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CREW KAYAKING IN-SCHOOL EVENT GUIDE

For Kayak Clubs



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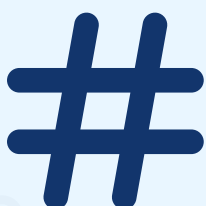
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Introduction

Welcome to the In-School Event Guide for Kayak Clubs! This guide was created as part of the *Erasmus+ Sport* project - **Kayak Crews 4 Youth** (Kc4u).

In 2024 Kc4u successfully hosted in-school crew kayaking events for over 600 children in Italy and Slovenia. During these exciting events, we discovered that 64% of participants had never been kayaking, and 48% were unaware that sprint kayaking is a competitive sport!

Organising in-school events is an excellent way to raise awareness of our sport, and actively engage kids in physical activity. It also provides a fantastic opportunity to promote your club and drive recruitment.

This guide draws on our first-hand experiences and offers a comprehensive, step-by-step approach for planning, preparing, and implementing fun and interactive in-school crew kayaking events which centre around teamwork.

Inside, you'll find everything you need to run school events, from activity station videos to printable checklists.

If you're curious about the other Kc4u activities and free resources, be sure to explore the *K4 Land & Water Drills* guide, and much more on our website kayakcrews.eu

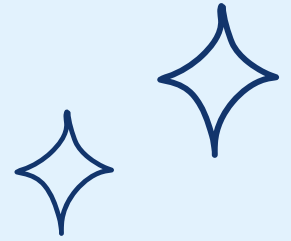
We hope you'll join us in introducing paddling into the school environment, and find this guide helpful in creating memorable kayaking experiences for students in your local area.

Let's begin...



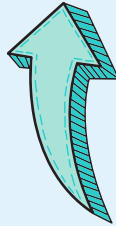
IN-SCHOOL

An exciting, large scale event run by your club at local schools during school hours



INTERACTIVE

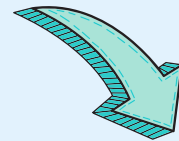
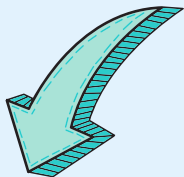
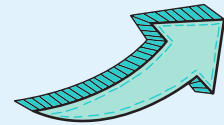
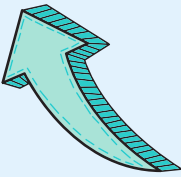
10 activity stations running simultaneously ensure participants are constantly engaged



ATHLETE COACHES

Your club athletes coach their age-peers

WHAT IS A CREW KAYAKING SCHOOL EVENT?



DIVERSE SKILLS

Unique challenges test diverse paddling related physical and teamwork skills



TEAMWORK

Participants work together in teams at all activity stations to emphasise the fun of crew-kayaking



CREW KAYAKING

The ergometer K4 is the closest thing to a real K4 paddling experience, without leaving the school gym



TOP 5 REASONS TO RUN

IN-SCHOOL EVENTS

1

REMOVE BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

Welcoming an entire school of children at once isn't practical at most clubs, nor is it possible for many schools to organise multiple rounds of transport for small groups. Taking events directly into schools removes all barriers to participation, and connects your club with large numbers of children in a short timeframe.

2

GROW AWARENESS OF THE SPORT

In a landscape dominated by professional sports (and more commonly played school sports), Sprint Kayaking faces many visibility challenges. While kayaks are instantly recognisable to most, in many countries children remain unaware that sprint kayaking is a competitive sport and Olympic discipline. In-school events are a great way to raise awareness and inspire a new generation of paddlers.

RECRUIT NEW CLUB MEMBERS

Dynamic and interactive in-school sessions can spark children's interest in joining your club. By involving your club athletes, these events transform from boring lessons into fun-filled sessions. It's the perfect chance for students to meet their future teammates and soak up the one-of-a-kind atmosphere your club offers.

3

4

EMPOWER YOUR ATHLETES

Peer coaching serves as a powerful learning and development tool to empower your club athletes. By having them coach activity stations, you can enhance their skills, nurture leadership qualities, and boost their confidence, all while fostering new friendships.

5

TALENT IDENTIFICATION

Are you on the hunt for the next paddling superstar? In-school events allow you to assess general physical literacy, movement quality & control, and many of the essential underlying physical skills required to become a great paddler.



WHY CREW KAYAKING?

PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH

Playing team sport during adolescence has a host of benefits including; “promoting **physical, psychological** and **social health**, as well as the development of physical-, academic-, self-regulatory- and general life skills” 1.

Additionally, team sports in contrast with individual ones, have been linked with “**lower levels of anxiety** and depression and improved emotional/social support, a **sense of belonging, self-esteem**, and social interaction” 2.

MORE KIDS ON THE WATER

With four seats available per boat, M/K4s enable more children to enjoy being on the water simultaneously, without the need for extra coaching staff to oversee numerous individual boats paddling at varying speeds.

FUTURE LEADERS

Navigating the various physical and communication challenges that crew kayaking presents - while maintaining respect and integrity, plays a vital role in shaping our potential future leaders, and nurturing great ambassadors for the sport.

ATHLETE RETENTION

The responsibilities of working together towards a common goal are likely to strengthen the friendships between club athletes, resulting in an increased chance of them staying involved.

[@KAYAKCREWS.EU](https://www.instagram.com/kayakcrews.eu)

1) Drop-out from team sport among adolescents: A systematic review and meta-analysis of prospective studies. Center of Research on Welfare, Health and Sport, Sweden. April 2022, Psychology of Sport & Exercise 61.

2) Team Sport Athletes May Be Less Likely To Suffer Anxiety or Depression than Individual Sport Athletes. September 2019, Journal of Sports Science & Medicine



PLANNING & PREPARATION



SCHOOLS

- Contact your local schools and set a date for your event/s.
- Most schools prefer to have events during their regular PE session times.
- Liaise with a school representative to coordinate the groups/classes and teachers. It's great if they are from the PE department so they can help out on the event day.
- Be sure to check you have full use of the school gym, (or a large outdoor space if the weather is good).



LOGISTICS

- **Transport** - plan how and when you're getting all your equipment and team to the school.
- **Equipment** - there's a printable checklist of all equipment on page 43 of this guide. You may be able to borrow some equipment from the school, but be sure to check this in advance.

COMMUNICATION

In-school events provide a variety of opportunities to promote your club and the sport directly to children in your desired demographic. By utilising flyers, posters, social media, and engaging local media, such as newspapers and radio stations, you can further amplify your message to reach parents and the wider community.

To continue the momentum built by school events, we highly recommend coordinating them with an **Open Day** (or week) at your club where children can try kayaking for free.

