

# FOUR STAR TEST SEA KAYAK



## Sea Kayak - Four Star

### AIM

The purpose of this test is to ensure that the candidate has sufficient knowledge and skill to enable him or her to take a kayak safely to sea in moderate conditions under a competent leader.

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

### PRE-REQUISITES

BCU 3-Star test. Where a candidate does not hold this test a cross-section of the requirements of the 1-3 Star tests should be incorporated at the assessor's discretion.

The candidate must have taken part in at least three one day expeditions at sea. To rate as a qualifying expedition, the journey must have been on open water (i.e. where it is **possible** to be three miles from land in any direction).

The journey may, however, be inshore close to a simple coastline not involving overfalls, tidal races, difficult landings or open crossings. Winds not exceeding Force 4. Not more than one trip shall be carried out on an estuary. The journey must have involved four hours travelling, with a lunch break in which the candidate was self-sufficient for food and drink. At least one journey must be on an entirely different stretch of coast to the other two.

### ASSESSMENT AND VENUE

The test must be taken at sea, under moderate conditions (wind or sea state 2-4) ideally during a day trip. Allowance will be made by the assessor if conditions are rough, but the kayak skills must be performed in a competent manner. For reasons of safety three kayakers will participate. The test will not be taken in a flat calm.

### ASSESSOR

Level 3 Sea Coach or higher, who is an A1\* Assessor

### THEORY

The candidate should be able to answer questions on the following:

#### Equipment

Show a good knowledge of kayak, paddle and personal equipment.

#### Safety

- Be aware of: Safety precautions applying particularly to the kayak at sea
  - The general effects of tide, current and wind
  - National Coastguard organisation and rescue services
  - Local waters and conditions
  - Potential hazards, (especially busy estuaries and water ways)
  - Basic collision regulations and sound signals

#### 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 our basic freedom to paddle on the sea, but also of the need not to bring the sport into disrepute through irresponsible behaviour.

Be aware that some harbour authorities have the right to charge canoeists, and do so.

#### 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 rock pools.

#### Planning

Be able to determine from a chart:

- Depths and drying heights
- Simple recognition of hazards - i.e. tide races, overfalls
- Basic recognition of main buoyage
- Simple tidal predictions by the tidal constant method

Demonstrate an ability to use a simple compass to follow an escape route.



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**Weather**

Be aware of the sources of weather forecasts and the effect of the weather on the sea environment.

**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**

Show group awareness and self-control consistent with a 4 Star standard journey on the sea.

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. Borrowed equipment will be judged as though it was the candidate's own.

**The following items, which must be both suitable and serviceable, must be presented for inspection:**

1. **\*Kayak and paddle.** Kayaks must be provided with end grabs suitable for carrying out rescues without trapping the hand. Safety lines and/or painters (if fitted) must be taut and not capable of becoming loose accidentally, or fouling the cockpit area. Fitted buoyancy must be securely fixed and fill all available space apart from cockpit in suitably customised general purpose kayaks. Sealed bulkheads are regarded as sufficient in themselves for sea kayaks.
  2. **Personal clothing.** Personal clothing should be appropriate to the expected conditions, and should include windproof and water-proof outer garments.
  3. **Buoyancy aid, appropriate headgear and spray deck.** 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. A brightly coloured helmet or woolly or other hat is recommended. The spray deck 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: simple compass; emergency food; whistle; exposure (bivvy) bag of minimum size 1.8m x 0.9m (6' by 3'); torch; matches or lighter; flares or other suitable means of pinpointing position if in the water.
  8. **Waterproof kit bag(s).** Spare equipment must be stored in appropriately secured, waterproof kit carriers and must remain dry even after a capsizing.
- \* **The award may be taken in any kayak, provided it is suitably fitted out and the candidate can meet the requirements of the test.**

**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.

**PRACTICAL ON OPEN WATER**

1. **Launching** The candidate should demonstrate launching techniques appropriate for the conditions
2. **Efficient paddling technique, forwards and backwards.** The assessor will look for: correct dynamic seating position; correct entry and exit of the blade; ability to keep the boat straight; sufficient power in the stroke to paddle against wind or current; trunk rotation; correct width of paddle grip.
3. **Turning the kayak 360 degrees.** In both directions by using alternate forward and reverse sweep strokes. Paddle blade just covered, reaching out to full arm extension, elbow slightly bent. Paddle drawing well into the stern with the forward arm pushing across the body. Body turning to place the paddle in the water at the stern of the kayak. If the kayak is fitted with a rudder, it must be turned again in both directions, this time steering with the rudder only.
4. **Emergency stops.** Forwards and backwards. Reverse direction should be in evidence within 4 strokes.
5. **Drawing the kayak sideways in both directions.** Top arm high, blade deep. The boat must keep a straight line sideways through the water in both directions.





