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Stroke improvement clinic

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Technique improvement: Why bother?

- **Go faster**
- **Go further with less fatigue**
- **Be a better team boat paddler**
- **Less injury risk**

Aims of good technique:

- **Maximise power**
- **Minimise drag**
- **Strong body position**

3 things will make you faster:

- **Strength**
- **Fitness**
- **Technique**

The paddle stroke:

What are we actually doing when we take a paddle stroke?

- **Holding your position in the water with your paddle blade, and moving the boat forward past the paddle**

Nomenclature:

- **Catch**
- **Pull**
- **Exit**
- **Recovery/Set-up**



Ideal technique

- **Use whole body, not just arms**
- **Paddle blade vertical**
- **Long stroke**
- **Maximum force/minimum time
in water**

Posture

- **Sit up tall, draw shoulders to hips (long neck)**
- **Straight spine**
- **Slight tilt forward from hips**
- **Head neutral and still**
- **Pressure on feet**
- **Neutral shoulder position**
- **Rotate around spine**



Holding the paddle

- Place hands at approx 1/3 length of paddle
- Relaxed grip, esp in recovery



Hand/arm position

- **Elbow straight but not locked through catch and pull**
- **Elbow 90-100 deg at exit, elbow stays low, hand to nose height**
- **Wrist rotates but never flexes**
- **Shoulders stay neutral - don't open out at back of stroke or cross body at front of stroke**



Catch

- Hands chin-eye height
- Blade square in water
- Extend stroke by relaxing grip on paddle before catch
- Hold body position until paddle is in water
- Accelerate to water but hold body position!
- “Spear” entry to water



Pull

- **Blade follows wash line**
- **Blade buried to where it meets shaft**
- **Hips and shoulders move together**
- **Blade vertical**
- **Accelerate through water**



Exit

- **Blade exits water level with hip**
- **Keep blade as vertical as possible (minimise lifting water)**
- **Boat level or slight tilt to exit side**



Recovery

- Top hand stays parallel to water at chin-eye height
- Top hand is moves slower than bottom hand
- Top hand should never direct stroke - hold back, don't push!



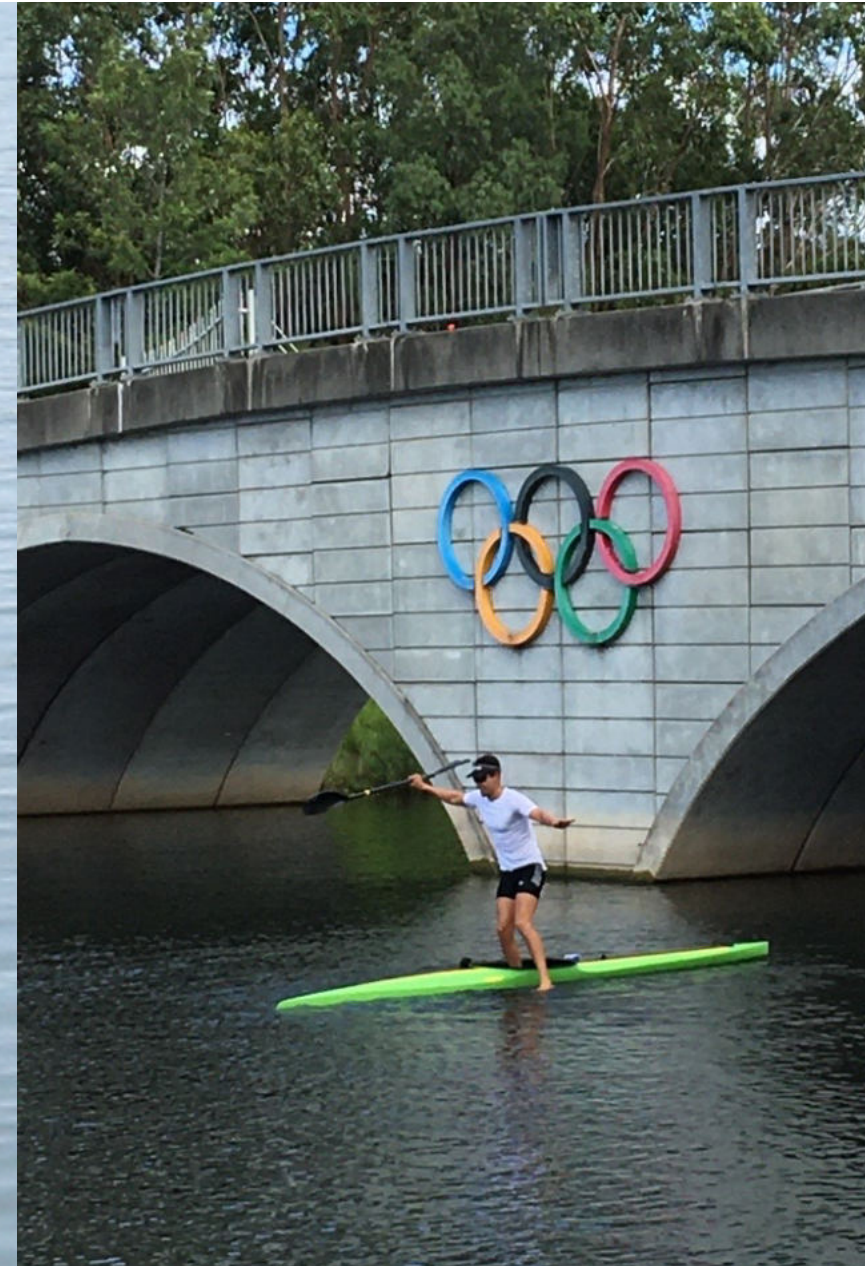
Putting it together

- **Cadence (accelerate through stroke, take time in recovery)**
- **Paddle shaft always parallel to chest**
- **Minimise “small” movements**
- feet, hips, shoulders and blade move as one



Other things to consider

- **Strength and conditioning**
- **Off-water warmup**
- **Warmup and cool down**
- **Flexibility**
- **Effective training sessions to improve endurance and speed**
- **Drills**



Common mistakes

sway away from stroke

hip hitch

opening shoulder angle at exit

closing elbow angle at exit/insufficient elbow angle at exit

closing shoulder angle at catch

rotating before blade is in water at catch

Collapsing shoulder on to catch

No rotation

poor co-ordination hips/shoulders/feet

poor foot/hip pressure control

pushing shoulder forward at catch

rushing top hand in recovery

not fully burying blade/over-burying blade

windmill stroke

Circle/triangle stroke

poor stroke acceleration (lack of power)

holding paddle too tight

Leaning forward and back instead of rotating