

Slalom

The aim of a slalom race is to negotiate a set course through moving water in the fastest possible time without incurring any penalties.

If, on the way down the course, you touch either of the poles that make up a “gate” with any part of your body, your boat or your paddle, a two second penalty is added to your time.

If you miss a gate, go through it in the wrong direction, or go through gates in the wrong order, you’ll incur a fifty second penalty.

In the lower divisions the best time – plus any penalties - from two runs counts towards your overall placing. The fastest combined time + penalties wins. At the elite end of the sport, both runs are added together to give an aggregate time.

Canoe Polo

Polo is played between two teams of five players (with up to three substitutes).

The game starts with all the players on their own goal line. When the whistle blows, the ball is thrown in and two sprinters make a dash for the ball.

The ball can be moved with the hand or paddle. What ensures is a fast and furious game. Ramming is not allowed but pushing, shoving and capsizing the other players is perfectly legal!

Each player can only keep the ball for five seconds at a time. A game lasts for two halves of ten minutes each and the winning team is the one who scores the most goals.

Pitches can be set up in a swimming pool or on any suitable flat water. The size of a polo “pitch” can vary, depending on the space available. Competition pitches are anything up to 25m x 35m in size. The goals are 1.5m x 1m and are suspended 2m above the water.

Sprint and Marathon Racing

Races cover distances of between 200 metres and 10,000 metres with categories for K1 and C1, K2 and C2 and K4 and C4. Men, women and juniors take part in separate races and competitors race in lanes from a standing start. The stern of each boat is held at the start line by a marshal, until the starting gun is fired. The aim is then to get to the other end of the course first.

Marathon races cover distances from a couple of miles to well over a hundred miles.

Wild Water Racing

Like sprint racing the aim of wild water racing is to get to the bottom of the course first, except that the race is on a river and the boats have more volume.

There are two divisions. Anyone can enter division B in almost any canoe or kayak. Races can be on flat, gentle rivers to fast-flowing whitewater. Serious river racers will compete in division A where races usually take place on grade 3 – 4 water (medium to difficult), and courses are set to take an average of 20 minutes. Some races are 'Sprints' where the average time is 2-3 minutes.

Competitions are divided into three categories – K1, C1 and C2

Freestyle and Surf

Both freestyle (previously called rodeo) and surf competitions are expressional events where competitors have a set time to impress judges with their skill. Like figure skating, marks are given for complexity of moves and variation. Freestyle competitions take place on a static features or 'holes', whilst surf competitions take place on the breaking surf around the coast.