6. **High and low recovery strokes.** To be performed on both sides. For high braces the water must reach the paddler's waist, with a strong pull and associated hip flick to recover.
7. **Paddle brace.** High and low on the left and right. Where wave conditions are not suitable the candidate must paddle hard forwards then glide with the blade flat on the surface at right angles to the kayak.  
For a high brace, the water must reach the paddler's waist at the onset of the stroke.
8. **Stern Rudder.** The paddle blade should be placed in the water upright, well back to the stern. Candidate should be able to keep the kayak running straight, downwind on small waves, with the paddle kept on one side of the boat.
9. **Landing** Bring the kayak into a beach forwards, sideways and backwards (forwards only if kayak is fitted with rudder). This is controlled, not a surf landing. Holding position in order to allow for the waves.
10. **Capsize and rescue.** Perform capsize drill, followed by a deep water rescue with partners. Take charge of a rescue and then act as a capsized victim. Any sign at all of fear or panic, and failure to retain the kayak during the drill will automatically result in failure of the test. The capsize must be accidental with spray deck in place - either whilst paddling or in an attempted recovery stroke or sculling for support.
11. **Handling waves.** Demonstrate an ability to paddle into a head sea, with a following sea and in a beam sea.
12. **Negotiate moderate surf.** Demonstrate an ability to handle moderate surf (maximum 1m/ 3ft ) in order to safely commence a journey or achieve a landing.
13. **Knots.** Tie the following knots: Bowline, Figure of eight, Round turn and two half hitches, Clove hitch and demonstrate and explain their uses..

### Journeying

1. Provide evidence of having taken part in at least 3 one-day expeditions at sea as stated under *Pre-requisites*.

## FIVE STAR TEST SEA KAYAK

### AIM

The purpose of this test is to ensure that the successful candidate has sufficient knowledge and skill to lead others of adequate ability on sea journeys, up to and including advanced level, with safety, in British conditions. When used with the relevant coaching award it shows that the candidate has sufficient expertise to coach and lead groups in more demanding situations.

This award is intended for paddlers who journey on the sea in areas where tidal races, headlands, open crossings, swell and challenging coastlines may be encountered. The award should be accessible to all those people who journey on the sea on a regular basis and should not be seen as the preserve of a few elite performers. It is envisaged that the average club member canoeing regularly, should be able to obtain this award within three years of starting to paddle regularly on the sea.

### PRE-REQUISITES

Due to the nature of this test and its remit for leadership it is necessary that candidates should show three days logged experience of formal training in leadership, safety and rescue, prior to assessment. Such experience may be gained on advertised courses, or from endorsement by a level 5 coach

The candidate will have documented a minimum of six journeys on the open sea. These will have involved a variety of different conditions including:

- A journey of a minimum distance of 20 nautical miles. (see journeying)
- An open crossing of at least 5 nautical miles.
- Navigation in poor visibility and darkness.
- Winds reaching at least force 4.
- Exposure to no landing zones.
- Tide races and overfalls.
- Camping from a kayak.
- Tidal streams of at least 3 knots.
- Paddling in swell and waves.

The candidate must already hold the BCU 4 Star test (or be recommended for exemption by a current level 5 Sea Coach).

The candidate must hold an appropriate, and current, first aid award ( e.g.BCU Lifeguards Aquatic First Aid - 8 hour course). Any of the nationally recognised standard first aid certificates, or any H&SE approved, are acceptable provided they involve a minimum of 8 hours training and include CPR and EAV.

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## ASSESSOR

An A5 Sea Assessors as per student ratio supported by an A4 Sea assessor

## SYLLABUS

### Theory

Navigation; Weather; Equipment; Environment; History; First Aid

### Practical

Show an efficient and effective forward paddling technique.

Demonstrate an ability to manoeuvre and control a kayak in a variety of different situations.

Launch and land in a variety of situations.

Perform a range of rescues.

Roll in rough water

Be conversant with different methods of towing.

Show the ability to navigate on the water.

Exercise group control and show concern for the general welfare of other group members.

Demonstrate the capability to handle a range of incidents.

