

During the Paddle Leaders training workshop last month, we reviewed assisted re-entries and the use of stirrups. There is at least one commercial stirrup available, however several people noted that it can be awkward to use.

When taking a rescue course with Gordon Brown several years ago the use of stirrups was also reviewed and he demonstrated a simple and effective alternative stirrup set-up that can easily be made at home. The alternative stirrup is comprised of two parts - a contact tow line and a stirrup that attaches to the contact tow line.

The length of a contact tow line is typically three widths of your kayak (Fig 1) with a carabineer attached at each end (Fig 2). The contact tow line is attached to the deck lines on the front deck and typically stays in place for use as a tow line or with the stirrup.



Fig 1



Fig 2

The stirrup is made of 3/16th" deck line that is folded back on itself, and tied in such a manner to form several loops along its length (Fig 3). The bottom loop is the largest, approx 8"- 10" in length. The line of the bottom loop is threaded through a 6" length of tubing - it is this portion of the stirrup (the 'step') that receives the foot when the stirrup is in use. One or two smaller loops, each about 4" in length, are fashioned above the bottom loop (only one small loop is shown in Fig 3). The stirrup is compact enough to be tucked in a pocket of your PFD.

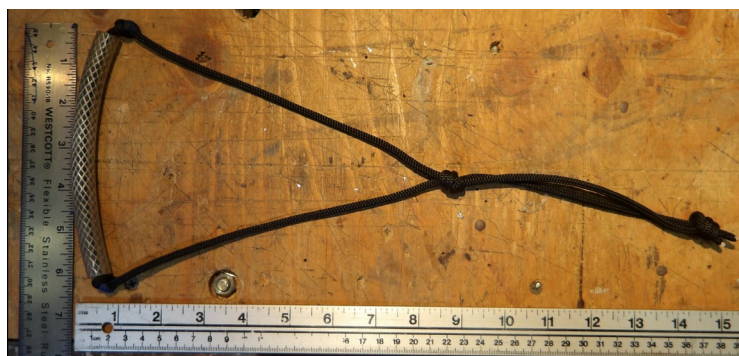


Fig 3

In use, one end of the contact tow line of the 1<sup>st</sup> kayak (the kayak of the person performing the rescue; white in Fig 4), is detached from the deck line, and clipped onto one of the smaller loops of the stirrup. The 2<sup>nd</sup> kayak (yellow; Fig 4) is positioned bow to stern and the contact tow line is passed around the rear of the cockpit coaming of the 2<sup>nd</sup> kayak. The stirrup is then placed over the side of the 2<sup>nd</sup> kayak and into the water.



Fig 4

The length of the overall assembled stirrup may be adjusted so that the 'step' portion is deep enough for the person being rescued to place their foot onto the tubing of the bottom loop. The length of the stirrup can be adjusted by attaching the contact tow line to a different smaller loop, and/or by attaching the contact tow line to the deck line on either the far, or near, side of the 1st kayak. It is easier for the person doing the rescue if the contact tow line is attached to the far deck line and then threaded under the deck line on the near side as shown in Fig 4.

The person performing the rescue holds onto the deck lines, and braces against, the 2<sup>nd</sup> kayak in the same manner as for any assisted rescue. The person being rescued places their rear foot (when facing their kayak) onto the step of the stirrup, directs their front leg into the cockpit, and corkscrews their body into the cockpit. Alternatively, they may use the stirrup to lift their body onto the back deck of their kayak, and then corkscrew into the cockpit.