

BBOP Paddling Fundamentals

MUST KNOW for All Paddlers | Bellingham Bay Outrigger Paddlers (BBOP)

Docking

Steers may pass up the fender before the ramp or at the ramp once the canoe has come to a complete stop and at least 1 person is holding the bow. If the fender is passed up before the ramp, please do so outside of the congested ramp area — during summer, the ramp area can get busy and doing this within the area can be unsafe.

Step-by-Step Docking Procedure

- When it is safe and shallow, Seat 1 exits the canoe to hold it and bring it closer to the ramp.
- If the fender was not passed up earlier, Steers will pass it up on the ama side by handing it forward (easier to pass while floating).
- Seat 1 rolls the canoe onto the fender positioned at the water line.
- Seat 2 exits and grabs the wheels.
- In rough conditions: after Seat 2 exits, they hold the ama and Seat 3 grabs the wheels.

Technique Basics

1. Setup (Before the Catch)

- **Feet:** Lead foot flat to hull; rear foot under seat, heel raised. Big toes planted. Knees relaxed, not forced out. Stable stance.
- **Rotation:** Use your hips! Move your "shoulder-hip rectangle" as one unit. Weight on buttocks on leading foot.
- **Hands & Paddle:** Vertical shaft, stacked hands. Hold one hand-width above the throat (where blade meets shaft).
- **Top Arm:** Lower elbow slightly below shoulder.

Coach Cue: "Rotate, soft bottom elbow."

2. Catch

- Drop bottom elbow into the catch; hips rotate with shoulders.
- Entry should be firm — initiated from the drive of the lead foot; opposite shoulder/lat drives the paddle down. Enter with a forward angle.
- Watch the power face of your blade as it enters the water. Think "mail slot" — enter the blade deep, like pressing into a marshmallow, not hammering a nail.
- Bury the blade before the bottom arm pulls.

3. Power Phase

- **Stroke Length:** Prioritize efficiency and sustainability — not brute force.
- **Timing & Stroke Rate:** Exit together. Focus on the bottom hand of the person you are following (not the top — due to variability of shaft type, paddle length, and body type).

Exit together — return together — return with the same speed.

Coach Tip: Watch the bottom hand and follow exit and recovery timing to stay in sync.

4 & 5. Exit & Recovery

- **Exit:** Turn thumb 1/2 an inch toward your body, elbow outward.
- **Recovery:** Stay close to the canoe. Light hand on return. Draw a "D". Top hand doesn't move much except to drive the paddle — at recovery, top hand reaches to the opposite gunwale.

Coach Tips: "Stir the pot" and "Keep top hand at eye level."

Hinge

Comes naturally — focus on hip rotation for power. Foot placement and weight shift in hips will help with rotation.

Paddling Commands

All paddlers must know and respond to these commands immediately.

Paddles Ready	Paddles set across the lap — prepare to paddle.
Hit	Begin paddling.
Paddles Off	Stop paddling immediately.
Hold Water	All paddlers stop stroking. Brace the shaft of the paddle against the body, keeping blades in the water to stop the canoe from moving forward.
Kahi	Draw water under the canoe to control the nose. Seat 1 and/or 2 positions hips perpendicular to the left gunwale. Enter paddle blade at the angle you want the nose to turn. Use body and hip drive to pull the canoe to the blade. Typically used in sprints or large conditions. In rough conditions, before Kahi-ing right, ensure Seats 2 and 4 are on the ama and steers have instructed you to do so.
Draw Left / Draw Right	Draw water from the left or right side at a 45–90 degree angle. Less power than a Kahi.
Keep the Nose Straight	Seat 1 uses small draws left or right to keep the nose straight or into the wind. Seat 1 communicates with Seat 6 on direction and power needed.
Back Paddle	Hold the shaft against the body and paddle backwards in sync with other paddlers. Typically done on the left side.

Bellingham Bay — BBOP Points of Interest

Key landmarks and navigation points on Bellingham Bay. Click any map link to open in Google Maps.

Location	Notes	Map
Woods Coffee	Popular waterfront coffee shop in Boulevard Park	Map
Glass Beach	Sea glass beach with bay views	Map
Dot Island (Chuckanut Island)	Small island in Bellingham Bay	Map
Governors Point	Northern point along Bellingham Bay	Map
Clark's Point	Lookout spot right above Train Tunnel	Map
Teddy Bear Cove	Located in Chuckanut Bay	Map
Squalicum Pier/Dock	Long pier near Little Squalicum Beach	Map
Squalicum Beach	Close to Mt Baker Products	Map
Little Squalicum Beach	Base area of Squalicum Pier	Map
Waypoint Park	Waterfront park with pier and kayak access	Map
Taylor Dock	Scenic boardwalk in Fairhaven	Map
Larabee State Park / Wild Cat Cove	Boat launch south out of Larabee State Park	Map
Buoy #1 - Bellingham Bay Entrance	Navigation buoy - south entrance	Map
Buoy #3 - Mid-Bay	Navigation buoy - mid Bellingham Bay	Map
Buoy #5 - Squalicum Channel	Navigation buoy - Squalicum Harbor approach	Map

Welcome to the water. Paddle strong!