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## CKC THAMES LEADER DEVELOPMENT & ASSESSMENT PROCESS

**To become a Thames leader for CKC, you need to follow these steps:**

- 1) Meet CKC Thames Leader Competency Requirements (found under “Club Documents” on the website). Assessment will be based on potential leaders fulfilling the requirements of the British Canoeing 4\* Sea Leader syllabus, with the following criteria modified to reflect the Upper Tideway environment:

### Part A – Personal Paddling Skills

- Ability to roll encouraged but not required - good self-rescue technique sufficient.
- Comfortable paddling/leading in Sea State 3, rather than 4 - it's generally not that bumpy on the upper Thames but you must be able to cope with strong currents, boat wash etc.

### Part D – Theory

- The focus of these areas should be for the tidal Thames, rather than the sea in general (e.g. access points/communications/navigation etc.).
- VHF qualification not required but recommended - advantage to listen/communicate with other river traffic but a mobile phone (to hand in a waterproof case) is a reliable alternative.

- 2) Be conversant with all documents listed on the club website (particularly the CKC Operating and Safety Procedures) and the PLA Paddling Code.

- 3) Shadow existing CKC leaders on the Thames, to gain local knowledge and experience. During these sessions, potential leaders will be mentored, prior to assessment.

- 4) The assessment itself is conducted on the Thames, by two current CKC leaders (either together on one occasion, or separately on two), using the BC 4\* Assessment Notes, as a framework to observe the candidate leading. Candidates will be expected to demonstrate personal and group leadership skills, which meet the CKC Leader Competency Requirements. Proficient knowledge of the PLA Paddling Code may be assessed both on and off the water, with questions set by the assessing leaders that cover the key topics below. Both assessors must agree that the candidate is deemed competent, in both knowledge and ability.

- Tidal conditions and sources of tidal information
- Factors effecting tidal stream / Ebb tide flag warning system
- Planning and trip preparation
- Weather conditions and forecast information
- Environmental responsibility/ pollution awareness (inc. water quality)
- Group leaders responsibility
- Group management
- Group briefings
- Equipment & clothing (including selection, use and reporting defects/damage)
- Paddling in dark/ poor visibility/ lighting your boat
- Access and egress from the river
- Positioning on the river and Col Regs
- How and where to cross the river
- Water feature and hazard identification
- Bridge numbering and signs
- Piers, buoys and mooring identification
- Identification of lights, sound signals and shouted warnings
- Working the slacks and the rowing code
- VHF communication, VTS and incident reporting
- Incident management / emergencies
- Local knowledge of the Thames



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## GEORS'S SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE

**1) What does the CKC 'S.K.I.L.L.S' acronym stand for? Briefly explain each of these:**

**Safety** -Know who is paddling in the session, understand their paddling ability and make sure that we have emergency contact details/consent forms, medical information for any guests in the session.

**Kit** -Allocate a member of the group to be responsible for checking which kit is taken out for the session, that kit is fitted/ worn correctly, and to ensure that it is all returned and stored correctly and securely when you get back.

**Inform** -Contact the PLA (Port of London Authority) through London VTS (Vessel Traffic Services - VHF Ch. 14 or 020 8855 0315) and inform them of the 'Chelsea Kayak' group size, departure point/time, destination and expected duration. Make sure to contact them and confirm a safe return.

**Lessons** -Make sure that everyone is aware of the planned route and that they are handling (e.g. lifting) and using (e.g. no beaching) kit correctly and safely when getting on/off the water. Adhere to rules of the river and if necessary refer to CKC/Centre operating procedure.

**Lock** -Before leaving the centre, double check that all doors are locked and padlocks are clicked shut.

**Socialise** -Try and get the group to visit the pub after the session to talk about their paddle and reflect on what they've achieved.

**2) Where do you go to check the weather and tides for the Thames?**

e.g. PLA website , [www.ukho.gov.uk/easytide](http://www.ukho.gov.uk/easytide), Met Office (weather)

**3) What is the tide doing today and how would this effect planning for a trip?**

e.g. checking understanding of ebb tide, flood tide, neap/ spring tide, planning journey around change of tides, importance of adjusting GMT time to British summer time.

