

USCA Teaching Topic Example  
**Stretching for Canoeing**

**Purpose:** Assist beginning paddlers to understand the importance of stretching to increase flexibility while canoeing.

**Goals:** Students will:

- Understand that increased flexibility is a key to enjoyable and safe canoeing;
- Understand that all parts of the body are used for canoeing

**Objectives:** At the end of this session students will be able to:

- Discuss the importance of a warm-up before stretching
- Identify which parts of the body are used during canoeing and need to be stretched
- Demonstrate at least one appropriate stretch for their neck, shoulders, arm, torso/sides, low back, and legs
- Explain how to stretch while in their canoes

**Presentation Length:** 10 minutes

**Setting:** Outside, near launch site

**Equipment:** canoe paddles

**Methods:** discussion, demonstration, participation

**Content**

*Introduction:*

Place students in circle so everyone has enough room to spread out. Explain that canoeing is a whole body sport not just upper body. Explain the purpose/ importance of stretching before going canoeing. Point out that flexibility is one component of overall conditioning for canoeing (strength, flexibility, endurance, and cardio-respiratory fitness).

*Key Points:*

- Warm-up before stretching (walking back and forth while unloading gear/canoe, moving canoes, etc.)
- Need to address each part of the body used for canoeing
- Breathe deeply, hold stretches for 10-15 seconds, don't bounce

(Note: if time permits use a round-robin method so that each student has a chance to demonstrate and lead the group in their favorite stretch otherwise instructor leads all stretches. Caution: know your group - make sure you check for medical issues ahead of time.)

*Presentation:*

Demonstrate a stretch or two for each of the main parts of the body:

- Neck
  - Shoulders
  - Arms (triceps, biceps, forearms)
  - Torso/sides
  - Low back
  - Legs (hamstrings, quads, calves)
- Paddles can be used for support

Finish by describing two stretches that can be done in the canoe

*Conclusion:*

Flexibility is one part of an overall conditioning regimen for canoeing. Make it part of your routine preparation for a day on the water.

**Resources:**

Bigelow, J. (2008). *Kayaking for fitness*. Beachburg, ON, Canada: The Heliconia Press.

Snyder, R. (2003). *Fit to paddle: The paddler's guide to strength and conditioning*. New York: Ragged Mtn. Press.