EVENT SPACE

To highlight your club & the sport during the events, be sure to decorate the event space with:

- **Roll banner**
- Club (or other) **flags**
- **Photos**/posters from competitions (particularly crew boats). These can be stuck to ergometers and around the gym at the activity stations
- **Posters** promoting your Open Day/Week

Don't forget your team should all be dressed in **club clothing**

FLYERS

Distribute visually appealing flyers to participants at the end of every session. These will inform parents of your Open Day, and on the back you can print your regular club training timetable.

PRESS

Be sure to send press invites for your events to local press at least one week before your event/s.

Send press releases to national press and other relevant sporting organisations afterwards.

Remember you need permission from parents to use any images or videos of children online or in your press kit.

GIVEAWAYS

A free gift at the end of a session is a great way to get kids to remember you. A club sticker or other small club-branded item is enough, but if you've got the resources, you may want to give everyone a club t-shirt.

PARTICIPANT SURVEY

Participant surveys serve as a valuable tool for collecting data for current and potential funding partners, along with other relevant stakeholders. It's also a great way to evaluate your sessions. The survey doesn't need to be long - you'll find an example in the printables at the back of this guide.

YOUR TEAM

SIZE

We recommend running school events with at least **10 people from your club**; 2 coaches, and 8 athletes - preferably in the same age range as the participants. This setup allows all 10 activity stations to operate simultaneously, maintaining high engagement levels for all participants.

If you're running events with fewer people from your club, it's best to keep the participant group size for each session under 40, and form **teams of 8 rather than 4**. In this scenario, start the teams on stations 1,3,5,7 & 9 and have coaches stay with a team for two consecutive stations.

PREPARATION

Prior to the school event/s it's highly beneficial to run a training workshop with your athletes to familiarise them with demonstrating and coaching all of the stations and variations.

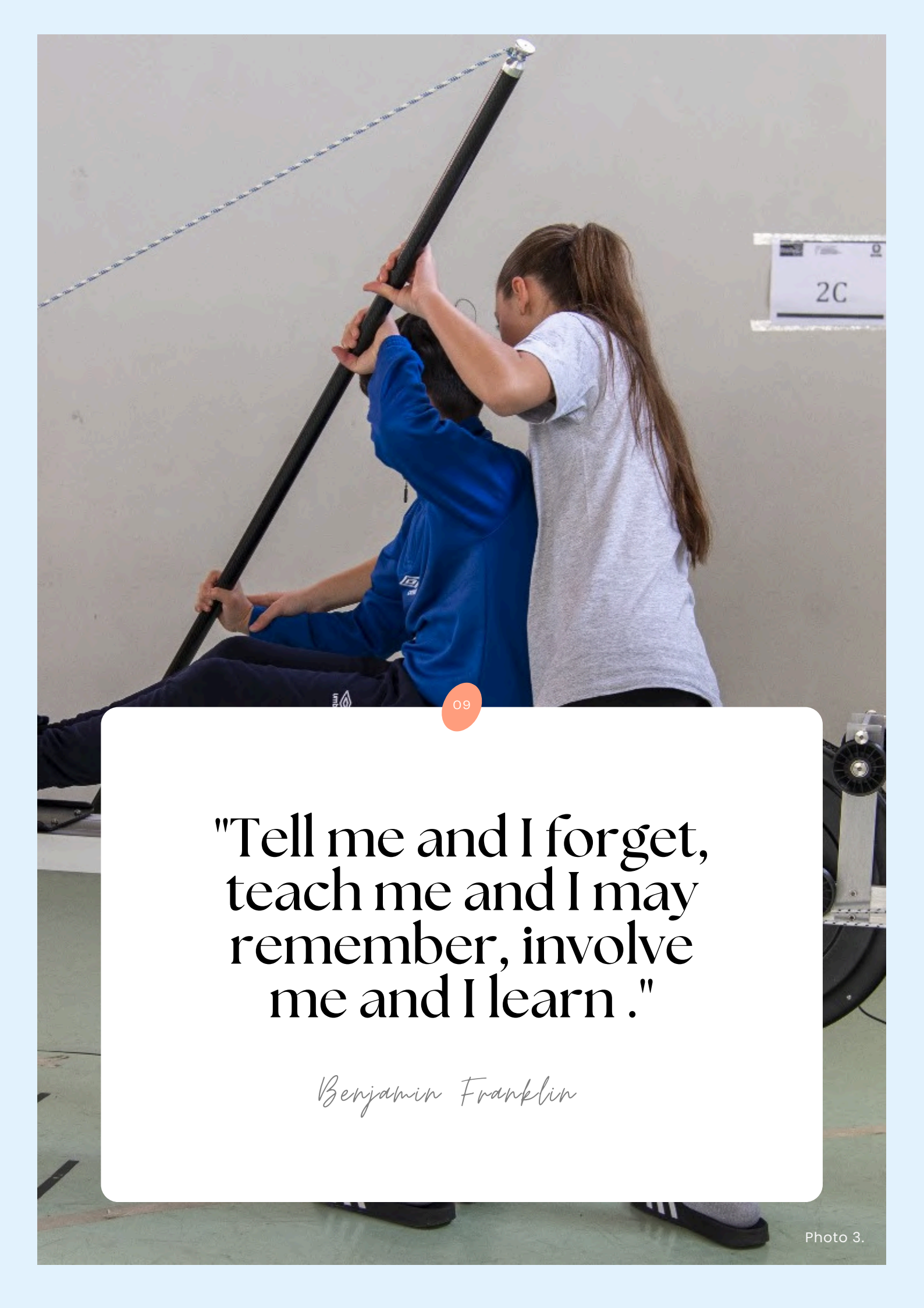
To ensure things run smoothly on the event days, decide who will coach at each station in advance (planner on page 42). Some activity stations require demonstrations from your team, so it's wise to choose the most skilled and confident candidates for each station.

When running multiple sessions on one day, consider having your station coaches rotate between two or more stations (to help their enthusiasm high).

If your team comprises less than 10 people, it's important all team members can demonstrate and coach all stations.

Finally, if your club athletes need to miss school or class to attend the events, be sure they get permission from their school in advance.





