

Guidebook on how to start a SUP School



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SUP FOR KIDS



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Introduction

Stand up paddle boarding has gained popularity over recent years, and now more than ever, people want to hit the water and improve their paddling skills. Next to that paddling is a very healthy way to be active for young people who mostly don't have paddling on the top of their list.

To focus on elementary and vocational schools to add paddling to their year schedule is a good way to get people into the sport and is relatively easy to start with.

Step 1: Location

To start with a paddle school the most important issue is to find places to paddle that provide you with safe conditions, on the water and to access the water. Next to that a place to change and a bathroom near would be great. If you also can park close to the access point will make your life easier when the business starts to grow. Our situation during the project was in Bunrana, where there was a parking with a toilet close to the sea. The only negative point was that the distance to the water was relative long. Big advantage was that the school was only 5 minutes away, so on that side logistics were easy.

So, the first step is to find a location(s) where you can access the water and guarantee the safety of your paddlers. Invest in finding a proper location(s) since that will make your life much easier in the future.

Location:

We chose location with regards to different points:

- Depending on wind, tides and weather, we access different seas and loughs. This is to ensure that we can provide the least dangerous and adequate conditions to get young people into the water
- We accessed Bunrana but in reality, we can look at Inch Island, Ned's Point and Fahan depending on weather. Bunrana is an open and exposed beach and in May the weather conditions and tides suited the implementation of the SUP clinic. We had to travel 15-20 minutes to get there but it is the same distance for the other locations mentioned above. We explain the reason to the kids to help them understand why we chose the specific location in regards to safety and provide an environment that installs confidence to support the learning of SUP
- There are 4 points that we like to discuss with the group prior to entering the water which include: 1)SUP Equipment 2)Environment and Weather 3)Planning 4)Safety on the Water
- The school in Bunrana was at the beach next to the school which meant the kids could access the clinic within minutes of each other. The elementary and vocational schools have buses that they are happy to provide to transport the kids to the relevant area depending on weather conditions. All the beaches that we use have access to changing areas that can be accessed by the public for both male and females. Although most schools give them the option to change and wear the appropriate clothing in the schools themselves before they leave for the assigned water area
- Our clinics are backed by the local Donegal County Council which supports the implementation of clinics to raise awareness of promoting healthy living and our commitment to the environment by cleaning up the waterways. We also work with the RNLI (Royal National Lifeboat Association) who are also based in Bunrana. The education of safety on the clinics states: **If you can, always go with a friend.** It's more fun, and they can help you if you get into difficulty/ **If you are going out alone, always tell someone where you're going and when you'll be back.** Don't leave the house without a mobile phone or communication device/ **Bringing your phone to take some photos?** Make sure you keep it in a waterproof pouch. That way it won't get wet, and you can use it to call for help in an emergency too/ **Check the weather forecast and tide times before you set out.** If the water is too choppy, you might find it difficult, especially if you are a beginner. And be aware, the conditions can change quickly/ **Avoid offshore winds.** They will quickly blow your paddleboard far out to sea, which can make it extremely tiring and difficult to paddle back to shore/ **You should wear a suitable personal flotation device.** This can be a buoyancy aid or a lifejacket. Choose one

that still allows you plenty of movement so you can paddle freely. Not only will it keep you afloat, but it will also help give you time to recover should you fall in – and chances are you will/ **Wear suitable clothing for the time of year.** In the winter, you will want to use a wet or dry suit. In the summer, you might be able to get away with a swim suit. But if you are going to be in the water for a long time, you might want to upgrade to something that keeps you warm/ **You should always use a paddleboard with an appropriate leash.** There's nothing more frustrating than having to swim after your paddleboard if you fall off. The leash will also help you stay connected to your board if you get into trouble and help you float/ **If you are launching on a lifeguarded beach, make sure you launch and recover between the black and white chequered flags.** There should be less swimmers in this area, giving you more room to manoeuvre. Consider other water users by learning the rights of way in the surf. This can save you and others getting injured/ **Get the appropriate level of training.** You might be tempted to just buy a board and head out. Having a few training sessions can teach you the right technique, so it's more stand-up and less fall-in paddleboarding!

Our SUP for Kids clinics present the platform for a appropriate level training. The danger with the idea of SUP is that it is easy and that lessons aren't required, we focus on the importance of adhering to training and professionals before entering the water.

- Since the pandemic, mental health issues have increased and the schools see this as a good opportunity as a form of therapy to promote healthy minds, team work, build resilience and tolerance. This provides a platform to give kids the tools to deal with societal issues that can create ill mental health issues.
- Legal insurance must be in place to implement these clinics and in Ireland, you can't manage these clinics in less you have the appropriate insurance in place.