### Journeying

Have experience of a minimum of six journeys on the open sea. These will have involved a variety of different conditions.

Two of the journeys must have taken place in a different sea area.

At least one journey must have involved an overnight camp or bivvy.

## METHOD OF ASSESSMENT

### Theory

As well as oral questions over the course of the assessment it is envisaged that there will be two written examinations. The first will take the form of a written paper which is sent out in advance and for which the candidate will be able to utilise all the resources which are at their disposal to answer the questions. The second will be a navigation exercise, which will usually be undertaken on the first evening of the assessment course. The candidate should have produced sufficient work for the assessors to make a judgement as to their competence within two hours.

### Navigation

Plan a two day journey in an unfamiliar area which includes an open crossing.

### Weather

Know where to obtain relevant shipping and weather forecasts. Understand the probable sequence of weather which occurs during the passage of a depression.

Have an understanding of the following:

The formation of fog, onshore and offshore winds, the effect of relief, line squalls.

The relationship between the pattern of isobars on a synoptic chart and the probable resultant wind speed and direction.

Be able to relate physical signs to the actual forecast.

### Equipment

Show an understanding of the variety of equipment which is available including radio and navigation aids.

### Environment

Candidates should be aware of the environmental factors that affect the sea. These will include the effect of wind, tidal movement, swell and physical factors. The candidate should also show a basic knowledge of the wildlife which is likely to be encountered on the sea and be aware of times and areas when special consideration should be given. The candidate should show a personal responsibility for the environment.

### History

Show a knowledge of past and present developments in the sport of sea kayaking.

### Coastguard

Have a knowledge of the role and responsibilities of the Coastguard Service.

## PRACTICAL

The assessment course will normally be run over a weekend or similar time span. The first evening will be spent on the navigation exercise and course administration, followed by two days and a night undertaking a journey of the appropriate level. It is anticipated that an overnight bivvy or camp will be involved.

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## **Forward Paddling**

The candidate should be able to demonstrate efficient and effective forward paddling technique in different

wind and sea conditions. This should include a following sea and a beam wind.

## **Manoeuvre and Control**

The candidate should show manoeuvring skills in relation to static and moving objects and demonstrate good control in moving and broken water. Where a rudder or skeg is fitted the candidate should demonstrate reasonable control in the event of a failure.

## **Launching and Landing**

The candidate should show the ability to launch and land themselves and the members of their group in a variety of conditions. This may involve beaches, rocky inlets, headlands and surf. They should also show the ability to land an injured paddler.

## **Rescues**

The candidate should have a good repertoire of rescues and be able to adapt them to a range of conditions. It is expected that they should be able to rescue a loaded sea kayak without assistance apart from the casualty. In addition, the candidate should have a knowledge of a variety of self rescues and be able to demonstrate one. This part of the test should not take place in calm conditions but it is not necessary to perform it in a tide race.

## **Rolling**

Perform a roll in rough water.

## **Towing**

The candidate should have a towing system and be aware of the need for flexibility and be able to drop and pick up the tow with ease. They should demonstrate single and multiple tows.

## **Navigation**

The candidate must demonstrate the ability to keep a compass course on open water and make good a course using transits. They should be able to fix their position using a combination of bearings and transits. The candidates should be able to navigate in poor visibility or the hours of darkness. They should be able to plan alternative routes whilst afloat which take into account wind and tidal conditions. They should also be able to identify features from the chart and recognise navigation marks.

## **Group Control**

The candidate should exercise appropriate group control whilst on the water. They should also be concerned for the comfort and welfare of the party throughout the whole journey. The importance of effective group control cannot be over-emphasised.

## **Incidents**

The candidate should carry and have easily accessible suitable means for summoning help in an emergency. They should have a first aid kit and be familiar with the use of its contents. A repair kit should also be carried. It should be possible to effect a repair on a kayak whilst afloat as well as being able to deal with more substantial problems to the equipment whilst ashore. The candidate should be equipped and prepared to deal with any incidents which could occur during the course of the journey.

## **Equipment**

It is expected that by the time the candidate is ready for assessment they will be aware of what equipment is required for undertaking a multi-day journey. It is reasonable for people to make personal choices as regards equipment but they should be prepared to justify those decisions. It is not essential for candidates to present themselves for assessment in a specialised sea kayak, but due to the fact that they may have to paddle with people in those type of craft they should have some experience of paddling a variety of sea kayaks including singles and doubles.