

We train to reinforce behaviours and movements, ours is a technical sport which is why you must have correct technique and boat skills first, physicality second.

Once you have your skills (which you must keep working on especially as you grow) you can work on your physical strengths. You can't compensate for a lack of skills with more S&C. In a simplified way, weight training is used to break muscle tissue in minute tears and allow them to repair thicker and stronger, repeating the process allows bigger and stronger muscles, this may be easier to achieve with weights than paddling. ***But you must question the rationale – if I can't break it on the water, do I need to on land?***

It is about training your body to adapt so what adaptations are you after? And how best do you achieve them?

At junior and club level we are only talking relatively light weights. Body weight is plenty heavy enough and after all, this is what you are moving on the water. Weight training with super big weights is for body builders and we are kayakers!

A paddling specific range of activities allows you to build a complete system. However, we all have different body types and react in different ways to different sessions, you must train your strong **and** weak areas as well as your mental capacity. Don't just do the sessions and exercises you're "good" at.

Importantly, you must respect your body, especially during growth stages. You are going to get tired but with proper nutrition and proper rest you should recover, all three aspects are just as important – you can't get stronger without sleep and eating junk food.

Respect the process – You don't continually get stronger at a constant rate. You'll experience periods of sudden improvements (usually when you first start a programme), periods of no gain and occasionally getting weaker. This is normal. Everybody experiences this to a greater or lesser extent, and it follows a natural rhythm. Enjoy the good days, endure the not so good days. Learn to understand that this is just another form of training and not the end goal

**Body weights:** You are trying to move your body in a boat so what is wrong with starting with that?

Think about the impact the exercise is going to have on you, do you need to do it for kayaking or overall fitness? For instance, a poor exercise for kayaking is sit-ups – if you only work your abdominals (tummy muscles – six pack) does it make you hunched over in your boat? – this can be exacerbated by bench press/press ups and poor hamstring flexibility. So "**core**" exercises are better. ***Moving core*** exercises are better still, ***paddling specific*** movements are even better.

Think both sides of the system so include back exercises if working the front, back bends/sit ups – reverse fly's – bench press.

The advantage of weights is it's easier to get to the point of failure, but you should still get there. If you are doing an exercise and managing it without struggling, then you need to do either more repetitions or a slightly heavier weight. So, a body weight exercise where you complete it and aren't tired means you need to work harder. We are training the brain too.

**Weights:** Being stronger doesn't make you faster, being able to transfer that strength into your paddling might! Try to replicate as much as possible your overall paddle movements and the muscles used and don't concentrate on one set of muscles, you are a whole system not one muscle. For instance, why would you bench press with a different width grip to your paddles? Don't forget or neglect your stabilisers muscles! Use free weights over a machine – most importantly be safe! **Never work in a gym on your own, especially with a loud radio!**

**Exercises:** As it says above, these should be paddle specific as much as possible however you can "isolate" a movement but not a muscle group (remember we're kayakers not body builders). So, a hanging single arm pull with body rotation is good (i.e. on the hanging ropes), curling dumbbells isn't.

**Bench press** – You should question why we coach paddlers to never push their top arm on the water and yet spend winter getting them strong at pushing the arms? Bench press should be to better control the top arm and shoulder. So a better exercise is to use dumbbells to build stability muscles so you can hold that top arm still when on the water rather than have it wobble around (you won't lift as much as on a bar, but it'll be more useful to you). If you get good and move beyond the dumbbell weights then try lifting your legs off the ground engaging the core, and stopping your legs offering stability (you may have to lighten the load).

**Hanging press ups**, again good for stabilisers, unlike press ups on the ground, the effort doesn't decrease as you move up (on the ground your weight shifts to your feet and off your arms). On the ropes you are constantly stabilising no matter where you are in the press up. This also works your **core** too.

**Lawler slider:** This is **NEVER** about moving as much weight as fast and as far as possible if you are using poor technique to achieve it. Two good strokes are worth 20 bad ones! Never thrust it forward or lean back to move it. Make it boat specific. Look into the mirror, relax your face, watch your top hand.

**Rest:** The idea of training is to push yourself to your limits (and over) and recover and repeat. If you don't try hard, you'll only improve slowly to a limited amount. However, rest and recovery are the parts which allows the improvements. You must train to your physical limit, eat well, remain hydrated and sleep properly. Especially in the crucial teenage years when you experience maximum growth but also must balance training with school exams.

**Mental training:** Most people's bodies are limited by their head. You must train the brain as much as the body. Weights are a good way to see easy improvements and whether you did or didn't lift/move it, is easy to gauge. However, whilst weights can be good in getting

athletes to learn to try, do question why the big improvement. If it's supposedly the same as your paddling are you going faster when on the water?

**Goal setting:** You should have a personal aim, try not to get worried about what others can do and concentrate on improving your best.

**Injury:** As the sign says in the gym, weights aren't dangerous, it's the idiots that use them that are!!!

You are trying to cause minute tears in muscles to repair and grow stronger, however most canoeist get injured through running or gym. Be careful! Learn proper form and be sensible, particularly hard for teenage boys and men in gyms!

Don't train with headphones on and definitely don't train alone with loud music because who is going to hear you cry for help? Get some proper advice about how to structure your session or sessions but be very careful about what you read on the web!

**DOMS:** Delayed onset muscle soreness it what you get the next day from weights, you need to get back in the gym or on the water, don't wait until it goes away as you'll just repeat the process and it's what you are after anyway – this is NOT true of an injury or tear, training through something like this can cause serious damage. Get proper advice (a Dr well tell you to rest – a physio might show you some helpful exercises – an S&C coach might show you how to do it properly in the first place.

**Kaytech**  
PADDLE SPORTS COACHING