

Kayak Exercises



Preparing for a fun kayak outing includes preparing your body.

Overview

Kayaking is about more than just paddling. Because of the nature of the kayak and the types of maneuvers you must do on the water, proper preparation—including exercise and strength training—is essential to becoming a good kayaker. Several exercises can get you ready to show off your kayak skills in the water.

Paddle Exercises for Endurance

Paddling a kayak through rough water or over long periods requires tremendous upper-body strength, especially in the arms and shoulders. To prepare your body for this type of muscular endurance, practice your paddling on land while sitting on an elevated surface, such as a weight bench or workout block, with your legs extended in front as if you were sitting in your kayak. Hold a paddle or a weighted body bar in your hands, and practice proper technique for several minutes at a time. Do several 3- to 5-minute sets of rowing, alternating between a cross-stroke and paddling on each side.

Torso Rotation for Better Rolls

One benefit of a kayak is that if it overturns in rough water, you can use your upper body weight to turn it right-side up. However, it requires solid core strength. To develop this, find a Roman chair, and lie face-down with one light dumbbell held by both hands. Bend at the waist so your body is at a 90-degree angle, with your upper body pointing toward the ground. With the weight held out in front of you, lift your upper body and twist to one side until your entire body is parallel with the ground, as well as your arms. Lower your upper body down again, then lift up and twist to the other side. Repeat 10 to 15 times, alternating sides for each repetition. The twisting motion, combined with the resistance from gravity and the weights, will train your core muscles in the manner you use them to maneuver a kayak upright.

Build Strength with Modified Lat Pull downs

The modified lat pull down simulates the motion you need to drive the paddle into and through the water. Stand in front of a cable stack, with the cable at the highest setting and the rope attachment affixed. Reach up with your body straight and your abdominal muscles contracted and pull the rope down to one side of your body with both hands. Drive the cable as you would a paddle, with the same motion and intensity. Let the cable return to the top, then pull down on the other side. Repeat 10 to 15 times, alternating sides with each pull.