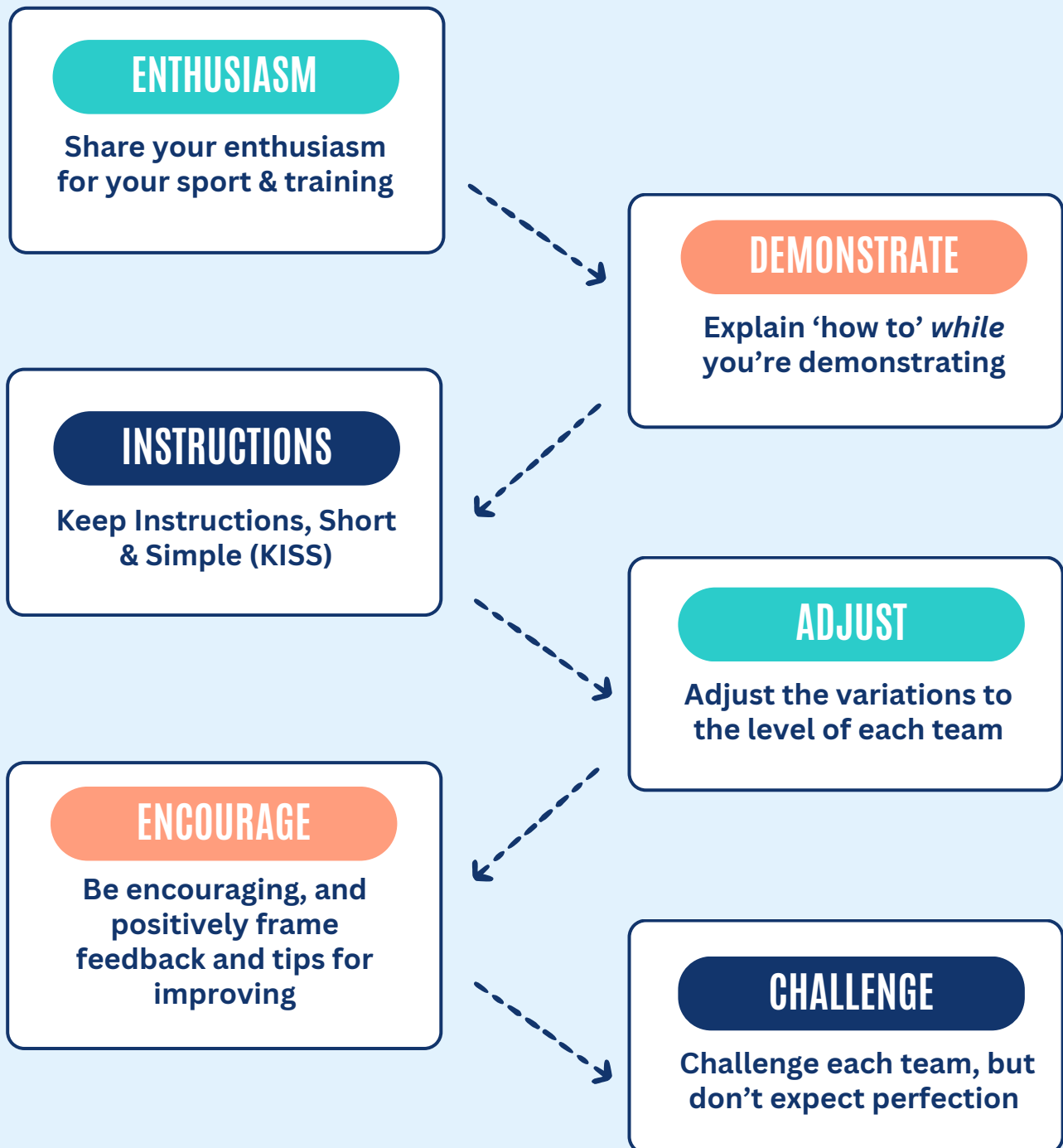
"Tell me and I forget,
teach me and I may
remember, involve
me and I learn."

Benjamin Franklin

TOP TIPS

FOR PEER-TO-PEER COACHING

Depending on how your club operates, these events may be your athletes' first coaching experience. To help them prepare, our top tips for peer-to-peer coaching within the framework of in-school events are:



How To Structure Your Events

Session Size

- We recommend **30-60 participants** per session
- minimum 20, maximum 80

Number of sessions

- Always aim to reach as many children as possible at a given school
- **3-5 sessions** per school, per day works well (younger club athletes may struggle to maintain their enthusiasm and energy for coaching with any more than this)

Session Length

- **35-50 mins** (ideal length is 45 mins)

Session timetable

Event Welcome

TIME:

4-5 mins

- Introduce your team
- Introduce the sport and ask questions
- K4 Kayak Ergometer demonstration

Group Division

TIME:

3-5 mins

- Have the PE or classroom teacher present assist you
- Divide participants into **teams of 4**, or 8 depending on group size
- Have club members fill up incomplete teams

Activity Stations

TIME:

25-40 mins

- Have each team spend 2.5-4 minutes at each of the 10 activity stations
- Have someone (preferably someone from the school) keep time and blow a whistle when it's time to change stations

Debrief

TIME:

3-5 mins

- Distribute giveaways - stickers, flyers. etc.
- Have participants fill out a short survey - or take it back to class to fill out

ACTIVITY STATIONS

The **10 Activity Stations** lie at the heart of every school event. Each station tests different physical skills, whilst encouraging teamwork and movement synchronisation. On the surface some of the activities may not seem very kayak-specific, however, they all challenge one or more foundational physical skills that underpin efficient sprint kayaking, and/or crew boat paddling.

Station Layout



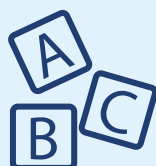
- Lay out the stations in a way that makes it easy to find the next station
- Mark each station with a race number
- Allow enough space around activity stations involving balls (which will inevitably escape)

Time at each activity station



- The time spent at each station will depend on how long the school has given you for each group (if the groups are coming in their regular PE lesson, this will generally be between 40-50 mins)
- Based on our in-school testing, we've found **3.5 mins** to be the ideal length for each station. This timeframe allows participants to complete the challenges to a reasonable level (with some practice) without causing boredom on the less complex stations
- For sessions exceeding 50 minutes, consider providing each team with a scorecard to carry with them. Awarding points adds a fun competitive aspect to the event

Variations



- Between age groups, and even within classes, there can be a wide range of athletic abilities, therefore many stations have variations which can be progressed or regressed to accommodate the skill level of each individual team
- The station coach should choose the variations on a team-by-team basis
- Variations should be challenging and fun, but not impossible

Event Welcome & Group Division

Introduce Yourself

1

- **How:** Each person from your club should introduce themselves by name, and share one thing they love about kayaking or a humorous anecdote about themselves.
- **Why:** Public speaking is an excellent way to enhance your athletes' confidence. Additionally, they serve as key ambassadors for attracting new members to your club.