**4) What is the minimum and maximum ratio of leaders to paddlers on the Thames?**

3:1 minimum, 8:1 maximum or 12:1 if leader is of 4 star standard

**5) What is the "set of the tide" and how does it affect navigation on the Thames?**

Tidal flow which pushes you to the outside of a bend. Paddlers should actively steer to stay on the correct navigational line.

**6) What is fluvial flow and how can you assess this on the Thames?**

Fluvial flow is the amount of water flowing downriver from the non-tidal Thames, which can make the ebb tide stronger. Categorized by a flag system ('red', shouldn't be on river, 'yellow'- take caution, 'green' – normal, 'black'- low flows)

**7) Give 3 strategies you could use when managing a mixed ability group on the Thames**

e.g. plan appropriate distance/ speed of the journey, splitting group into 2 if enough leaders, frequency of breaks/stops on route, buddying system, positioning new paddlers at front.

**8) What would you do if a member of your group capsized on the Thames?**

Ensure safety of group. Rescue individual. Get them off the water and into dry clothes if necessary. Consider reporting to CKC/PLA. Reflect on incident with group/individual.

**9) Where should you position your group on the river, when and why?**

Starboard side of fairway? Towards centre to maximise assistance from tidal flow? In the rowing zone, at the margins of the river or behind aits to minimise adverse current?



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- 10) Where should you position yourself within the group?**  
Front, middle or at the back - depending on circumstances? Do you have the support of a deputy?
- 11) What does 'working the slacks' mean? Should kayakers do this?**  
Term traditionally used by rowing boats when utilising the slower water on the inside of a bend, to minimise the effects of an adverse current. This makes progress easier but congestion within the rowing zone may create an additional hazard.
- 12) Where do rowers often cross over the river? What are the best points for us to cross and get on/ off the river?**  
Rowing Zone cross over points at Syon Reach, Chiswick Bridge, Chiswick Steps, Putney Bridge.  
Access/egress from draw docks, pontoons and slipways.
- 13) What does it mean if a rower shouts 'take a look' or 'hold it hard'?**  
'take a look'- polite alert that you may be about to collide with a rower if you don't change course, 'hold it hard'- emergency stop needed.
- 14) What is the 'wash' and 'wake' and how do you deal with this on the river?**  
Turn and face it with your bow? Relax hips/body and ride with it? Prepare to use low brace?
- 15) What is 'pinning', where is this likely to happen on the Thames, and how should you manage this?**  
When the current pushes you into a pontoon, barge etc. Danger you will be pushed underneath the obstacle. Need to advise group to stay clear of obstacles. Put weight (hug!) the obstacle to avoid capsize. If 'pinned', advise them to hold on tight and try to ease their way to the side. Get yourself onto the pontoon and pull them out. DON'T follow them and get pinned too.
- 16) Name and explain 5 hazards you may encounter on the Thames, and how you might manage against these:**  
Portage- slipping when doing this. Advise group to take care. Multiple people to carry boats. Wear good footwear.  
Overhanging trees and debris- can get pinned against this. Especially evident at low tide  
Barges- danger of pinning. E.g. Dove peer, before Hammersmith bridge
- 17) What does it mean when there three red circles or lights under an arch? How are bridge arches numbered?**  
Red circles/lights means arch is closed to navigation. Bridge arches are numbered in sequence (1,2,3,4,5 etc.), starting from north (Middlesex) side of the river.
- 18) What do you need to consider when paddling at high tide?**  
High water level may cover the foreshore and reduce places that a group may land/egress in an emergency.
- 19) What are the signs of hypothermia and how do you manage this?**  
Drowsy, shivering, muttering, withdrawn, disorientated, unconscious. Get them off river, into warm/dry clothes, warm drink and snacks etc. Call for help if needed.
- 20) How can you tell if the tide is changing direction while you are on the river?**  
Look at current round buoys, bridges, moored boats etc.