

Paddlesports Games and Activities



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The games and activities in this guide are mainly for canoes and kayaks. Canoeing and Kayaking are Adventurous Activities and should only be led by instructors with the correct permits and qualifications. You can find out more information about the Adventurous Activity Permit Scheme [here](#).

Information about sessions run by the High Peak Scouts Paddlesports Team is available [here](#).

Capture The Rope

The aim of this game is to be the kayak or canoe with the most lengths of rope!

Set up

Tie a rope to the front and back of each boat using a slip knot or highwayman's hitch. The releasing end should be around 2 metres long so it can trail in the water behind the boat.

Playing the game

- 1) Once everyone's found their sea legs, introduce the game and define a playing area.
- 2) Make sure all the ropes are easily accessible and give everyone twenty seconds to spread out.
- 3) Blow a whistle and get the game going.
- 4) Each participant or boat should try and collect as many lengths as possible. There's no getting out, so everyone should keep going until there are no ropes left attached.
- 5) Once all the ropes have been detached, count up and see who has collected the most.

Safety

Be mindful of the risk of entrapment when using ropes. If they've been attached to the boats in advance of the activity, make sure they are secured and stored out of the way.

This activity involves boats moving close together, often at speed. Remind participants to keep their hands clear and try to avoid ramming into one another.

Detaching the ropes may throw some paddlers off balance – particularly in kayaks. Review the ability of the group before playing this game.

Hot Sponge

The rules are simple; you don't want the sponge! This game is ideal for warm weather.

Set up

All you need to do is make sure you've got a sponge!

Playing the game

- 1) Introduce the game and define a playing area.
- 2) Appoint the first person to be on, and give everyone twenty seconds to spread out.
- 3) Blow a whistle and get the game started.
- 4) Whoever is on should try to throw the sponge into someone else's cockpit. Once someone else has it, they're on. If they miss, they should retrieve the sponge and carry on.

Safety

Keep an eye on the level of water in each boat (especially kayaks) to prevent capsizes.

Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Jump

Perfect when rafted together.

Set up

Everyone should be rafted together side by side, with paddles placed across the front of each boat.

Playing the game

- 1) Once everyone's rafted together, explain what's going to happen.
- 2) One person will stand up and sing 'head, shoulders, knees, and jump'. Set a challenge and see who can jump the highest!
- 3) Everyone else should make sure the raft is being held tightly together to make sure it's well balanced.
- 4) If the group manage well, see if anyone is confident enough to have a go whilst not in a raft.

Safety

Participants may lose balance and end up in the water. Make sure you're close by to support them back into their boat.

When forming the raft, be mindful of finger entrapment.

Paddling Traffic Light

This game focusses on manoeuvring skills and is great for beginner paddlers.

Playing the game

- 1) Get everyone on the water and define a playing area.
- 2) Introduce the three commands:
 - Green light – Paddling forwards quickly
 - Amber light – Paddling forwards slowly
 - Red light – Stop
- 3) Mix up the commands to make sure everyone is confident in all three manoeuvres.
- 4) Once everyone's got the hang of it, you could add in commands such as:
 - Reverse – Go backwards
 - Left turn – Spin in the left (anti-clockwise) direction
 - Right turn – Spin in the right (clockwise) direction

Safety

To start, avoid going from green to red in order to prevent accidental capsizes.

Treasure Hunt

The aim of this game is to have the most floaty things in your boat.

Set up

Disperse a collection of things that float. You could use rubber ducks or ping pong balls.

Playing the game

- 1) Get everyone together and introduce the game and define the playing area and a "home base".
- 2) Each person should collect one piece of treasure at a time and bring it back to the home base.
- 3) After five minutes, the person with the most amount of treasure wins!
- 4) You could make it head to head by having two colours of items. Split the group into two teams and give each a colour. The team to collect all their items first wins.

Safety

To avoid collisions, make sure the items are spread out, and discourage people from trying to collect the same item.

Paddling Polo

Once everyone's learnt the core skills, this game is great at putting them into practice.

Set up

Position two goals – these could be empty canoes or instructor's boats.

You'll also need a ball.

Playing the game

- 1) Introduce the game and designate a playing area.
- 2) Split the group into two teams and allocate each team a goal.
- 3) Each team needs to get the ball into the other team's goal in order to score points.
- 4) One person cannot have the ball for any longer than ten seconds, otherwise it is given to the other team.
- 5) The team who scores the most goals after five minutes wins.

Safety

This game is non-contact, so boats shouldn't ram into one another and paddles should not be used to hit each other.

Animal Paddlers

Great for younger paddlers, this game develops core skills whilst having fun.

Playing the game

- 1) Once everyone's had a practice of their skills, introduce the game and define a playing area.
- 2) Introduce the commands:
 - Cheetah – Paddle forwards quickly
 - Snail – Paddle forwards really slowly
 - Opossum – Stop
 - Frog – Two paddle strokes, stop, and repeat
 - Snake – Paddle in a series of 'S' – shaped turns.
- 3) Spread out and start to go through the commands.
- 4) Once everyone's got the hang of it, ask for suggestions or make it more challenging with commands such as:
 - Crab – Paddle sideways
 - Centipede – Get in a line (end to end) and paddle in a straight line

Safety

To start, avoid going from 'Cheetah' to 'Opossum' in order to prevent accidental capsizes.

Relay Races

This game focuses on speed and paddling effectively

Set up

You'll need two buoys or instructor's boats to act as marker.

Playing the game

- 1) Introduce the game and define a playing area.
- 2) Split the group into two teams.
- 3) Divide those teams into two groups. One group will go to one marker, and the other group will go to the other. Make sure the same team is opposite one another.
- 4) One person from each team will race from one marker to the other, before tapping the paddle of their team mate who will race back to the first marker, and repeat.
- 5) The winner is the team where everyone has raced.
- 6) You can make it more challenging by making the distances longer.

Safety

To prevent injuries to fingers, ensure everyone knows to tap paddles lightly and keep fingers away from the blades.

If the relay is across a large distance, consider having an instructor at each marker and one somewhere in between.

Canoe Bubble

Ideal for hot weather and group with confident swimmers. It's best to play at the end of sessions.

Set up

Find an area that's deep enough for a canoe to capsize.

Playing the game

- 1) Once you've found an appropriate area, explain how to capsize the canoe.
- 2) Once capsized, the participants can experience what it's like to be in the air bubble of the canoe.
- 3) After no more than 90 seconds, the participants should come out of the canoe.
- 4) If no one's willing to capsize the canoe, simply roll it over in shallow water and allow the participants to swim under it.

Safety

To ensure appropriate supervision, one instructor should supervise one capsized craft only. Instructors should be ready to perform necessary rescues if required.

All participants should wear the appropriate PPE (buoyancy aids and helmets) and be wearing clothing suitable for the water.

Participants should spend no longer than 90 seconds in the upturned canoe.