

### KAYAK GAMES AND TASKS

#### WHY USE GAMES OR TASKS??

These are great fun sessions to work on and over the years we have found that if you can get your students to smile, relax, loosen up, have fun and forget about being in a tippy boat they will try much harder and learn, much more quickly.

Use your imagination to come up with a task that encourages your students to use the stroke just learned but that is also fun and safe and appropriate for the skill level of the group as a whole.

Be clear and concise in your instructions, and make sure safety is a top priority. (If someone flips over, stop the game, and perform a rescue) Most games are easily modified to suit different ages; the more creative or outrageous, the better time everyone has. Let kids be as silly as they want; rest assured that they are learning whenever and however they are paddling! And adults enjoy games too!

Traditional landlubber games like Simon Says, Follow the Leader, Mother May I, and Red Light, Green Light are especially popular with younger kids and easily adaptable to water. When Simon says, "Paddle backwards with your hands," you'll witness quite a scene!



*The ideas for games and tasks have been gathered from instructors, counselors and resources over several years of ACA events, certifications, updates and workshops. Many thanks to the instructor paddling community for sharing your ideas!*

## Kayak Games for Children

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**TAG GAMES: All are boat control games best played in a confined area to encourage quick starts, stops and turns. Don't let kids tag with paddles. Controlled boat contact may work (bow to bow, or bow to stern) but it's more likely to turn into bumper cars (or worse). You could take their paddles away...**

1. **SHARKS AND MINNOWS** is a game of tag that teaches paddling, aim and speed. The game begins with one player becoming the shark and the other players becoming the minnows. The shark paddles around the play area trying to tag the other players. A tagged player becomes a shark as well. Play continues until only one minnow is left. The last minnow is the winner and becomes the new shark for the next round. This game prompts kayaking students to use different maneuvers to accomplish their goals. There are pre-established boundaries. You can also limit tagging to bow-to-stern only or allow hand-to-boat tagging, but the idea is to avoid tagging with the paddle.
2. **BULLDOGS CHARGE** A great way to let a group see their progress over a number of sessions. Play it during one of their first lessons and then a couple of sessions later and it's obvious to everyone the improvement that has taken place. One person is the bulldog and sits in the middle of the lake or river. When called the others have to charge past the bulldog and try to make it from one safe area to the other without being caught. Those caught are bulldogs in the next round and this continues until everyone is caught. The bulldog can catch people in a number of ways depending on how hard the instructor wants to make the game. The easiest way is by boat to boat contact and the hardest way is if the bulldog has to touch the boat with his hand.
3. **STUCK IN THE MUD** Stuck in the mud is a classic freeze tag game. One or two people are 'on'. They have to chase the people that are not 'on' and tag them. When they have tagged another student who was not on, that person is 'stuck in the mud'. They sit with legs and arms out of the kayak, and they cannot move. The only way to release them is if another person who is not stuck frees them. This continues for about 5-10 minutes or until everybody is stuck. You can make the game easy by allowing people to free those stuck by bumping boats or harder by making them high five each other.
4. **SOGGY WET SPONGE:** A simple game of chasing/tag with a twist. The instructor introduces a sponge and tells the group that if they are hit or if their boat is hit with the sponge they are it and have to chase the others. There is to be no paddling while holding a sponge. Give the group a short time to get away before you start throwing sponges. The instructor then throws a number of sponges. (less bumper boats)
5. **DEAD FISH POLO** – Similar to the wet sponge game, except the sponge is picked up with the kayak blade, and launched (similar to a lacrosse scoop and toss)

### **Capture the flag –**

1. **DUCT TAPE :** Put a piece of duct tape on the bow or stern of all boats. Everyone tries to remove the tape from other boats, but keep it on their own. Last boat with tape wins. Captured tape can be easily stuck onto the capturers kayak.
2. **BALLOON POPPING:** Tie balloons to the stern handle of each boat. The last one with an unburst balloon is the winner. Just remember to pick up the burst balloons afterwards.
3. **PEG PIRATES!** The idea is that everyone has a clothes peg attached to the stern of their kayak, and the aim is to collect as many pegs from others as you can, until they are all nabbed. The one with the most pegs wins. This leads to some interesting play as people try to steal each other's pegs.

**RACES** are a great way to warm a group back up if they are getting cold or to inject a bit of life into a sagging group. You can have forward or reverse paddling races, drawstroke races, point to point or around a course. Let your imagination go!

**TUG OF WAR** There are a couple of ways to use the humble tug of war to help with teaching kayak strokes. Kayaks could be linked with a sling/strap at the stern or bow to have a forward or reverse paddling tug of war. You need an equal starting distance and a real or imaginary line to cross. Observers will see the effective use of a forward or reverse stroke at work! You can also use tug of war as a task when teaching draw stroke. Place 3 kayaks side by side. The middle paddler holds onto the other two (outside) boats who have to draw/pry stroke away.

**RAFT RELAY** Raft up three or more kayaks. The inside boats hold on to the boats, the outside kayaks paddle. The combination of Forward and Reverse sweeps spin the raft. Two groups can race to see who competes a 360° spin first. A single group can count the number of strokes it takes to get around. Switch up your end paddlers. See what team performs the best. This is best taught early on, as it assists with rafting up throughout the rest of the day!

