



How to Perform an Eskimo Roll in a Kayak



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Backgrounder:

Eskimo Rolls originate with the Inuit people of Nunavut. It was used as a safe way to right a kayak when it capsized without exiting into the cold water. In order to perform an Eskimo roll in a kayak the learner should have experience with paddling an enclosed kayak. This includes basic paddle strokes, bracing a kayak and most importantly understanding how to do a wet exit in the event you cannot complete the roll. When performing an Eskimo roll having an experienced instructor or support person in the water is important in order to ensure your safety.

This manual will take you through the steps involved to correctly perform a Eskimo roll, but is in no means a replacement to one-on-one instruction in a safe setting with a certified instructor. Be safe and take a course.

Step 1:

Before you even step into the water it is good to get comfortable with your kayak and its equipment. Basic equipment includes:

- Kayak
- Paddle
- Spray skirt
- PFD

Optional equipment:

- Wet Suit or Dry Suit Top
- Helmet



Step 2:

Practicing the hip flick on land is an important lead up to doing the Eskimo roll in the water. In order to perform the hip flick properly, you must be seated snugly in your kayak. Your legs should be bent with toes against the foot platform and your knees braced on both sides of the kayak. This bracing allows you to use your hips and legs to flip the kayak.

Different kayakers have different levels of comfort in how tight they want to be in their kayak. The tradeoff is the snugger the fit the more responsive



the boat is to your every move. This makes it easier to perform a hip flick. On the other hand this can make it harder to “exit” the boat in case of an emergency.



Step 3:

Once you are comfortable with hip flicks on land it's time to head to the water. Find a lake area or swimming area with a sandy bottom. Paddle your boat out until when you put your paddle straight up and down the paddle is 70% submerged. This will allow you to perform the Eskimo Roll correctly without whacking your head in the sand. The sandy bottom can also serve as a support to push yourself up if you have trouble with your roll.

Now before you even try to do an Eskimo Roll you should do three wet exits to ensure that you are comfortable exiting your boat safely and doing so is an automatic reflex. This is important because you will likely get a lot of practice doing wet exits as you try to learn to roll.

When you are ready have your paddle across your kayak.



Step 4:

Place the paddle on the left side of your kayak (if you are right handed like me). The paddle blades should be flush against the side of the boat with the power face (the part of the blade you stroke the water with) is facing up. Place your head forward and down towards the top of your boat. Having your head in this position will make the boat easier to roll under water.



Step 5:

Initiate your roll with a hip flick. Notice the position of the head in the roll. The head leads the roll around keeping the body motion going. Remember to breathe out through your nose as your head enters the water.



Step 6:

At this point we are almost half way through the roll. The kayaker's body is totally submerged. Breathing out slowly through your nose will keep you from getting the dreaded water up the nose feeling!



Step 7:

Once you have completed the roll it's important to make sure your hands and the paddle break the surface of the water. Your face and body will be close to the surface of the water too due to your PFD. Keep your nose as close to the top of the boat as possible. Many kayakers tap the surface of the water at this point with their paddle blade to make sure it's on top and in the right position.



Step 8:

Extend your right hand out away from the boat to a 90 degree angle while your left hand carries the paddle on top of the bottom of the boat. Your paddle should be on top of, or very close to, the surface of the water. As you do this initiate the hip flick you have perfected from lots of practice.

Drive your right knee up into your boat and flick your hips toward your right side while pulling down on your paddle. This is known as the C to C roll



because your upper body makes a C on one side then a C on the other as you execute the roll.

Step 9:

As your body begins to come out of the water it is important that your head should be the LAST thing to break the surface. This will seem very unnatural but if you try to bring your head up first before your body your hip flick will NOT work and the boat WILL NOT roll over.

Many times I have seen people at this point struggle to get their head out of the water first and almost complete the roll only to lose their momentum and fall back in. Remember: your head exits last.

Step 10:

The force of your hip flick and the brace of your paddle at the surface will help to propel your kayak around and return you to the surface. Your boat is now level and you are ready to paddle away.



For more information there are many great sites and videos that you can access to further learn how to do this properly:

<http://www.kayakpaddling.net/4-4> - great animated instructions going over the basics of a sea kayak Eskimo Roll.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sL724AuL6i8> – watch a slow motion underwater execution of the Eskimo Roll. Has many links to other great video resources.