Introduce the Sport

2

- **How:** Have one of your (adult) coaches briefly introduce what the sport of sprint kayaking is all about. Encourage participants to share whether they know it's an Olympic discipline, or if they can name any Olympic kayakers.
- **Why:** Depending on your location, kids may know little to nothing about sprint kayaking. This is your initial opportunity to spark their curiosity for the sport and encourage them to train with your club.

K4 Ergometer Demonstration

3

- **How:** Have 4 of your athletes (preferably male and female) demonstrate K4 paddling. To keep it short, have them perform 10 slow strokes, followed by 10 fast and powerful ones. If needed, have a coach count to keep everyone in sync.
- **Why:** A single demonstration at the beginning of each session saves time during the participants' activity station time (and gives your athletes a chance to show off their skills and excite participants).

Group Division

4

How:

- For groups of up to 40 participants, divide students into teams of 4
- For larger groups, divide the students into teams of 8
- If you have more than one class together, try to form mixed-class teams
- In co-ed schools try to form groups with 2 female & 2 male students
- Form teams of participants with a similar physical size where possible
- Have club members fill up incomplete teams

Why: Working together with unfamiliar people on team sporting challenges, is a great way to help build social skills, and a more cohesive school environment.



"Good teams become great ones when the members trust each other enough to surrender the 'Me' for the 'We.'"

Phil Jackson

ACTIVITY STATION 1



Cone Square

Cone Square comprises a series of 3 challenges performed around a square of cones. These teamwork challenges involve hopping, hinging, and shoulder & core stability.

Equipment List

Teams of 4

- 4 x small witches hats, or cones
- 4 x tennis balls

Teams of 8

- 8 x small witches hats, or cones
- 8 x tennis balls

Instructions: Challenge 1 - Hopping

1. The balls are placed on top of the cones, with each team member standing behind a cone
2. The team nominates a captain to keep everyone in sync
3. On the captain's cue - the team hops to the next cone around the square together (on one leg), then on cue, they pick up the ball together whilst remaining on one leg
4. On cue - the team hops again to the next cone, and on cue places the ball down on the cone
5. The team keeps repeating this pattern until they have completed at least one circuit around the square with good synchronisation
6. Swap to the other leg, and repeat

Variations

If single-leg hopping is too difficult for a team, this can be replaced with double-leg jumping

What to look out for

Technical

- How well can each individual control their landings?
- How do they control the landing - with the foot, ankle & leg, the core, the arms? (ideally the arms are not being used)
- How much explosive power and distance is the individual able to generate on each hop?

Teamwork

- How well is the team able to synchronise their hopping and follow their captain?
- How willing is someone to step forward and lead the group as captain?



Instructions: Challenge 2 - High Plank

1. The balls are set out on the cones, with each team member coming into in high plank behind their cone
2. On the captain's cue ("down")- the team picks up the ball with the left hand and places it on the floor between the hands
3. On cue ("up")- they place the ball back on the cone" with the right hand
4. Repeat until the team starts to tire, or it's time to move on

Coaching Cues

- Freeze the body and just move the arms
- Keep your body like a triangle with the floor (not a banana, or a mountain)

Help athletes position their hips correctly to hold a good plank position, and look out for excessive body roll.



Instructions: Challenge 3 - Single-leg Hinging

1. Each team member stands behind a cone holding a ball
2. Together on cue, the team perform a straight-leg, single-leg hinge holding the ball on the standing leg side
3. Everyone places the balls on their cone and returns to standing
4. The team then performs a single-hinge on the other leg, picking up the ball with the standing leg side hand
5. Repeat until the group has some level of control, or it's time to move on

Coaching Cues

- Keep the hips level
- Imagine you tip your body over like a see-saw
- Imagine there is a broomstick running down your back from your head to your foot
- Keep the hips facing forward
- Bend the standing leg knee very slightly
- Feel the floor with the whole foot (tripod foot)

The importance of synchronisation on land

To excel in crew boats, athletes frequently need to adjust their own paddling style to stay well synchronised with the rest of the crew. If an athlete lacks physical (and mental) adaptability, this can lead to physical discomfort due to movement timing which feels unnatural.

Synchronisation exercises, especially those incorporating stabilisation or balance elements, place athletes outside their comfort zone, and are useful for helping them become more adaptable. These exercises also enhance their awareness of how teammates are moving around them, and help build rhythm.

What does this station test?

- Single-leg balance, stability & control
- Single-leg power generation (plyometrics)
- Core & shoulder stability
- Hinge patterning
- Hip & pelvis control
- Team synchronisation



Photo 1.

How does this station relate to sprint kayaking?

One of the fundamental elements of being able to control (balance) the boat well (without the use of the arms), transfer power efficiently, and manage forces optimally, is the ability to use the legs separately from each other, but together with an integrated core. This requires good control, strength, and connection of the feet, legs, hips, and core.

Challenge 1 helps develop single-leg balance (proprioception) and stability (ability to manage forces) in the lower body and core, and also helps with power development.

Challenge 2 helps develop shoulder & core stability and strength needed to support the stroke

Challenge 3 single-leg hinging helps develop control and strength of the hips and pelvic region whilst further challenging balance and stability.

Set up with a group of 8

- Set up 2 cone squares and have groups work in two teams
- If both teams are of a similar level, have them try to synchronise their movements with all 8 people

ACTIVITY STATION 2



Swiss Balls

The swiss ball station provides participants with a series of 4 challenges which test their team work, co-ordination, and strength skills in pairs.

Equipment List

Teams of 4

- 2 x swiss balls

Teams of 8

- 4 x swiss balls

Instructions: Challenge 1 - Squat

1. Pairs stand facing away from each other with a Swiss ball between their backs
2. They perform at least 5 consecutive synchronised squats whilst keeping the ball between their backs. Participants should aim to drop their hips below the level of their knees.
3. To increase difficulty - both pairs try to stay in sync

Photo 3.



Coaching Cues

- Lean back into the ball (you may need to assist pairs to lean back hard enough)
- Count-in together



Instructions: Challenge 2 - Tricep Dips

1. The pairs stand facing away from each other with the Swiss ball on the ground
2. They come into the tricep dip starting position
3. Once they have their balance, they perform at least 5 consecutive synchronised tricep dips dropping their hips below their knees

Coaching Cues

- Count-in together
- Open your chest



Instructions: Challenge 3 - Push Up

1. The station coach holds the Swiss ball
2. Pairs stand facing each other, with their hands on the ball
3. The pair walk their feet backwards, and when they are ready the coach lets go of the ball
4. Each pair performs at least 5 consecutive synchronised 'push ups',

Variation

If this challenge is too difficult, pairs should take it in turns to practice by putting the ball against a wall to make it more stable.



