



# Plan Your Progression

There are so many little things that we can do to keep ourselves focused on paddling during this time of restriction.

**Chris Brain** reflects on his time away from the water and how we can all prepare for the return to paddling.

## This is the longest time that I haven't been in a boat since I started paddling!

For me going out on the water isn't just my job, it's who I am, it's my identity, it gives me real focus in my life and so many of my personal goals are intertwined with it. With the restrictions in place, I've currently found myself feeling a little bit lost, wondering what to do, how to keep focused and how to get some kind of paddling fix throughout all of this. I know I'm not alone in how I feel, thousands of paddlesport enthusiasts across the country are feeling the same way. In an unprecedented situation where paddlesport is currently on hold in the UK it feels strange to be sat at home when the sun is shining, the water is warming up and daylight lasts well into the evening.

What many of us do have during this time however, is an opportunity. An opportunity to become fitter, faster, healthier, more knowledgeable and more prepared for future paddling. We can reflect on where we have been and where we would like to go. We can take the time to properly plan that dream trip or to research rivers, coastline, lochs, lakes and canals we've not yet paddled. We can create a proper personal development plan so that we can move forwards with our paddling when we're back on the water. We can also take time to connect with others who might share our situation; via social media, online meeting platforms or just a good old fashioned phone call.

What I've realised is that we can do a little something every day to help us prepare for when we get back on the water. So take some time to reflect, set some goals and to make a plan!

## Reflect

Where are you currently with your paddling? To help, you might want to ask yourself the following questions:

- What have the last 12 months paddling been like for you?
- Where have you paddled?
- Are these the same places you've always paddled?
- Is that ok, or do you want to explore more venues?
- How have your skills/experience/knowledge developed in the last 12 months?
- Do you have development opportunities with your technical and tactical skills?
- Do you have development opportunities with your physical and psychological approach?
- Are you making recognisable progress?

If you are looking to reflect specifically on your coaching skills and experience the **British Canoeing Coach Self Analysis Tool** can help you identify areas where you have potential to develop. This will also signpost you towards a range of resources to assist your development

Effective reflection is the first stage towards solid planning, so taking the time to do this will pay off in the long run.



## Goal Setting

**“If you always do what you’ve always done, you’ll always get what you’ve always got”**

If you want to come out of this period ready to move forwards with your boating, you’re going to have to be prepared to do something different to what you were doing before!

Setting goals as well as specific milestones and checkpoints along the way is going to be critical to developing your paddling performance. A simple and reliable way to do this is to use SMART goals.

**S**pecific - I have a clear definition of exactly what I need to do

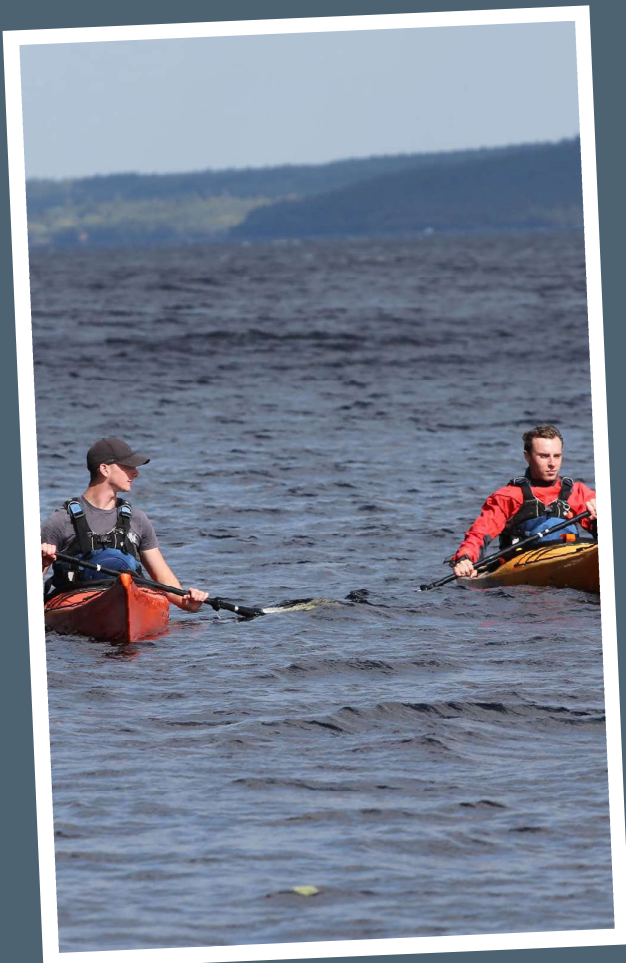
**M**easurable – I will know when I have achieved it

**A**chievable – It is actually possible for me to do this

**R**ealistic – My level of commitment is good and the time required to do it is realistic

**T**ime Bound – I have set myself a realistic deadline to complete my goal and I will work towards that

It is really important that your targets are specific and tangible so you know exactly what you are trying to achieve and will be able to recognise when you achieve it. Many paddlers fall down at this stage by saying something too vague like, “I want to be a better paddler.” This goal is not specific and won’t help you in your quest to improve.



## Plan and Do

Reflecting and goal setting is one thing, but getting off the couch and doing it is a different matter altogether!

Now you’ve identified the areas you’d like to develop and set yourself some targets, it’s time to start making a plan as to how you are going to do it.

**“How do you eat an elephant?  
One bite at a time!”**

Break your SMART goal into lots of smaller bite sized pieces. Giving yourself milestones towards your goal is critical, consider the rivers/rapids/venues/moves that you will need to do along the way to help you reach your target. The inclusion of checkpoints is also key as they are structured moments for reflection to check you’re tracking towards your goal.

Once you start your plan, keep the initial steps towards your goal really small and easily achievable, the simpler something is to do the less likely we avoid doing it!

Remember there is something we can do every single day to help achieve our goals.