PE 218
Aquatics & Outdoor Education

Canoeing and Kayaking 101
Canoe History

• Canoes were developed over the course of thousands of years by the native peoples of North America.

• The word 'canoe' originated from the word 'kenu' - meaning dugout.

• Made from the bark of birch trees (sometimes used elm or cedar bark) because of it’s waterproof and resilient nature.
Types of Canoes

• C-boat is what is traditionally thought of when referring to canoes.
• Manufactured from many different materials, ranging from wood to kevlar.
• This type of canoe is usually around 17 feet long, a different weight depending on the material used to build it, and meant for two people.
• The canoeists each use a paddle with a single blade.
Types of Canoes (cont.)

- K-boat (also known as the kayak) is a closed decked vessel,
- Generally meant for the use of one person.
- Propelled by a single paddle with a blade at either end.
Canoe Picture
Entering a Canoe

• Put the canoe in the water parallel to the shore or dock.
• Place one hand on the near gunwale and one foot in the center of the canoe.
• Crouch low and grab the far gunwale with the other hand as you transfer your weight to the foot in the canoe.
• Swing your other foot into the canoe and drop to your knees.
• Remain there while your partner boards, then assume your paddling position.
Paddling a Canoe

**Right:** This is the proper paddle position. Stroke as close to the centerline of the canoe as possible.

**Wrong:** This paddle angle will cause the canoe to turn rather than make forward movement.
Paddling a Canoe (cont.)

• Keep the paddle as near vertical as possible.

• Your upper hand should be at eye level.

• Reach out with your lower hand as far as possible, arm fully extended. Dip the blade in the water and push with your upper hand.

• Don't continue the stroke beyond your body, as you'll waste effort.

• Switching sides is okay, it rests some muscles, while helping to maintain course.

• You can switch sides every 5-6 strokes to keep the canoe going straight without using a steering stroke.
Paddling with two people is very much a team effort.

Usually the bow (front) and stern (back) canoeists paddle on opposite sides.

The bow canoeist is responsible for the power strokes that keep the canoe moving.

The stern canoeist adds to the power, but is also responsible for setting the direction of the canoe and fine adjustments to the canoe's balance.
Kayak History

• Small human powered boat
• Originally used by native Ainu, Aleut, and Eskimo hunters in sub-Arctic regions of northeastern Asia, North America and Greenland
• Originally made from wood with animal skin covers
Kayak History (cont.)

• Propelled by a double-bladed paddle by a sitting paddler
• Modern kayaks are made for a variety of purposes and from a variety of materials (plastics, foam, kevlar, wood, etc.)
• Kayak means “man’s boat” or “hunter’s boat”
Basic Types of Kayaks

- **Recreational Kayaks** - shorter sea kayaks with wide beams and large cockpits

- **Touring/Sea Kayaks** – seaworthy small boats with a covered deck and the ability to incorporate a spraydeck (skirt). They trade off the extreme maneuverability of whitewater kayaks for cargo capacity, ease of straight-line paddling, and comfort for long journeys. They often have rudders that are adjusted using the feet.

- **Whitewater Kayaks** – smaller more maneuverable kayaks with spraydecks used for whitewater travel. These kayaks are designed to roll-over.

- **Surf Kayaks** - often called "surf skis", are specialized narrow and long boats for surfing breaking waves and surf-zone rescues.
Recreational Kayak
Touring/ Sea Kayak
Whitewater Kayak
Surf Kayak
Paddling Basics

• **Grip** - Check the width of your grip. Your arms should form a **ninety-degree bend at your elbows**. This may feel awkward at first. Given time, you'll come to appreciate the greater amount of power and control. Sliding each hand in an inch or two is okay, but more limits your power.

• **Control Hand** - One hand, the control hand remains indexed, that is, it stays in the same place on the shaft.

• **Grip Tips** - Avoid gripping the shaft too tightly by relaxing the fingers of your top hand during each stroke. Allow the shaft to rotate freely in your non-control hand.
All strokes are based in two important principles. First, your torso, not your arms is the primary source of power. Second, a secure hold on the blade shaft is necessary before making any stroke movement.

Think of your torso as the engine, your arms as the transmission, and your paddle blade as the wheels. Too often paddlers use their arms as the engine and don't have a smooth transmission of power. The result is tired arms and ineffective strokes.