

Far out!

So you're ready! You're raring to go! You have the right kit and you just want to get out there and have a brilliant session in the surf. In this article I'll cover the essentials for getting out back and taking off. Hopefully with a little practice you'll avoid those soul destroying back loops and start ripping it up on the waves.

Green Machines

If you're new to surfing, you might not want to go right out back to begin with and it can be quite good to play in the shallows to get a feel for the kayak. However, think of your surf kayak in the same way you would a surf board, they are made for surfing and will perform best on the 'green wave', so as soon as you're comfortable try and get out back and start surfing.

Paddle Out

In an ideal world we'd all have a nice clean point break on our doorstep, with no need for paddling out through closeout surf, however, for most of us this is a dream and we have to settle for a closeout beach break. Sitting on the beach, watching wave after wave break in front of you can be pretty intimidating but with a little practice and careful planning you can minimize the beatings and make it out back. Probably most of us have, at one time or another, just tried using brute strength to get through the waves, but by refining technique this can be achieved with much less effort.



High Performance Surf Kayaking:
Paddling out and taking off



The Bunny-hop

With smaller and weaker waves it's possible to lift your kayak over the top of the foam pile.

Step 1: Paddle out with some speed.

Step 2: Just before you hit the wave, edge your boat on one side and throw your weight slightly forward at the same time as you put in a forward stroke on the opposite side. This will drive the front end of your boat into the water in a similar way to pumping a playboat. (Note - by forcing the bow down, the buoyancy will help you achieve greater lift in step 3)

Step 3: On the same side as you edged towards put in a powerful forward stroke, levelling your boat off and timing it so that you pull to the top of the incoming wave.

Step 4: Throw your weight as far forward as you can, whilst putting in another powerful forward stroke to pull you over the top of the wave.

Hopefully by this point you'll be clear of the wave and able to continue paddling out. If the wave is more powerful, you may find yourself being dragged towards the beach, in which case read on and try another method!

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Duck-dive

In larger, more powerful surf, when you can't bunny-hop over the top, it's worth trying to duck-dive your kayak, although the larger the boat the more difficult this is.

- Step 1:** Paddle out with lots of forward speed.
- Step 2:** Just before the wave reaches you, lift the nose using a strong forward stroke.
- Step 3:** Use the back of the blade to push the nose down and start rolling so that the nose goes into the green water immediately before the white.
- Step 4:** Capsize fully as the wave passes over the top
- Step 5:** Once upside down complete the roll, pulling through the wave.
- Step 6:** Continue paddling forward hard.

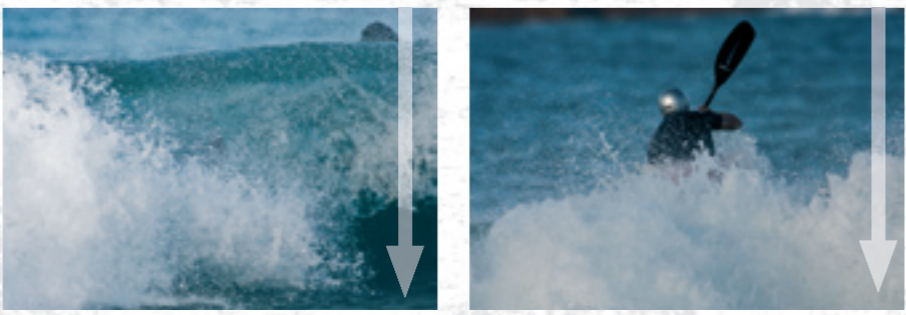
Variation: Capsizing and rolling up on the same side. (effective in slightly less powerful waves)



Duck-dive 2

If the wave is steep enough and you're at the critical point, (just as it's about to break) hold your nerve as it's probably the most intimidating time...You can punch through the face of the wave and pop out the other side.

- Step 1:** Generate some forward speed.
- Step 2:** As the wave approaches, put in a strong forward stroke and throw your weight forward, to punch through the face. (Note: this needs to be initiated as low down the wave as possible)
- Step 3:** Reach as far through the wave as you can to grab the green water on the other side and pull hard as the wave breaks over the top of you.
- Step 4:** Keep paddling forwards to avoid 'suck back', if you stop too early you may get sucked back into the wave and receive the beating of your life!



