

Exercise 4

Read the article about a young canoeist called Adele, and then answer the questions.

My sport: canoeing

by Adele Roberts



I've been canoeing for ten years now. I joined a local club when I was twelve. At the time, I never imagined doing it for years! Like many of my friends, when I wasn't studying I was online a lot, and I thought I needed some fresh air. Some friends thought it sounded fun too, so we went together. I'll always remember the first session; we spent ages in the water, learning how to get back into the canoe!

I go canoeing with the club twice a week. In bad weather, we have training sessions at the swimming pool, but we go out on the river whenever possible. We practise canoeing 'up river' – that means going against the flow of the water, which can be quite fast. There's no time to admire the surroundings as you have to concentrate a lot. In the pool, it's easy to make progress in terms of technical ability, but I always finish river sessions with aching muscles. That's a good sign I've been working hard – it's just not the same in the pool.

I started competing as soon as I could canoe properly in a straight line. My coaches organised competitions, and they were very patient. They knew that being on the water was so exciting for everyone that any last-minute advice they gave on the day was unlikely to make a difference to our performances. For us, it was more about gaining competition skills: the result didn't really matter, but working out why someone had beaten me was useful. I was fortunate because I went on to win quite often as I got older. To be fair, I worked hard, so I know I deserved it.

When I was 17, I moved from the Junior level to competing in Senior races. Although the race locations were new, I was glad to see the same faces I'd seen in previous competitions. The routes were longer and technically more complicated, as you'd imagine, so when we were given specific practice exercises I was enthusiastic to get started. You need to learn extra skills to have a chance of getting to the end of the race, and I often thought I'd never make it. I'm glad I didn't give up though!

People sometimes ask for tips about starting canoeing. What I always say is that you need to be safe. By joining a club, you'll have access to life-jackets, wetsuits, and of course, canoes. You can spend a lot, so borrowing the equipment at a club helps you work out what's essential. You can also follow blogs by other canoeists; it's not a sport you can learn by watching though – you have to get out there and do it yourself. That's because sea canoeing, for example, is completely different to being on a lake, so experiencing different environments is a great way to find your favourite.

For me, canoeing is more than just a sport. Through joining a club, as you might expect, I've expanded my social circle. I'm spending time with people from diverse backgrounds but who I share a common interest with. I think it's only in clubs that you get that opportunity. It's also shown me that actually, I'm the sort of person who others look up to when the going gets tough. It's not something I'd realised before. And it's even had a positive impact on my job. If there's a particular issue with a project, an hour's canoeing after work helps me think things through, and my colleagues are amazed how often I'll come up with solutions at work, or new options to consider!



Question 14

What advice does Adele have for other young canoeists?

- A** buy high-quality safety equipment
- B** try out a variety of locations
- C** follow professional canoeists online for tips

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