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### TASKS

- 1. CHARIOTS :** There are two types of chariots; both involve two paddlers and two boats. In the first chariot, the two boats are placed side by side with a paddle across the two boats, placed in the combing at the back of the cockpits. Paddler A sits on the paddle with one foot in each boat. Paddler B stands with one foot in the cockpit, on the seat of each boat and paddles the chariot. In the second chariot the kayakers face each other bow to stern, side by side. Each paddler sits on the back deck of his kayak, behind the seat, with a foot in each boat. The paddlers face each other and have to use team work to maneuver the chariot.
- 2. PIANO KEYS:** Line up all the boats in the water facing the same direction. Each person holds on to the boat next to him to keep the boats in line (paddles are left on shore). The paddler at one end climbs out of his boat and tries to walk from one end to the other and back on the lined-up boats without falling in. Once they return to their kayak, they get back in and paddle to the other end of the raft, and the next person takes a turn. The boats are not a stable platform, so expect lots of kids to end up in the water.
- 3. SIT ON BACK LEGS IN WATER:** Get your paddlers to sit on the deck of their kayak behind the cockpit with their legs in the water while paddling. To increase difficulty, get people to put their feet on the seat of their cockpit. A great way to teach the use of a low brace. See if anyone can “rodeo”, rotating their body 360° around the deck, swinging the legs around without falling in!
- 4. HAND PADDLE:** for some reason kids love hand paddleing their boats! It’s a great safety exercise, as it teaches how to maneuver without a blade. You can race, or actually have them try some maneuvers around a buoy course.
- 5. JAVELINE RACE:** Another version of hand paddling. Have your group to throw their paddles away javelin style before setting them the task of racing to a marked point collecting their paddles along the way.
- 6. EDGE BALANCE**
  - Paddle in a straight line while holding up one edge.
  - Paddle in a circle while paddling only on the inside of the turn. Use edge to turn the boat.
  - Paddle in a figure of eight while paddling only on the inside of your turn.



### RESCUE DRILLS

1. **SWAMP RACES** Wet exit out of the kayak, fill it with water, climb back in, and race to a destination.
2. **RESCUE ME!** Partner up, one capsizes, the other rescues. See who is fastest.
3. **DEEP WATER SOLO ENTRY** Quite a challenge. Try to get back into your boat in deep water with no help. Time it or have a race.
4. **RESCUE RACES**
  - a. Tired Swimmer on bow of boat
  - b. Contact Towing
5. **AROUND THE WORLD** Working in pairs, one person uses their hands to go “around the world” of their partners kayak. Start and end at the bow of the boat. Switch. This can be timed, or a group race.

### GROUP ACTIVITIES

1. **FOLLOW THE LEADER** Good simple task. Set up a buoy course (which can also simulate a river). Let the kids take turns leading each other around the buoys doing bow draw or sweep turns, going backwards, drawing. Let them make it up, and challenge each other. The Instructor may have to lead to generate some ideas to get this game started.
2. **SLALOM** Set up your own simple slalom course to practice sweep stroke edging or other turning stroke. You can time your group or count strokes taken to complete the course. The aim then is to improve on your time or reduce the number of strokes.
3. **ON WATER STRETCHES** Simple stretches can be done while on the water. Reach forward and touch the bow of the boat. Reach back and touch the stern of the boat. Rotate torso left and right to touch the rear of the boat. Pass the paddles under the boat. Rock the kayak from side to side with the paddles above your head, or cradled in your arms (paddle stays level) and use the hips to rock the boat. Torso rotate, drop the paddle into the water, pick it up, repeat.
4. **SCAVENGER HUNT** This game works in almost any location where a variety of natural treasures can be found. Divide into groups of 2-4 boats each and give each group a list (the lists can be the same or different). Objects to find can be as simple as a rock or a leaf, a clam shell, a gull feather or a bottle cap! This game takes the focus off paddling skills and puts it on teamwork, getting places, and learning about nature.
5. **SIMON SAYS** Once your students have learned a few strokes and techniques, you can get them to play the standard game of Simon Says; test out their knowledge of the strokes and their reaction time. The last kayaker "standing" wins the game.
6. **PARADIDDLES** A game where the kayakers are given a beat or rhythm to mimic with their own paddles. Start with a simple pattern like "left stroke, right stroke, left stroke, right stroke" and progress into more advanced rhythms; or replace strokes with paddle dips in the water. This teaches students to gain confidence and control of their paddles and have quick hands to move them as needed. If you are set up in a circle, each person can add something to the sequence. Those who miss a beat of the sequence are "out".

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7. **KAYAK POLO** teaches players how to steer their boats, how to paddle effectively and how to reach their destination quickly. It is best to play this game on flat water such as in a lake or swimming pool until players are better able to gain control of their kayak. There are two teams of players, and all that is needed is a goal (a pair of buoys) for each team, one placed at each end of the play area.
- A ball is thrown into the middle of the play area
  - Player(s) paddle to the ball
  - Use your hands to grab the ball (no travel or paddling when in possession)
    - You may glide with the ball (if you have momentum)
  - Pass/throw the ball to a team mate
  - The ball can be intercepted, or batted/deflected with a paddle
  - Each time the ball goes past the goal, one point is earned.
  - The winning team is the one to reach five points first.
  - FOULS: (turnover)
    - No paddle jabbing - if someone is reaching for the ball, or of other boats
    - Dumping (Everyone Freezes)
      - Team helps players who have fallen out of or tipped over their kayak.
    - Players cannot hold other players' boats