



Level 3: Freestyle Canoeing Instructor Criteria

Overview

Fundamentally, participants are expected to have the paddling skills, technical knowledge, rescue ability, teaching ability, group management, and interpersonal skills commensurate with this level of certification prior to presenting themselves for evaluation as Instructor Candidates at an Instructor Certification Exam (ICE).

Course Prerequisites

- Acknowledgement of personal compliance with the [ACA Essential Eligibility Criteria \(EEC\)](#).
- Be a current ACA member
- Completion of the appropriate level skills course, assessment course, or equivalent skills

Course Duration

Combined Instructor Development Workshop (IDW) and Instructor Certification Exam (ICE) - Minimum 3 days (24 hours).

Course Location / Accessible Venues

Protected water with constant access to safe landing and within .5 nautical miles from shore:

- Winds less than 10 knots
- Waves less than 1 foot (0.3 meters)
- Current less than 1 knot

Course Size

Tandem: 6 Instructor Candidates : 1 Instructor Trainer; with an additional instructor, the ratio can be 12 : 2. The maximum number of instructor candidates permitted is 12.

Solo: 5 Instructor Candidates : 1 Instructor Trainer; with an additional instructor, the ratio can be 10 : 2. The maximum number of instructor candidates permitted is 10.

Instructor Trainer

This certification course may be offered by Level 3: Freestyle Canoeing ACA Instructor Trainers or Instructor Trainer Educators.

The following is a list of the criteria used to evaluate Instructor Candidates. The content and sequence of evaluation is to be adjusted to best fit the participant's needs, class location, time allowance, and be craft appropriate.

General Requirements for all ACA Certification Candidates

- Be at least 18 years old
- Demonstrate general knowledge of ACA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives
- Successfully complete an Instructor Certification Workshop (IDW and ICE)
- Upon successful completion, register with the Safety Education and Instruction Council
- Have and maintain first aid and age appropriate CPR
- Demonstrate a general knowledge of paddlesports and the ACA
- Demonstrate the ability to appropriately perform and teach all of the following material, unassisted, in the appropriate venue

Certification Maintenance Requirements

- Teach at least two courses that meet ACA standards within the four-year certification period and properly report the courses using the ACA Course Management System (CMS).

- Complete an Instructor Update, at the highest level of certification, during the four-year certification period
- Maintain ACA membership and SEIC registration annually
- Maintain appropriate CPR and first aid certification for the duration of certification

ACA Level 3: Freestyle Canoeing Instructor Requirements

Demonstrate a knowledge of ACA administrative processes:

- How to register and report a course (with and without insurance)
- An understanding of the ACA Waiver and Release of Liability
- Familiarity with the ACA website and the resources and SEIC policies available

Demonstrate a knowledge of teaching and learning theory:

- Understand multiple modalities of teaching and how they impact different learners
- Differentiate instruction targeting different learners
- Use effective teaching methods including appropriate skills progressions when teaching complex skill sets
- Present information effectively, both prepared and impromptu
- Effectively make documented skill assessments
- Focus on **core principles** rather than specific techniques
- Provide appropriate, specific, and meaningful feedback

Demonstrate the following:

- Positive interpersonal skills
- Appropriate group management skills including leadership and judgment
- Ability to choose an appropriate venue / class site

Demonstrate ability to paddle efficiently and comfortably in venue utilizing:

- Safe and effective body usage: bio-mechanics (body, posture, linkage, and rotation)
- Efficient and effective paddle placement for intended maneuver
- Parts of strokes: CPR (catch, power, recovery), static and dynamic

Demonstrate ability to teach and model these paddling strokes:

Tandem (Bow)

- Forward
- Forward with switch
- Back
- Draw
- Bow Draw (dynamic, static)
- Cross Bow Draw (dynamic, static)
- Push away
- Pry
- Sweeps (forward, reverse)
- Cross forward
- Cross draw (abeam, static)
- Sculls (drawing, prying)

Tandem (Stern)

- Forward
- Forward with switch
- Forward with rudder
- Forward with stern pry
- Forward with J-stroke
- Back
- Draw

- Stern draw
- Push away
- Pry
- Stern pry
- Sweeps (forward, reverse)
- Cross Draw (abeam, static)
- Sculls (drawing, prying)

Solo

- Forward
- Forward with switch
- Forward with rudder
- Forward with stern pry
- Forward with J-stroke
- Forward with C-stroke
- Back
- Draw
- Bow draw (dynamic, static)
- Cross bow draw (dynamic, static)
- Stern draw
- Push away
- Pry
- Stern pry
- Sweeps (forward, reverse)
- Cross forward
- Cross draw (abeam, static)
- Sculls (drawing, prying)

