circle, you can choose to respread the circle or leave the holes there for effect.

A good idea is to wear helmets during this game incase any paddles get accidentally thrown.

Paddle spin race

Divide the group into two teams and have them line up in single file at a starting point. Upon the start command, they have to run out to a designated point, pick up the paddle (already sitting here), put the paddle on their nose and spin (up to as many times as you like) before placing the paddle back down, jumping over it & then returning to the start point where the next person line has their turn.

Be cautious with how many times you spin & wary of kids may loose balance so consider the ground they are running over and any sharp objects etc.



'On Water' games

Dog's Breakfast

Great for a 'get on the water' game/ small session. A bit of poetic licence where, you pre-empt with students the fact that the first session on the water is often messy/ 'all over the shop' as they gain some skills and control, so you grant them a first up game/ session of 'Dog's breakfast'. That is, within reason you allow them (once boundaries and group management is set) to do whatever they want for 10 minutes (hence often a 'dogs breakfast' messy) as they expend some energy and have some fun getting used to the canoe and ultimately realising that - they actually need some further skills and instruction. Can work well as students are then ready to listen and learn and have got some energy out of their system/ had some fun.

Canoe Polo

A modified canoe version of water polo. Goes well. Make sure you have a ball on hand beforehand. Split the group up into two groups (either as paired canoes or single craft). Have one group to wear helmets backward or use some mud on face 'commando stripes'. Explain how after a ball up, the ball gets passed around all boats in each group before they go for goal. Rules are:

- Only 3 seconds with the ball
- No using paddles to scoop up the ball (otherwise you will samurai sword someone's hand off – very important)
 - You can go for goal once every boat in your group has touched the ball
- The goals are the staff boats/ kayaks. If you hit staff boat, you win 1000 points. If you hit the staff boat you loose 10,000 points!
 - No intentional capsizing

In finishing, great to mention how; in order to play the game everybody effectively used all the basic manoeuvring strokes. Fun and learning at the same time

'Le Mans' race

Akin to the famous car race, this is an active racing game. It's often a great way to start the paddling session as it get the students restlessness out of their system before they start more formal stroke lessons. Start with the boats lined up on the bank facing outwards and the students line up roughly 10 to 20 metres away. On your 'start gun' they need to run to their own boat & then paddle it to a designated finish line. Not only does it get the students blood flowing but it also lets you observe what paddling skills they might already have. At game's completion, it's often a good lead way into making the point that hopefully this game has recognised their need to refine their skills.

Variation: If concerned about the students running over rocky/ slippery ground, use a variation like a 'swimming start' instead.

Canoe Slalom

Simple game that gets the students racing around and learning & practising (& maybe arguing!). By using markers, buoys, islands or tree's etc, design a slalom course that the students must race around and then sprint to the finish line.

Tug of War championships

Two canoes face each other with 3 or 4 people in each canoe. One person grabs the rope while the others try to paddle backwards as hard as they can. Once one canoe gets past a marker point they are the champions! You can then rotate through more rounds so that everyone gets a go.

Instructors Folly

Ask all the students to raft up (all their boats together) & then ask them to place their paddles in the boat & hold onto their neighbours boat. Then, as staff, splash the whole group! You may have to then employ some survival skills to avoid the ensuing student revenge.

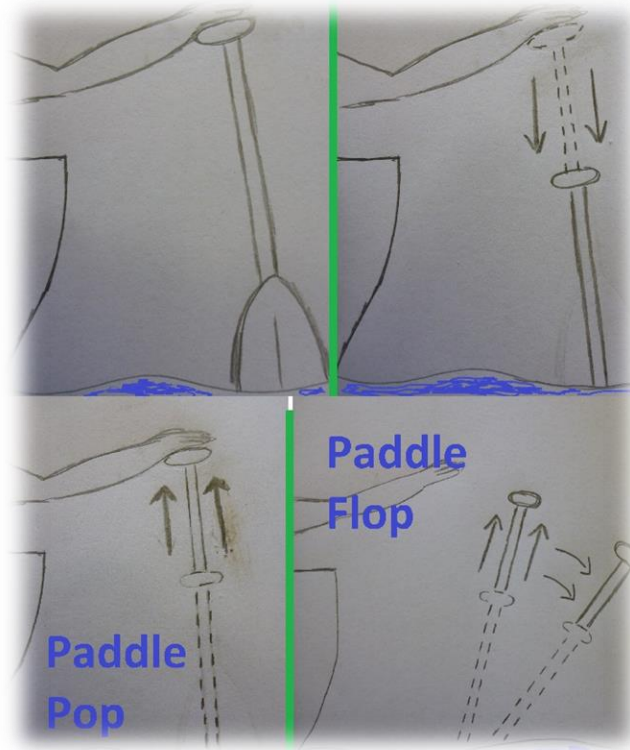
Drown the Instructor!

Quite simply, the nimble (?) instructor/s prompt the group to try & run over the instructor as best they can while the instructor/s weave inbetween all the canoe's. Most students will jump at the chance to do that!

PaddlePop!

A quick little game for the students to try! Provided that your paddle has good buoyancy (as they all should), simply start by pushing the paddle vertically into the water & watch it go under water momentarily. Based on the angle (& luck?!) that the paddle was pushed into the water, it will bounce back up either towards the paddler (shouting 'Paddle Pop!') or away from the paddler ('shouting 'Paddle Flop'). As easy as that.

** Paddles can rebound up quite quickly so watch out for the paddles hitting the paddler/ their head etc



Other simple games

- Follow the leader
 - Races (backwards, blindfolds, boat/raft upside down etc)
 - Canoe tag
 - 'Stacks on the mill'. All students try to get onto one raft!
 - Raft Wrestling (wrestling on upturned raft)
 - Game of canoe frisbee
 - Doggy paddle race (paddles tucked away). Can also add 'itchy bum' component where the students have to pretend to have an itchy bum (bum wobble) to get more speed in the doggy paddle race (seeing all students doing bum wobble movement can be a bit of a visual spectacle)
 - Car wash. Great on a hot day where students momentarily take off their helmet and scoop up water and put the helmet back on again - giving themselves a car wash!
 - relay races
 - Stand up balance games
 - Canoe orienteering
 - Limbo! Every canoe has to 'limbo' under your paddle
 - Top 40 Radio station. A variation on an oldie. Students put a small twig/ branch in the holes in their helmets (if they have them) to serve as an antennae & then one by one in order they have to sing their favourite song (that they are picking up on the antennae)
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