Instructions: Challenge 4 - Kneeling

1. One person from each pair helps the other to get onto the ball in the kneeling position.
2. The assistant lets go
3. The person then tries to get onto the ball without assistance
4. The pair swap over

Variation

Skilled teams can try air paddling whilst in the kneeling position on the ball.

What does this station test?

- Team communication
- Shoulder, core, & wrist stabilisation
- Leg strength
- Tricep strength



Photo 2.

How does this station relate to sprint kayaking?

Communication and trust are both key to this station and vital for successful training and competing in crew boats.

This station will also highlight general shoulder stabilisation strategies. In the dips and push-ups, you will notice if the participants are able to maintain shoulder integrity throughout the movement, or if they collapse into their shoulders. Stable shoulders are essential to efficient power transfer on the water.

ACTIVITY STATION 3



Shuttles

This station has two shuttle challenges which test participants aerobic fitness and agility, along with throwing/catching skill.

Equipment List

Teams of 4

- 8 x cones
- 2 x basketballs, volleyballs, or footballs
- stopwatch or phone timer

Teams of 8

- 8 x cones
- 4 x basketballs or volleyballs
- stopwatch or phone timer

Instructions: Challenge 1 - Standard Relay

1. 4 pairs of cones are set out (including the start line)
2. Teams of 2 participants race against each other
3. The participants must touch the floor at each marker
4. Once the participant has completed the shuttle, they must tag their partner
5. Time the pairs (fastest wins)

Variations

- With co-ed groups, race both single-gender and mixed-gender pairs/teams
- With more athletic groups, have each pair complete the relay twice or three times in a row without stopping



Instructions: Challenge 2 - Backwards Ball

1. Use the same markers from Challenge 1
2. At the starting signal, the first participant from each pair runs backwards to the first marker, and their partner picks up the ball
3. As they arrive, their partner throws the ball to them, then they place it on the ground at the marker
4. The first runners continue to run backwards to the second marker, while their partner runs to the first marker, picks up the ball and throws it to them on the second marker
5. The pattern continues until the first runners reach the final marker. Once they have the ball the pattern reverses. They throw it back to their partners who place it on the ground and run backwards.
6. The winning team is the first to have the ball and both partners across the starting/finishing line.

Variations

With athletic groups use a light medicine ball (2-3kg) instead of a basketball or volleyball.

What to look out for

Running

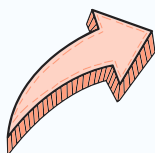
- How well can the participant turn, can they control their balance at high speeds?
- How quickly can they accelerate?

Throwing

- Does the participant use their whole kinetic chain when throwing?

Catching

- Can the participant distribute the force of the ball effectively when catching it?
- Do they use an appropriate level of stiffness in the hands and arms?



What does this station test?

- Aerobic fitness
- Acceleration/deceleration
- Agility
- Throwing/catching
- Coordination



Photo 1.

How does this station relate to sprint kayaking?

Shuttles are not only an obvious way to test aerobic fitness, the changes of direction and repeated sprints will also give you a good indicator of the athlete's ability to accelerate quickly/generate power.

The connection between kayaking and ball throwing and catching is less obvious but equally important. Efficient throwing over longer distances is a full-body action underpinned by the kinetic chain - a sequence of movements which transfers energy from the ground (feet), through the core to the upper body to generate forward momentum in the ball. The same lower-to-upper body energy transference is essential for an efficient paddling technique which utilises the legs and forward momentum effectively.

The clue to catching's relationship to kayaking is in the title...Catching a ball is a complex task, you need to track a moving object, then absorb its force with your hands and arms. Depending on the speed and weight of the ball, this often requires greater force than throwing it. Absorbing the force of the ball requires differing levels of softness and stiffness throughout the body, and the ability to isolate the arms from a stable core. With too much stiffness in the hands, the ball will fall out (or you'll break a finger), too soft in the body - and absorbing the ball's momentum can knock you off balance.

A clean, successful kayaking 'catch' (one when the blade fills with water, and is then locked in place) requires the exact same interplay of softness and stiffness in the upper body and core. Too stiff in the hands and arms during the blade entry, and the athlete will 'kill' the stroke rather than 'feeling' the water. (Instead of hanging off the paddle and moving the boat past a locked blade, this athlete will need to move a huge amount of water). Too soft in the core/body and the athlete won't be able to support pressure on the blade and a strong stroke. Too stiff in the body and the athlete won't be able to adapt well to the movement of the water and boat (often causing instability).

Set up with a group of 8

- If you have space, race 4 teams of 2 so that participants get less rest between turns
- If you're short on space, race 2 teams of 4

ACTIVITY STATION 4



Med Ball Wobble

Medicine Ball Wobble is a series of challenges which combine rotational throwing with balance, and stability

Equipment List

Teams of 4

- 5 x wobble cushions (or balance boards)
- 1 x 2kg medicine ball
- 1 x 3kg medicine ball

Teams of 8

- 9 x wobble cushions
- 2 x 2kg medicine ball
- 2 x 3kg medicine ball

Instructions: Challenge 1 - Sitting Variations

Level 1 - Standard

1. Spread the 5 wobble cushions along a straight line
2. Everyone sits on a wobble cushion in the kayaking position with legs together, and toes pointing up. (The station coach sits on the first cushion).
3. Pass the medicine ball along the line using a rotational throw (not a chest pass)
4. When the ball gets to the end, return it by rolling it along the floor under each person's legs
5. Repeat faster
6. Swivel around and repeat on the opposite side

Level 2 - Around the World

- Each person starts by passing the ball behind their body 'around the world' keeping it off the floor, before throwing it to the next person.
- Once the ball reaches the end, it is returned under the legs as in level 1
- Swivel around and repeat on the other side

Level 3 - Leapfrog (for advanced teams only)

1. The ball is thrown over people from position 1-3-5-4-2-1. If the group gets confused, you can use the pattern 1-3-5-3-1 + 1-2-4-2-1
2. Swivel and repeat on the other side.

**Instructions: Challenge 2 - Standing****Level 1 - Standing on both legs***

1. Throw the ball along the chain and back again
2. Turn to face the opposite direction and repeat, throwing the other way

Level 2 - 'Around the world'

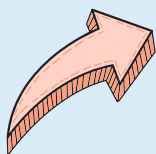
1. Perform 'around the world' in both directions standing on both legs
2. Turn to face the opposite direction and repeat, throwing the other way

Level 3& 4 - Standing on a single leg

1. Repeat levels 1 & 2, now standing on one leg
2. Change legs when you turn to face the opposite direction

Level 5- Leapfrog single-leg (only very for advanced teams)

1. The ball is thrown over people from position 1-3-5-4-2-1. Alternatively, 1-3-5-3-1 + 1-2-4-2-1
2. Turn around, change legs and repeat.



