

Stroke Technique

The stroke is broken down into three phases:

1. CATCH PHASE (KAU)

The catch is that portion of the stroke where you get the blade of the paddle into the water.

- a. Lean slightly forward and using your stomach and back muscles rotate (twist) around your spine dropping your shoulder and extend the paddle forward keeping the shaft of the paddle parallel to the side of the canoe. (This twisting will enable you to use the larger and stronger muscles of your back and torso). Your lower arm should be fully extended with your elbow straight. Your top hand should be at your forehead with the arm fully extended and the elbow slightly bent.
- b. Once you have extended the paddle (**reach**) place the blade cleanly in the water without stabbing or splashing. Do not start the power phase of the stroke until the blade is deeply in the water (this will cause cavitation and you will not get full power from your stroke).

If you slice the blade in cleanly and buried the whole blade in the water you will have a solid **ANCHOR** from which you can pull the canoe.

REMEMBER A CLEAN SILENT ENTRY IS THE BEGINNING OF A GOOD STROKE. **RUN SILENT, RUN DEEP.**

2. POWER PHASE (HUKI)

The power phase is that portion of the stroke where you move the canoe forward.

- a. Make sure your body is firmly positioned in the canoe to fully transfer energy from the paddle to the canoe. You do not want any extra movement in your arms that will absorb or deflect energy from moving the canoe forward. (This is accomplished by keeping your arms in the entry position.)
- b. Push down and across your body with the top hand and untwist with an explosive movement driving down with your top hand and back on your lower hand to about your mid thigh.
- c. Once your lower hand has reached your mid thigh release power and begin the exit.

3. RECOVERY PHASE

The recovery phase is that portion of the stroke where you get the blade out of the water and back to catch for the next stroke.

- a. Once the blade is at your mid thigh release power and either pull the blade straight out or slice it out to the side. This is done by rotating your top hand down similar to turning the steering wheel of a car.
- b. Float the blade forward through an easy return to the start of the next stroke. Remember to **feather** your blade during times of strong head winds. You feather the blade by turning it parallel to the water during the recovery, which will reduce drag.

Remember, the recovery should be easier and slower than the power phase. There should be a 2 to 1 ratio between the recovery/catch and power phase. One beat for the power phase and two beats for the recovery and catch.

Helpful Hints

- Try paddling with locked elbows. This will force you to sit up and rotate. Add the minimum bend necessary to your arms for comfort later when you have mastered this.
- Try to keep a flat back and keep your chin up, this will afford the maximum oxygen uptake and will help keep your shoulder and neck muscles relaxed.
- Don't forget to get drive from your leading leg. Always keep the leg on your paddling side extended forward to help you brace - this means when you switch the paddle at a Hut, you must also switch which leg is forward.
- Keep your face muscles relaxed and remember to breathe! Breathing in synchronization with your paddling helps you maintain an even stroke.
- Keep your concentration in the canoe and remember that it is the thoughtful application of power that makes each and every stroke count.
- Concentrate on your stroke technique at all times especially when you get tired. Your stroke is the first thing that will fall apart once you start getting tired.
- Remember that the boat slows when the change is made, so make your last two and first two strokes on each side strong.