

G16 - Guidance for 1:1 Working with Children (Under 18s) and the “Rule of Two”

This guidance in this document is that of British Canoeing and the Canoe Association of Northern Ireland (CANI). Please contact the Scottish Canoe Association (SCA) or Canoe Wales (CW) for details of the equivalent guidelines.

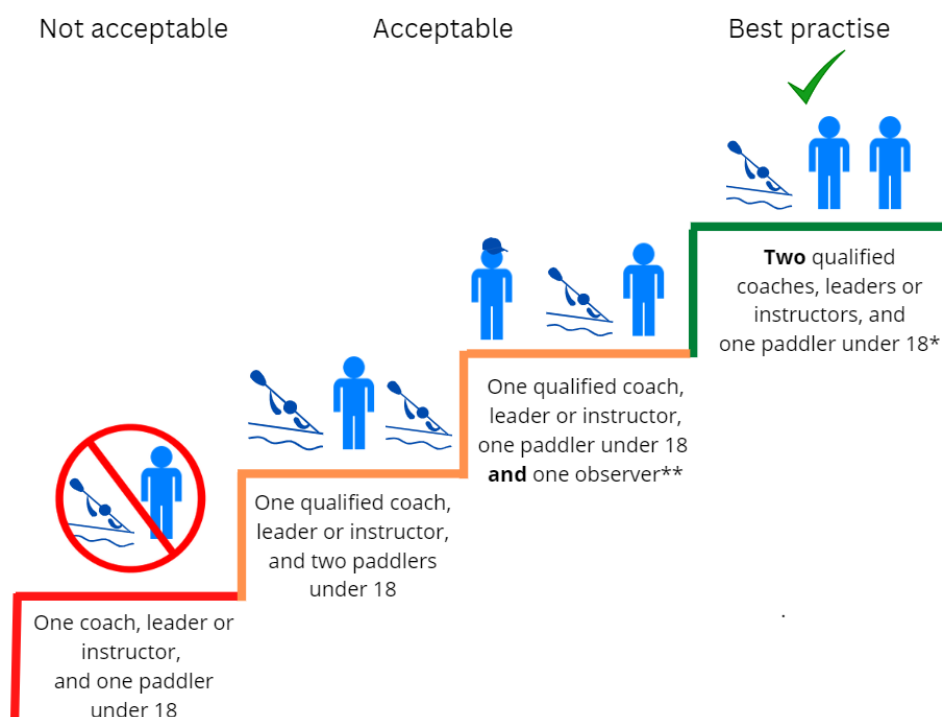
Adults coaching or otherwise working with children should not be alone with one child (under 18) unless it’s unavoidable in a medical emergency.

In most cases coaches or others working with children operate with *groups* of paddlers, rather than on a 1:1 basis. However, there may be times when working on a 1:1 basis is necessary or appropriate to meet the needs of the individual participant. In these cases, you must follow the “Rule of Two”.

The Rule of Two

The Rule of Two means that it’s best practice to have at least two responsible adults present for any interactions with one child. This includes training sessions (on the water, in the gym or otherwise), transport, video or phone calls, and messaging. The Rule of Two exists to protect children *and* adults from potentially vulnerable situations by ensuring interactions are transparent.

Maintaining appropriate boundaries like the Rule of Two when working with children **demonstrates good practice**; allows children and parents/carers to **better recognise inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour**; and **limits the ability of normalising** such behaviour by those with ill intent.



*For on-water, gym or other types of sessions, a qualified coach, leader or instructor is most likely to be best placed to observe; however for messaging, calls, or meetings, a parent/carer is normally more appropriate.

**Adults taking on the role of observer must be in view of, and at least occasionally within earshot of, the interaction.

The paddler’s parent/carer may carry out the role of observer. Where this is not possible, other responsible adults may carry out the role but they must be informed of the purpose of it from a safeguarding perspective, and must be known, or made known, to the paddler. If an adult (who is not the parent/carer of the child) carries out this role more than once they may require a DBS check or equivalent; see our flowchart guidance [here](#).

Coaching Sessions and the Rule of Two

In most cases, children prefer to participate in group activities and are able to develop their skills in a group setting. If a coach, the paddler and their parent/carer feels that the child would benefit from a 1:1 session, consider the following ways to ensure a 1:1 session still satisfies the Rule of Two:

Can the 1:1 coaching intervention happen within a group session?
Is there another qualified coach, leader or instructor available to observe or assist the session?
Are one of the child's parents/carers able to observe the session?
If you are part of a club, is the Club Safeguarding/Welfare Officer available to observe the session?
Is a volunteer or another paddler willing to observe or paddle nearby (whilst remaining within view and occasional earshot)?
Is there another child from the squad or group available to join the session?

If you're unable to satisfy the rule of two, speak to your Safeguarding/Welfare Officer who can support you to find a solution. If you do not have access to a Safeguarding/Welfare Officer or if you are unable to satisfy the Rule of Two and believe the session or interaction is necessary and appropriate, contact the [British Canoeing Safeguarding Team](#) for guidance.

Transport

Adults in paddlesport should not travel 1:1 with a child (for whom they are not a parent/carer). The Rule of Two must be followed.

Video Calls, Phone Calls and Messaging

1:1 calls and messages with under 18s should be avoided. The Rule of Two must be followed. See our [Guidance for Video Calls](#) and our [Guidance on Digital Communications with Children](#) for more information.

Remember that professional standards and boundaries are important because:

- People with poor intent try to make inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour seem normal, and may gradually and slowly violate boundaries to reduce the chance of detection or challenge.
- Not following the rule of two may be an attempt to erode professional standards and boundaries.
- Following the rule of two means there is always someone else to observe and question inappropriate behaviour, and it maintains safe and appropriate standards and boundaries.

Reporting

If you're concerned that a coach or other adult is not following the Rule of Two, speak to your Safeguarding/Welfare Officer and/or report it to the appropriate [Safeguarding Contact](#) (use 0115 8968842 safeguarding@britishcanoeing.org.uk if you're unsure). All concerns are managed sensitively. For more information on reporting, view our [Safeguarding Children Policy](#).