What does this station test?

- Rotational power
- Control & distribution of forces
- Balance
- Stability
- Throwing
- Catching



Photo 2.

How does this station relate to sprint kayaking?

Rotational throwing requires athletes to effectively utilise core torque and stabilisation strategies to transfer power and momentum to an external object - similar to the water phase of a stroke.

Catching a heavy object which is moving laterally to the body (without losing balance, or stressing the arms and shoulders) requires the ability to stabilise the body by distributing the forces of the incoming ball. In the sitting position, this requires good core strength and integration, and in the standing position; good control of the feet and legs. The ability to use the entire lower body and core to stabilise the boat and body against rapidly changing lateral forces is essential for a strong, powerful, and efficient stroke.

🌀 Notes for Coaches

With 3-4 mins per station, there isn't time to demonstrate these sequences before starting, therefore the coach at this station needs to participate and coach it on the go.

Use a 2kg medicine ball for younger, or more uncoordinated groups, and a 3kg ball for older or more advanced groups. If the group is struggling, move the wobble cushions closer together.

Teams tend to vary greatly in their ability to perform the activities on this station. Less advanced teams may only get through the first two levels of the sitting variations in the time allowed. With more advanced groups (or to challenge a team), you can skip standing on both legs and move straight to standing on one leg.

Set up with a group of 8

- If you have access to 9 wobble cushions/balance boards, set up a line of 5 and a line of 4 parallel to each other, and have athletes sit/stand facing each other.
- If you only have 5 wobble cushions, have one group sitting and one group standing, swapping over halfway through the allocated time.

ACTIVITY STATION 5



Agility Ladder

The agility ladder provides a series of challenges to test shoulder and core stability, single-leg control, coordination, and of course – general agility.

Equipment List

Teams of 4

- 1 x agility ladder – at least 6M

Teams of 8

- 2 x agility ladders – at least 6M each

Challenge 1 - Walk the Plank

1. Set up with 2 team members on each side, in alternating squares
2. Have a team member keep everyone synchronised with L-R cues
3. The team 'walks' the ladder together in the high-plank position
4. Participants should lift the hand and foot on the same side off the ground together.

Variation

If the group is struggling to lift the hand and foot off the ground at the same time, have them slow the exercise down and exaggerate this movement, rolling the body to the side and pausing with one foot and one arm high in the air.



Notes for Coaches

Check for good straight plank positions, and with more advanced teams – minimal body roll as they move along the ladder.



Challenge 2 - Jumping & Hopping

Level 1 - Jumping in and out

Perform with synchronisation

Level 2 - Diagonal Hopping

Repeat on both legs

Level 3 - Backwards jumping pattern

Perform with synchronisation

Level 4 - Jump & Turn

Challenge 3 - Fast Footwork

Level 1 - Tip-toe running

Run through as fast as possible placing both feet in every square

Level 2 - 'Waltz'/123

1 & 2 inside the ladder, 3 outside the ladder

🌀 Notes for Coaches

Repeat each variation at least twice.

Participants who regularly train football or tennis, will generally find the jumping and footwork variations at this station easier and can complete a large number of variations in the allowed time, while working more on synchronisation.

Less experienced teams, can benefit from a smaller selection of the less complex exercises such as; Plank Walk, L1 Jumping & Hopping, and L1 Fast Footwork.



What does this station test?

- Shoulder & core & stability
- Team synchronisation
- Single-leg strength, control, & power
- Dynamic balance
- Ability to learn new movement patterns
- Physical & mental adaptability
- Co-ordination
- Fast reactions



Photo 1.

How does this station relate to sprint kayaking?

Challenge 1 Plank walk helps develop the shoulder and core stability needed to support the forces on the blade. Synchronisation helps develop crew awareness.

Challenge 2 Jumping and hopping variations help develop the leg strength, control, and power needed to help balance the boat and effectively transfer energy from the footrest.

Challenge 3 Fast footwork variations help develop quick reactions and the mental adaptability to execute high-speed movement patterns - a necessity for starts and sprinting.

Set up with a group of 8

- set up the two agility ladders parallel to each other
- for jumping and fast footwork variations which do not require synchronisation, have the teams compete against each other for speed

ACTIVITY STATION 6



Wheelbarrow & Caterpillar

Two challenges to test shoulder & core strength and stability, along with teamwork.

Equipment List

Teams of 4 or 8

- 4 cones to mark the course for Challenge 1

Instructions: Challenge 1 - Wheelbarrow Race (Carriola)

1. Divide the team into 2 pairs keeping the most similarly sized participants together
2. Pairs race come into the wheelbarrow position and race to a marker
3. Once reaching the marker they swap over and race back
4. The first pair to return to the starting line wins

Photo 3.



Coaching Cues

- push the floor away from you
- keep the tummy tight
- keep the hips high & legs straight
- no banana backs
- top tip: holding the legs closer to the knees can help participants who have saggy backs and bent legs



Instructions: Challenge 2 - Caterpillar

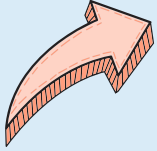
1. Have the team form a line from smallest to largest
2. The smallest 3 team members come onto their hands and knees
3. Starting from the front of the line, each person places their feet on the shoulders of the person behind them (the coach may need to assist)
4. The 4th team member picks up the feet of the last person
5. On L-R cues, the caterpillar tries to walk forward



Photo 4.

Coaching Cues

- push the floor away from you
- keep your head down (front 3 people)
- keep your legs together (front 2)
- keep your hips high



What does this station test?

- Shoulder & core strength
- Shoulder & core stability and integration
- Force distribution
- Teamwork

How does this station relate to sprint kayaking?

Being able to distribute the force on the blade throughout the body during the water phase, is crucial for a strong and powerful stroke that doesn't place unnecessary stress on the shoulder and arm. This requires good shoulder and core, strength, stability, and integration (alongside support from the legs and hips).

When one hand is lifted off the floor as the participant 'walks' on their hands, these same mechanisms in the shoulder and core are being challenged.

Set up with a group of 8

- For Challenge 1 - race 4 pairs
- For Challenge 2 - have 2 caterpillars, or if the group is very advanced, try one very long caterpillar



Photo 3.

Kc4u school participants with poor core support (banana backs)



Photo 2.

