

Drills and Tips for Becoming Better and Trickier **For the Intermediate Steers Person**

1. Pick various wind directions to train in. Learn how your canoe reacts and what your best steering options are to keep the canoe moving in generally the right direction without slowing it down too much with your steer strokes. Get feedback from your crew on how they felt.
2. Hut Hoe with your crew every changeover and then force yourself to steer appropriately from the side you are on. This will improve your changeovers and your ability to stick your blade to the side of the canoe.
3. Allow yourself only two crew paddling strokes to preform your steer strokes in. If your steer stroke is having to last longer then your steer stroke needs to move up the aggressive level. This will test all three poke strokes.
4. Whole crew same side in circles. Left side then right side. This drill will send the canoe around in a circle. It will test the balance of the crew as a whole and allow you as the steersman to work on your timing. As the weather gets warmer test yourselves by doing this in increasingly rougher conditions.
5. Set a challenge for yourself at the beginning of each training session. Tell your crew what you are working on. Ask them for feedback after each piece so you can take it to the next piece. Understand the perspective they offer. You will need to learn to ask good questions in order to get the appropriate information you need to improve yourself. Remained thick skinned. Criticism from non steerers can sometimes feel brutal on your steering soul!
6. When its warm get out in the rough water. Nothing will make you a better steers person than testing yourself and your crew in as many rough conditions as possible. Note: If your crew is not comfortable in rough conditions they will naturally stiffen up and centre themselves in the middle of the canoe. Under these circumstances it will feel like you are steering a brick and it will be very challenging. Remind your crew to relax their hips and lean out. A more relaxed crew will make for an easier steering experience.
7. As much as possible have head to head training sessions. Treat these sessions as you would a race. There is nothing like head to head competition to push everyone involved up the learning curve. Stay close to each other so you are forced to hold your line and steer. This will get you and your crew comfortable at having canoes around so you all learn to not overreact in real race situations when other canoes are close. Debrief your experience, at the very least with the other steers person, but ideally with everyone in both crews so the learning happens together.

8. For 4 change overs only paddle steer - no pokes. Follow it up the next 4 change overs by only poke steering. Pay very close attention how easy or hard each version is and how they compare to each other. How much of a toll does each take on you.

9. For 4 change overs poke with your hands close together at the bottom of your shaft. Follow it up the next 4 change overs by poke steering with your top hand on the handle of your blade. Pay very close attention how easy or hard each version is and how they compare to each other. How much of a toll does each take on you.

9. Pick a distinct point to aim for. You must take 4 paddle strokes before you steer. That's right, you will have to let the canoe go and then pull it back on course with what will likely be a more aggressive steering stroke than you are used to doing. Don't cheat!!! Increase this to 5 strokes, 6 strokes etc. You might owe your crew a beer after this one cause its likely you will be all over the place. This is ideal for helping you understand the nuances of your steering strokes and also highlight the consequences of taking just one or two or three more paddling stroke before you steer.

10. Everyone sits in every seat. 6 x 10 minutes training session. Each piece move 1-seat back to steer and everyone move up a seat. This gives everyone a higher appreciation for what its like to sit in each position in the canoe.

Bonus #1: You will identify those individuals who are naturally good at keeping the canoe straight.

Bonus #2: You will never be more appreciated as a steers person!!! And your crew will want to buy you a beer!

11. Get out there and have some fun in other canoes. Steer as many different canoes as possible. Marathon, V1, Voyageur, dragon boat. Expand your ability to understand how canoes move in the water, what it takes to influence this movement and when it makes sense to man handle them with a steer stroke or when you just need to let them go and run.

12. Seek out and respect the expertise right in your own club! Don't wait for some perceived outside expert to show up to expand your learning experience. Your own club offers your best day to day opportunity to learn, grow and discover.

Have fun! Laugh at yourself! Get out there and make lots of mistakes!! The more you relax and let the mistakes flow in training the less you will make in racing!

Cheryl Skribe

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