

Strokes

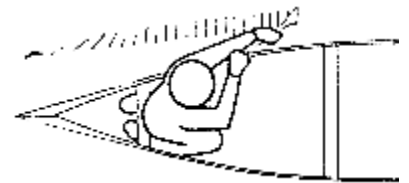
The farther away from the center-line or keel of the canoe your stroke is, the more the canoe will want to turn instead of going straight.

To paddle in a straight line you should adopt an upright but relaxed posture, and plant your blade in the water close to the side, or gunwale of the canoe an easy reach in front of you. The shaft of the paddle should be nearly straight up and down, not angled with the blade away from the boat and the grip inside (in fact in some narrow canoes it's possible to slightly angle the blade under the hull during the stroke). Don't try to make the stroke too long: as the paddle angles up behind you it does more lifting of water than propulsion. Lift the blade cleanly just as it passes you, striving for as little splash as possible.

Remember to use your whole upper body during the stroke. You'll gain power and reduce fatigue. Get your shoulders and upper back into it as well as your arms and rotate your torso. If you're paddling into a headwind, you can feather the paddle to reduce drag: As the blade comes out of the water rotate the thumb of your control hand (the one on the grip) down and forward to turn the blade parallel to the water, with the power face up, so it cuts through the wind instead of pushing it.

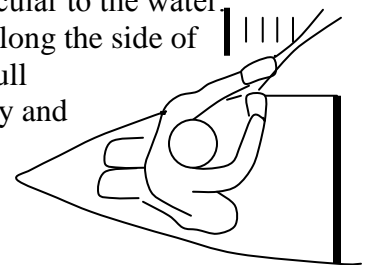
Forward Stroke

The paddle enters the water comfortably ahead of the paddlers' position. With the blade perpendicular to the keel line and the paddle vertical, pull straight along the side of the canoe. Keep both arms relatively straight throughout all phases of the stroke. Push forward and down over the blade with the top arm and pull with the lower arm. Body and shoulder rotation provides much of the power. The stroke should not go much past a position where the lower arm is perpendicular to the water. The paddle can be rotated briefly at the end of the stroke as a rudder to correct course.



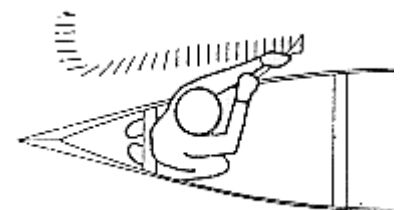
Back Stroke

The paddle enters the water comfortably where the paddler's lower arm is perpendicular to the water. With the blade perpendicular to the keel line and the paddle vertical, push straight along the side of the canoe. Keep both arms relatively straight throughout all phases of the stroke. Pull backward and up over the blade with the top arm and push with the lower arm. Body and shoulder rotation provides much of the power much like the forward stroke only in reverse.

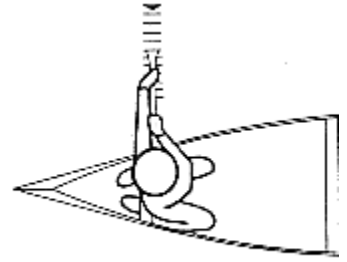


J-Stroke

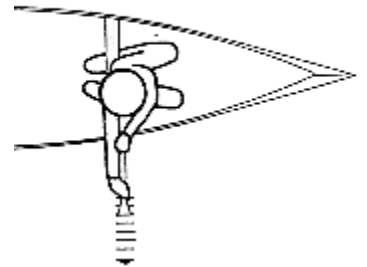
This stroke provides forward momentum at the same time that it keeps the canoe on a straight course. Start off with a forward stroke, but toward the end of the stroke push the top hand farther out and rotate the thumb down and out. This motion feathers the blade underwater in the opposite direction as a rudder, but still pulls the boat back into a forward alignment. Done correctly it is a powerful stroke. It can be difficult to learn.



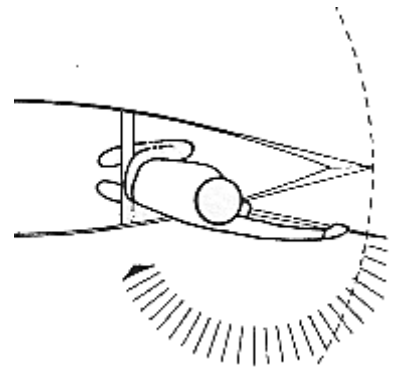
Draw - This stroke is done by extending the paddle outwards and drawing towards you. If this is done on opposite sides of the canoe by both the paddlers the canoe will rotate rapidly. If this is done on the same side by both paddlers the canoe will move sideways. The draw is generally a more powerful stroke than the pry.



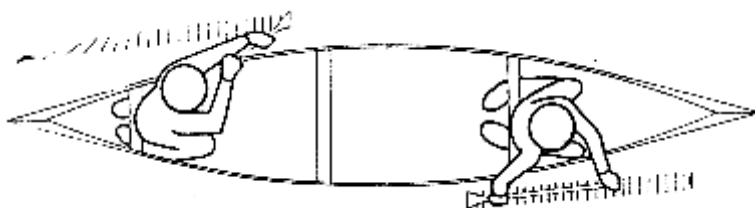
Pry/Push away - This is the opposite of the draw. The paddle is inserted into the water by the canoe and pushed outwards. This has the same effect as the draw, but the result will be in the opposite direction.



Sweep - This stroke turns the canoe in a circle away from the paddling side of the canoe. To do this stroke place the paddle in the water as far in front of you as you can. Pull the blade in a wide semicircle until the paddle is behind you. This can also be done in the opposite direction (Reverse Sweep), which will rotate the canoe towards the paddling side.



Putting it Together:



Going Straight - To go in a straight line the bow paddler should use the bow stroke, and the stern paddler should use the forward stroke, with enough J-stroke (or a rudder) mixed in to keep the canoe traveling in a straight line.

The stern paddler is in charge, adjusting for the bow paddler and advising the bow paddler when to change strokes. The bow paddler should watch for obstacles and maintain forward strokes on the same side until the stern paddler orders specific stroke changes.