Kc4u school participants with better core strength & integration

ACTIVITY STATION 7



Tug of War

The classic game of strength & tactics

Equipment List

Teams of 4 or 8

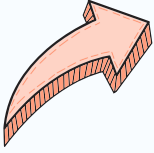
- 1 battle rope or other long rope
- a marker to tie on the rope
- a cone or marker for the floor

Instructions

1. Tie a marker in the middle of the rope
2. Place a line on the ground and line up the middle of the rope
3. Divide the group in half
4. Ready-set-go
5. The first team to pull their opponents over the middle line wins

With co-ed groups, challenge both mixed and single-gender teams. Have any unoccupied school staff and coaches join in.

If you are short on station coaches from your club, this is a good station to have the school PE teacher help run.



What does this station test?

- Pulling strength with integrated leg use
- Teamwork
- Dynamic balance
- Adaptation to changes in force



Photo 4.

How does this station relate to sprint kayaking?

Leaning back against the legs and pulling with the arms may be a little more like rowing than kayaking. However, aside from being fun and fostering a sense of camaraderie and healthy competition, tug-of-war can help athletes engage the core and legs to adjust to the dynamic resistance provided by the opposing team - useful for adapting to changes forces on the water. Additionally, it provides the sensation of 'hanging' with the arms, while connected to grounded feet - important to being able to hang off the paddle on the blade lock.

🌀 Notes for Coaches

Test the rope you are going to use before the event. Some ropes are more likely to give children bad rope burn than others. Alternatively, if you only have groups of 4 at each station, you can use two sheets tied together and then twisted.



Photo 3.

ACTIVITY STATION 8



Standing-Sitting

The Standing-Sitting station comprises two fun challenges which require a very high level of teamwork to complete. You will need two coaches to demonstrate.

Equipment List

- Nothing required

Instructions: Challenge 1 - Back to Back

1. First, have participants try this challenge in pairs
2. Each pair sits back-to-back with their feet tucked in close, and their arms interlinked
3. They stand up by pressing back into each other
4. Once standing, they sit back down in the starting position
5. Once they have mastered this in pairs, repeat the exercise with the whole group of 4.



Photo 3.



Instructions: Challenge 2 - Facing forward

1. First, have participants try this challenge in pairs
2. Each pair sits facing each other, with toes touching, and holding hands
3. They stand up by pulling outward
4. Once standing, they sit back down in the starting position
5. Once they have mastered this in pairs, repeat the exercise with the whole group of 4.

What does this station test?

- Teamwork
- Hip & leg mobility
- Dynamic balance
- Force matching



Photo 3.

How does this station relate to sprint kayaking?

The challenges at this station require participants work together and adjust force production and dynamic balance relative to both their body weight and teammates (otherwise not all of the group will be able to stand up at the same time). These are all useful skills for effective synchronisation in crew boats. Good hip mobility is essential for rotation and efficient power transfer on the water.

Set up with a group of 8

Start the challenges with pairs, then 2 groups of 4. If the group finds it easy, you can have them attempt both challenges in one large group



"The best team is not the team with the best players, but the team that plays best together."

Jamie Dimon

ACTIVITY STATION 9



Paddle Practice

The Synchronised Paddle station introduces teams to moving with a real kayak paddle

Equipment List

- 2 x long benches or 8 x chairs*
- 4 x paddles

*You may prefer to use a mini-K4, or 2 x MK2's instead of benches. With this set up you'll also need 4 x short broomsticks in addition to paddles.

Instructions: Challenge 1 - Connected rotations

1. Have the team sit on the bench as if in a K4
2. Seats 1 & 2, and 3 & 4 hold on to one paddle with the Left hand, and one paddle with the Right hand
3. The whole group moves the paddles forward and backwards together

Photo 4.



Notes for Coaches

If the team can move well together, challenge them to try to have the hip follow the forward movement of the hand.



Instructions: Challenge 2 - K4 Air Paddling

1. Demonstrate how to hold the paddle (where to place the hands, and which way around the 'spoon' goes).
2. Demonstrate a basic stroke and how to change the blade angle in the air
3. Have the group air paddle together at different speeds

🌀 Notes for Coaches

To keep the group together, first count strokes out loud for them. Once they are comfortable with that, have a volunteer from the team take over.

What does this station teach?

- How to hold the paddle
- Basic stroke pattern
- Basic rotation
- Synchronised paddling movement



Photo 3.

Set up with a group of 8

Unless you have a session with 80 participants, then we recommend combining Activity Stations 9 & 10 and sending 4 children from the 8 to each station (swapping them over when the timing whistle blows). If you do have a session with 80 kids, then you'll need to double the equipment on the list.

ACTIVITY STATION 10



This video shows the K4 demonstration from the event introduction

Ergometer K4

The ergometer K4 brings crew paddling into the school gym

Equipment list

- 4 x kayak ergometers

Instructions

1. Place the ergometers in a line to form a 'K4'
2. Organise each team member on their ergometer as quickly as possible (the setup doesn't have to be perfect)
3. Help each person to make a basic stroke
4. Let everyone play around with paddling at different speeds
5. Have the group try to paddle in synchronisation



Photo 3.

Notes for Coaches

Holding the paddle from behind as participants paddle is a great way for them to get the feel of a good stroke, but check first if the participant is comfortable with you doing this.

TEAM ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Activity Station	Session Nr.	Coach Name/s
1 Cone Square	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
2 Swiss Balls	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
3 Shuttles	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
4 Med Ball Wobble	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
5 Agility Ladder	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
6 Wheelbarrow- Caterpillar	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
7 Tug of War	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
8 Standing-Sitting	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
9 Paddle Practice	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
10 Ergometer K4	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____

EQUIPMENT CHECKLIST

Items	Packed
Race Numbers 1-10	<input type="checkbox"/>
Whistle	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 x Kayak ergometers	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 Paddles	<input type="checkbox"/>
1 Battle Rope (long rope) with tie in the middle	<input type="checkbox"/>
Agility Ladder	<input type="checkbox"/>
Medicine Balls	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wobble Cushions/balance boards	<input type="checkbox"/>
Swiss Balls	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tennis Balls	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cones (16+)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kayaks (optional)	<input type="checkbox"/>

COMMUNICATION CHECKLIST

Items	
Club Flag (or other local or national flags)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Roll Banner	<input type="checkbox"/>
Flyers (promoting an Open Day/Week + general club info)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Posters for Open Day	<input type="checkbox"/>
Giveaways	<input type="checkbox"/>
Images from competitions	<input type="checkbox"/>
Medals (club member medals can be used to decorate the space)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participant Survey	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local Press invited	<input type="checkbox"/>
Press release	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social Media	<input type="checkbox"/>
Media Release Consent	<input type="checkbox"/>

Participant Survey Example

1. School:

School A

School B

School C

2. First Name: _____

3. Gender: _____

4. Age: _____

5. School Year: _____

4. Have you ever been kayaking before today? YES / NO

5. Before today, did you know you can compete in sprint kayaking? YES / NO

6. Would you like to try sprint kayaking on the water? YES / NO / I already train sprint kayaking

7. On a scale of 1-5 how much did you enjoy today's session (1 not at all, 5 I loved it)

1 2 3 4 5

The Kc4u School Experience

In 2024 Kc4u introduced Crew Kayaking Events to four schools in Sardinia and Slovenia, engaging over 600 school children and club athletes.