Step 2: Gear

To get started you need boards, paddles, life vests and wetsuits (depending on conditions), this will be an investment and you probably will not start with an ideal situation. So, this means in the beginning you will have to be flexible and inventive. Probably work together with other people who own boards in case you have a bigger group. At the start 10 + 2 boards would be ideal to begin with, it fits on a trailer so you don't have to inflate the boards at the spot. For the beginners and schools, you best start with wide boards that are more stable and 2 faster boards for the instructors. To have 2 extra stable boards is advisable because not everybody has the same stability on the water, so by offering a more stable option will give them also self-confidence.

The most ideal situation would be to have enough boards to get a class on the water, so around 25 boards should be the end goal.

PFDS and wetsuits

Personal flotation devices are not only lifesaving, but they are also a legal requirement when out on a vessel. You'll need a selection of PFDs in all sizes, and you'll need to check them over frequently for any damage. If the water is too cold you will need wetsuits or find schools who already own them.

Equipment and Clothing required to develop clinics:

In order to start, boards are required. To invest in boards can be quite a heavy investment so we can work with other local SUP schools in the area to rent boards. This can also mean people who have boards that you know to rent or borrow from them to carry out the clinics. Both Wild Atlantic Travel Co and SUP Derry/Donegal have 8 boards in total but have different sources to access other paddle boards. Our group size was 10 kids plus 2 instructors' ratio. We have automatic pumps that speed up the process of

assembling the boards at the required location or we pump prior to save time. We also use a van to transport to the particular area when required inflated or deflated.

Depending on the size or weight of participant in the clinic, we allocate as best fit. Someone who is tall and generally bigger, will use a wider board and have usually access to 2-4 of this type of board.

Stability, balance, ability, confidence in the water and sports history play a part in what board to allocate but we feel that the more performance boards are used by the instructors so they can get to the clinic participant as fast as possible when needed.

The ultimate goal is to have between 20 – 25 boards to cater for larger groups.

PFDs (Personal Flotation Devices) and wetsuits are required for extra buoyancy and safety and to install confidence in the participant to encourage more participation and commitment. Irish waters are usually around 12 degrees Celsius so require 3-5 centimeters thickness to keep the participant warm when entering the water. This includes gloves, booties and hoods if necessary. Although we touch on benefits of cold-water swimming and breathing exercises to support SUP techniques and progression.

Most of our partnering schools have invested in wetsuits as we live by the sea in Ireland and there is a focus on water activities. If kids have their own suits, we encourage them to use for hygiene purposes otherwise we provide or rent from other SUP schools depending on group sizes.

All kids and schools are instructed to tell kids and parents to bring: swimming costume; towel, water; sun cream and wetsuit if they have one.

Step 3: Get Schools

This could be a complicated process with website, social media and other marketing tools, but in the case we are focusing on school classes it's relative easy. Talk to the management and sports department of the schools and start with giving clinics, if you get funding elsewhere, like in the case of SUP4KIDS, it's easy, because it's a free offer, so no school will refuse the offer. In all other cases read the manual on funding and try again.

To execute the clinics read the manual how to organize clinics.

Target Schools to Promote SUP for Kids:

We can promote and target schools with SUP Derry/Donnegal by different methods:

- Advertise through your social media channels; Instagram, Facebook and your website. It is important to let the schools/organizations know that it is FREE and that there are education benefits like environmental issues, geographical knowledge of tides and wind and the promotion of mental minds getting the young people outdoors
- Contact your local councils and schools directly. The idea of SUP for kids and the benefits should fit under their remits and strategy so they should be happy to get involved. Wild Atlantic Travel Co and SUP Derry/Donnegal invited the local Donegal County Council to attend an event and they sent a representative who collected the items/rubbish that was collected from the beach by the kids. They then separated the items to be recycled
- SUP 4 Kids is European funded project that fitted into the European/International strategy of both the schools and council. It became a mutual beneficial program for all partners and started a trans-national partnership for all parties. It also presented and generated knowledge of Erasmus+ and Brussels projects in a remote area of Ireland and disseminated the idea throughout the social platforms in the council and schools
- Maintain communication with partners, letting them know upcoming clinics and their commitment for future collaboration with other clinics
- Create further promotion on feedback supplied by past clinic schools, kids and teachers to further develop more participation

- Encourage and advise schools on investing in paddle boards to implement their own clinics with the guidance of Wild Atlantic Travel Co and SUP Derry/Donegal. Show them where they can buy, the best websites and partners to get the best boards at the right price and what they should be looking for
- Promote the manual on how to execute clinics that was developed for SUP 4 kids to direct them on the appropriate procedures/processes. Present to the sports departments and the benefits for all parties in doing so