In addition to:

- Forward, cross forward, compound cross forward
- All draws in all quadrants
- Back, far-back: combined, compound, and cross reverse
- Reverse J, cross reverse J
- Reverse C, cross reverse C
- Sweeps in all quadrants

Demonstrate ability to teach and model these flatwater maneuvers effectively:

- Launching and landing: low dock or bank to enter and exit safely
- Propel the boat forward in a straight line 15-20 boat lengths
- Stop the boat within two boat lengths
- Stop Turns: quick 90 degree turn to a complete stop near a buoy, dock, or shore
- Move the boat backwards in a reasonably straight line 3-4 boat lengths
- Abeam: move the boat sideways 20 feet (6 meters) to each side
- Propel the boat in a figure of 8 course around markers 3-4 boat lengths apart
- Spin: 360 degree pivot onside and offside
- Turn the boat while maintaining forward motion 90° to the right and left
- Sit and switch technique
- Switch positions in the canoe on the water
- Side slips: move boat sideways with headway

In addition to:

- Axle in all quadrants
- Christy in all quadrants
- Post in all quadrants

- Wedge in all quadrants
- Gimbals

Demonstrate ability to teach these concepts effectively:

- Paddling environments pertinent to paddlers
 - Water
 - Weather
 - Wind
 - Waves
 - Water confidence and comfort including swimming ability
- Principles of Rescue
 - Rescue Priorities: people, boat, paddle, gear
 - Responsibilities of the group, rescuer, swimmers
 - Appropriate use of rescue and safety gear
 - Bailer, pump, sling, lights, etc.
 - Emergency procedures
- Communication
 - Paddle, hand, and whistle signals
 - Cell phone and radios when appropriate
- River etiquette and Leave No Trace (LNT) principles and application to paddling environments
- Self care and care of other group members
 - Importance of fueling, hydration, clothing/insulation, and sun protection
 - Cold shock, hypothermia, and hyperthermia: prevention and treatment

Demonstrate ability to teach and model these boat-based rescue techniques effectively:

- Deep water exits: vault and slide performed in flat water
- Calmly exit the boat after a controlled capsize, using proper body position and contact with the craft and paddle
- Self rescue: swim 20 feet (6 meters) to shore in moving water using defensive and offensive techniques
- Strategies and techniques for boat and paddle recovery including bumping, bulldozing, towing, or swimming equipment to shore
- Swimmer tow options
- Self and assisted swimmer re-entry techniques (i.e., heel hook, rescue sling, paddle float, etc.)
- Assisted rescues: boat over boat or side by side or others appropriate to conditions
- Unresponsive paddler rescue
- Emptying water from the boat (on shore, bailers, pumps, sponges, etc.)

Demonstrate knowledge of and the ability to teach the following knowledge and skills effectively:

- Life jackets: types, usage, fitting, regulations
- Canoe: types, parts, materials, nomenclature, and design
- Paddle: types, parts, materials, fit
- Securing boat for transport on car or trailer using proper tie downs, straps, or knots
 - Knots: Figure-8, bowline, truckers hitch, and 2 half hitches
- Canoe carries: overhead & suitcase
- Importance of developing good judgment and group responsibility for a trip
 - Group organization, trip planning, and travel strategies
 - Float plan components and filing
 - Maps, guide books, local knowledge
 - Safety issues and hazards of larger lakes and lake travel
 - Boat traffic awareness and safe practice

- Lead boat, sweep boat, safety boats, spacing, group members with repair kits, first aid kits, and first aid and CPR training
- Federal, state, and local laws and regulations that apply to trip venue or route
- Put-in safety briefing
- Three boat minimum for group trip

Demonstrate the ability to perform demonstration quality strokes, maneuvers, and rescues outlined above with competence:

- Perform in real-time
- Perform in slow motion
- Emphasize particular phases of skills through exaggerated movements
- Perform at mental ease
- Perform consistently

Demonstrate leadership, group management skills, experience and judgment necessary to be a safe, effective instructor

Notes:

An ACA Level 3: Freestyle Canoeing Instructor is expected to be able to demonstrate and teach everything on the Level 3: Skills Course for their level/craft.

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<https://americancanoe.org>

This curriculum is managed by the ACA Canoeing Committee. To connect with the leadership of this committee, please view the SEIC Committee rosters on [the ACA website](#).