

Common technique errors and why they can happen

(and tips on rectifying and self-checks).

This is NOT aimed at a high level of athlete but the beginners and intermediate foundation of what should be corrected asap. Ivan Lawler at Ultimate kayaks has done lots of video tutorials to help good technique, this is unfortunately about the bad!

In no particular order

- 1. Paddling low and wide** – circular fashion
Often used as an aide to stability in the mistaken guise of lowering COG and making each stroke wider i.e. further from the boat and therefore widening the stability base. Causes the boat to yaw from left to right and brings the paddle too far back past the body
- 2. Pushing top hand up/across or forward** – a definite no, no. Paddlers rush to get the next stroke in, so they speed up the “unloaded” top arm and “rush” to the next stroke. – Sometimes people are even coached to do this – it’s wrong!
They are unloading the pressure or can’t hold the pressure of the loaded paddle – reasons vary from: not being strong enough to hold the paddle down, the blades are too big, paddles are too long or all three or they don’t know any different!
- 3. Pushing top hand over or under the paddle shaft** – bad wrist position
The first scenario can force the top arm down (up and over) making the bottom arm lift water at the back of the stroke
Second scenario – can be caused by over feathering, wrong blade angle, both are extra strain on a weak joint, as it’s pulling on a bent wrist.
- 4. Paddle isn’t submerged in the water** –
Paddle blade is only fully submerged behind the paddler when it’s slowing the boat!
Paddle blade is never fully submerged
Often a case of stability concerns – unstable people feel a fully submerged paddle can pull them in, when in reality, this should be your support, otherwise you are constantly balancing and not using the paddle to support you.
This can sometimes be caused by the bottom arm bending at the elbow, so the paddle is not submerged so the hand stays parallel with the surface of the water rather than “falling” from the front of the stroke in an arc.
This can be caused by the blades being too big, paddles are too long, or the paddler is weak or rushing.
- 5. Slapping the water/splashing on entry** -
Paddle should be placed into the water and not pulled back through the air until it hits the water, this again can be caused by the top hand being too low, *making the paddles very flat rather than more vertical*. Rushing to get the next stroke, or stability issues.
- 6. Lifting out with elbow or wrist** –
The back of the hand (watch face) should lead the paddle out, it should not be lifted by the weak wrist or by “chicken wings” elbow. Often lifting water at the back of the stroke is a sign. It is a waste of energy lifting heavy water for no gain.
- 7. Bobbing backwards and forwards** – sometimes called porpoising
This causes the boat to dive and rise. Paddlers lean forward to “reach” further, then sit up (and occasionally lean back to pull the paddle) and repeat, causing a diving and rising motion, all the while unloading the paddle.
- 8. Leaning away from the entered paddle** –
Often done in the thought that the paddlers body weight is “pulling the blade” this isn’t the case. Again, sometimes a stability issue which is exacerbated. The paddler is leaning off the

paddle and only pulling one paddle full of water maximum, it also causes the boat to rock from side to side.

9. Head movement –

The can range from a head moving from side to side, looking down at the knees to bobbing up and down – it's all wasted energy, it can cause stability issues, relaxation issues, it is also harder to breathe with your head down if exerting yourself, you are not looking at the horizon (for balance) or where you are going (in case of a crash). It is also hard to keep your top arm in front of your face/eyes if you are looking down!

10. **Rotation – of the trunk** – over rotation can be as bad as under rotation in the wrong places – “Rotation” It's an often-used phrase as is “longer stroke” but both should mean at the front of the stroke and not at the back. Often people can rotate “back” without pulling with their body. Or in gaining a “longer stroke” just extend it further back rather than extending the front.

We haven't even mentioned leg drive – hip movement - relaxed hands – relaxed face – sitting up/posture – entry angle – straight arms -bent wrist– paddle shaft not entering the cockpit space – crossing over -- pulling past the vertical – pulling down the boat...

Circle which of the above do you do?

Give yourself a score out of 10

/10

Tips on rectifying and self-checks – ask us to expand on yours

1. Lift top arm to face height, enter paddle more vertically, submerge paddle.
2. Don't do it! Let the top arm follow the paddle – keep the same strong body shape. If you are a pusher do it in the air between strokes.
3. Change the angle/feather of your paddles, keep the **OPEN** top hand in-front of the face
4. Place the blade fully in the water – don't rush – don't break/bend the straight bottom arm, let it full down in an arc from the front at head/shoulder height, to coming out beside knees and before hips.
5. Place the blade fully in the water – don't rush – enter paddle more vertically
6. Check width of hand grips – too narrow makes it harder – think of a T-Rex! keep the same strong body shape, rotate with the body and the paddle should slide out relatively un aided
7. Don't do it! Stay vertically static (at whatever angle, relatively upright) rotate forward (not lean), do not reach by rocking, or pull by leaning back – rotate the body trunk do not move it forward/backward, check the movement of the boat, is it up and down?
8. Lean onto the paddle – easier said than done if you've not done it before, check your body/head on the centre line of the boat, check the movement of the boat, is it rocking left to right?
9. Are you looking through your eyebrows/hair? Are you focused/looking at the paddle on the left & then on the right or just staring at the end of the boat? Look forward!
10. Keep the same strong body shape, don't pull with the biceps/bent arm – twist/rotate the shoulder/one side of the body forward (don't push the top arm!) & drive the top shoulder down (compress – but not the body), the paddle is useless past the vertical so don't pull it back past the knee, by the hip it should be exiting.

This is not an exhaustive list of fixes or do's and don'ts but an **aide-mémoire** and a starting point for your discussions