- Istituto Comprensivo, Cabras (IT)
- Istituto Istruzione Superiore 'Mariano IV d'Arborea', Oristano (IT)
- Istituto Comprensivo n2, Oristano (IT)
- Osnova šola Simona Gregorčiča, Kobarid (SI)

We sincerely thank all the students and staff for their participation and contributions to enhancing the model presented in this guide.

Photo 4.



Target Participants

The Kc4u Crew Kayaking In-School event is designed for **children aged 10-16**. However, depending on your club's objectives, it can be easily adjusted to accommodate children as young as 8, and up to 18.

Key Statistics from Our Experience

581

Total School
Participants 10-18 yrs

39

Total Club Athlete-
Coaches <18yrs

48%

% Who didn't know
sprint kayaking is a
competitive sport

64%

of participants had
never previously been
kayaking

61%

of participants
wanted to try sprint
kayaking on the water

83%

of participants rated
their enjoyment of the
events 4, or 5 out of 5

THE KC4U TEAM

Kayak Crews 4 Youth is an international collaborative project developed and managed by the coaches and athletes of Kajak Klub Zlatorog and Circolo Nautico Oristano. Our dedicated crew has a wealth of experience in nurturing talent and crafting programs for everyone from beginners taking their first strokes, to seasoned Olympians.

 [@kayakcrews.eu](https://www.instagram.com/kayakcrews.eu)



Kajak Klub Zlatorog – SLO

Nestled in the small town of Most na Soči - Slovenia, KKZ is home to National Team athletes and coaches, as well as kayakers at various stages of their paddling journey. Alongside challenging the status quo through innovative programs, KKZ is dedicated to empowering more girls through sport. Their *Paddle PWR-Girl PWR* initiative was honoured with the EU's 2022 #BeEqual Award for gender equality in sport.



Circolo Nautico Oristano – ITA

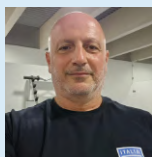
Established in 1970, CNO has a long tradition of coaching kayak, canoe and other watersport athletes of all levels. Located in Cabras on the island of Sardinia, CNO is an integral part of the local community, and home to three Italian National Team coaches along with many exceptional athletes.



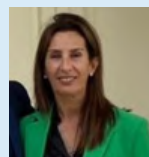
Melanie Schembri Waite
Project Leader, Coach, & Education
Coordinator



Stefano Loddo
Coach



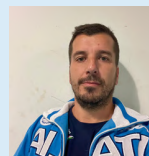
Gianmarco Patta
Italian Coordinator & Coach



Cecilia Tola
Coach



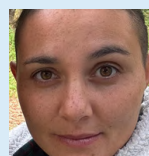
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Andrea Lilliu
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Coach



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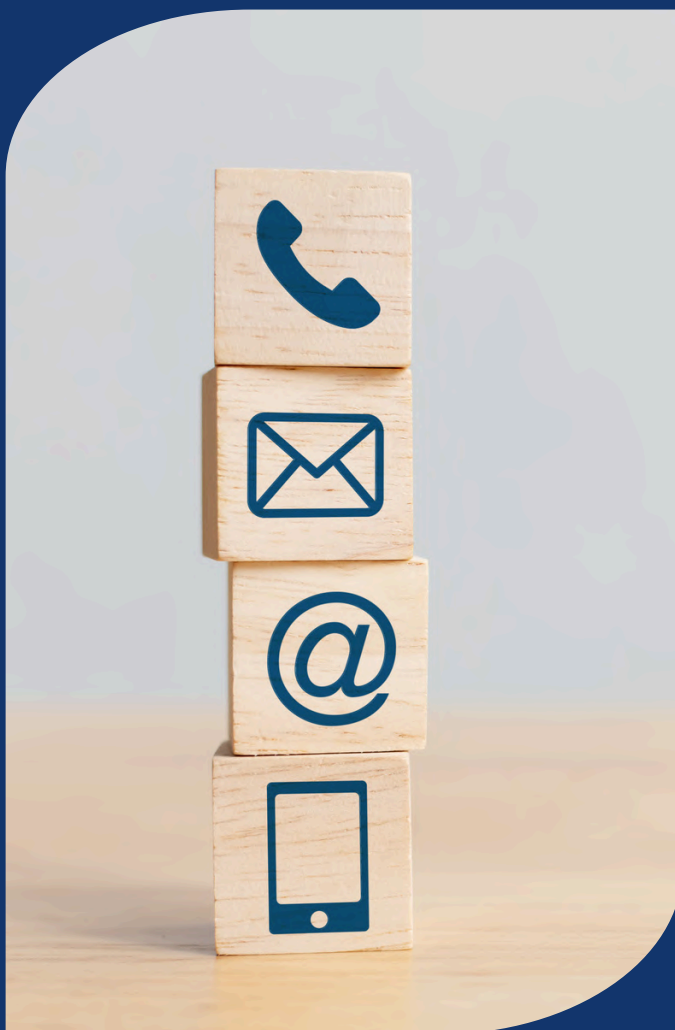
kayakcrews.eu

Instagram

[@kayakcrews.eu](https://www.instagram.com/kayakcrews.eu)

YouTube*

[@KayakCrews4Youth](https://www.youtube.com/@KayakCrews4Youth)



Photos

Photos 1. Participants from Istituto Comprensivo Cabras (ITA)

Photos 2. Participants from Istituto Istruzione Superiore 'Mariano IV d'Arborea' Oristano (ITA)

Photos 3. - Participants from Istituto Comprensivo n2, Oristano (ITA): © Daniela Caddeo

Photos 4. - Participants from Osnovna šola Simona Gregorčiča, Kobarid (SLO)

Photos 1, 2, & 4: Kc4u Team

* If you encounter any dead video links in this guide, please visit our YouTube channel [@KayakCrews4Youth](https://www.youtube.com/@KayakCrews4Youth) to find the corresponding video.



Co-funded by
the European Union



Photo 2.