

Coach's Corner *by Chris Crain*

REVERSE SWEEP

Most of our paddling is of the forward sort, but your kayak has two pointy ends. There are times when you'll want to move backwards, and it's a skill worth mixing in on every paddle. Your general boat control will improve and it will balance out your shoulder and torso muscles a bit, perhaps even helping avoid shoulder issues.

The reverse stroke is typically used to quickly stop your forward momentum, as a way of maneuvering backward a short distance without having to turn your boat around, or simply to exercise other muscle groups (including the brain).

Luckily, reverse paddling is fairly intuitive (it's basically a reversal of the forward stroke), though it will initially feel awkward. So, practice a bit of each paddle. The basic motion is to rotate your torso backwards toward the side on which you are taking the stroke, turning your head to look where you are going. Plant the paddle behind your hip next to the hull with a flat shaft angle, then unwinding your torso to power the stroke, removing the paddle from the water near your feet. You'll then be wound up to the opposite side; plant the paddle and repeat..

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Click on the following YouTube links to see the reverse stroke in action:

Mike Aronoff

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=Ax1Kyz9J6g>

Roger Schumann

https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=oa7Q_oLM8OQ

SeaKayakingTV

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=n4nforPHECM>

Sea Kayaking Cornwall

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=THMYkt7R7ao>

Once practicing a bit, try paddling backwards for increasing distances. Holding a straight course may initially prove difficult, but throw in a few basic paddling techniques (sweep stroke, edging, rudder, ...) to better hold course, or to deliberately turn your kayak. It may take a while before becoming comfortable, but a good reverse stroke will add greatly to your boat handling skills.

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