Rip Currents

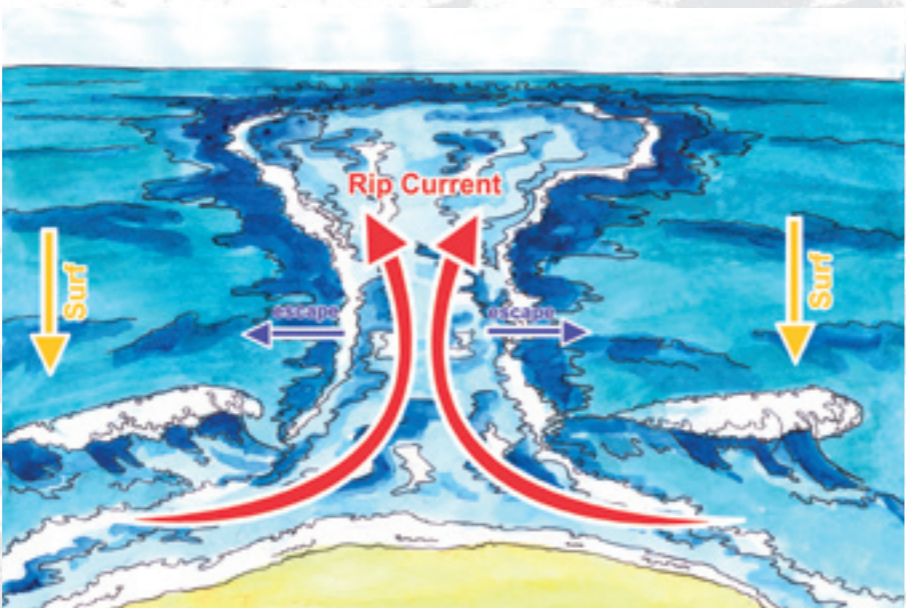
Lots of beaches have rips, which are basically currents of water flowing away from the beach. For swimmers these can be particularly hazardous, but we can use them to our advantage when trying to get out back. Look out for continual gaps in the waves, which are created by the flowing water. These would certainly be present at river mouths, but also on lots of other beaches where the water creates channels to run back out. On larger days these become more defined and it could be impossible to get out without them.

Taking Off

The take off is the beginning of the ride and as such one of the most crucial points, dictating the moves and quality of ride that will follow. So good positioning and wave selection is key to ripping it up and achieving smooth moves in your surf kayak. It's important to take-off in the most critical (steep) section so that you get the maximum speed going

into the bottom turn and first move. The deeper you can take-off, the more speed you'll achieve and the bigger and more impressive that first move will be. Look for long walling waves that will peel steadily so that you can surf along the wave. If you imagine the wave as similar to a half-pipe it needs to be steep to perform big moves, and have a good wall to give you a longer ride and more opportunity for manoeuvres. No matter

how good a surfer you are, if your wave selection is poor you'll be really restricted in the moves that you can do. In order to make the most of your session, it's well worth spending some time on the beach watching the waves and working out where you can paddle out most easily and where the best area to surf is. Looking at the surf, visualize the take-off and ride, working out what you can do where.



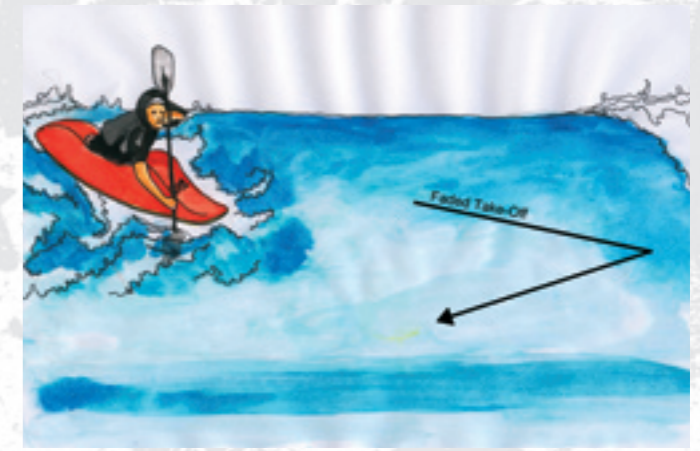
▼Straight Take-off: This is probably the most ideal take-off as you'll be able to generate maximum speed going into the bottom turn. Lean forward and keep the hull flat.



▼Diagonal Take-off: If the wave is too steep to drop straight down, or you find yourself a little too deep, you might be able to get away with taking off diagonally across the wave, although this will be slightly slower than going straight down the face.



◀Faded Take-off: Occasionally you might find yourself wide of a really nice wave with no one inside of you and you can't let it pass. Take-off diagonally towards the peak to gain the most critical section and then cutaway to surf down the line. A variation of this is to go straight into a roundhouse to gain the most critical section.



Technique Tips

As the wave approaches lean back until the wave starts to lift you up, then throw your weight forward. This will help you generate more speed down the face. Try and position yourself so that you need as few paddle strokes as possible. It's good to aim for less than five, but try doing it with body weight alone and no strokes. This will require going deep, sitting in the most critical section and throwing your weight in time with the wave.

Etiquette

Be aware that as a surf kayaker you've got more paddle power than other surfers and can therefore catch waves more easily. If there are other surfers in the water, be considerate and don't get greedy!

There will always be those days when getting out back is a fight and you get worked... But it's character building and way more fun than going to the gym, especially if you're able to laugh at your mates getting worked too! **CKUK**

INFO **Forthcoming Events**
 For surf kayak competition details please visit the BCU Surf website: www.bcusurf.org.uk
 For more info on Chris check out www.chrisharveyonline.net

Take a surf to the features section at www.canoekayak.co.uk for more surf kayaking articles or to contact Chris check out the Team page

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