



# Level 5: Advanced Whitewater 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 Course (IDW, ICE, or ICW).

## Course Prerequisites

- Be a currently certified ACA Level 4: Whitewater Canoeing Instructor
- Have taught and successfully reported at least two Level 4: Whitewater Canoeing skills or assessment courses
- Completion of an ACA Level 4: Swiftwater Rescue skills or assessment course (or higher)
- Given the common remoteness of this course venue, Wilderness First Responder (WFR) or Wilderness First Aid (WFA) certification is strongly suggested

## Course Duration

Combined Instructor Development Workshop (IDW) and Instructor Certification Exam (ICE) - Minimum 2 days (16 hours).

## Course Location / Accessible Venues

Sections of rivers rated class III-IV, in rapids where precise maneuvering in current is required to avoid obstacles. *A rapid class includes rapids at the lower and upper ends of the difficulty range, designated “-“ and “+” respectively.*

## **Course Size**

**Tandem:** 4 Instructor Candidates : 1 Instructor Trainer; with an additional instructor, the ratio can be 8 : 2. The maximum number of instructor candidates permitted is 8.

**Solo:** 3 Instructor Candidates : 1 Instructor Trainer; with an additional instructor, the ratio can be 6 : 2. The maximum number of instructor candidates permitted is 6.

## **Succeeding Courses**

- Canoe Rolling Skills or Endorsement Course

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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 5: Advanced Whitewater Canoeing Instructor Requirements**

### **Characteristics of an ACA Level 5 Instructor:**

- Complete self-control within the course venue, superlative judgment, and excellent group management skills
- Capable of taking every advanced technique apart and only teaching the next phase of a skill as the previous skill progression is mastered
- Is a mentor as well as a teacher; they show a culture, style, and attitude of being on the water more than the specific techniques
- Possesses supreme awareness of the moment, the place, and the responsibility for one's self and the group
- Has a finely honed sense to minimize risks, is highly competent in rescue skills, and possess wise judgment to assess situations and initiate the best rescue response

### **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 and appropriately model teaching and learning theory:**

- Understand multiple methods 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
- Focus on **core principles** rather than specific techniques
- Provide appropriate, specific, and meaningful feedback

### **Demonstrate the following:**

- Positive interpersonal skills to include all items outlined in the ACA [SEIC Policy Manual](#)
- Appropriate group management skills including leadership and judgment
- Ability to choose an appropriate venue / class site
- Effectively make documented skill assessments

### **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:**

- Forward and cross-forward with rotation
- Forward (with stern pry, rudder and J stroke corrections)
- Back (stern far back and compound back, solo and bow reverse J)
- Sweeps (forward, reverse)
- Draws (onside/offside) static/dynamic/sculling (out of water and in water recovery)
- Prys (static/dynamic, righting)
- Braces (low, high)
- Duffek (onside/offside)

- Jam
- Slice
- C-stroke
- Blended strokes

### **Demonstrate ability to teach and model these flatwater maneuvers effectively:**

- Forward stroke, to propel the canoe straight forward
- Reverse/back stroke, to stop and reverse straight backward
- Forward and reverse sweeps, to turn and/or spin the canoe
- Draw and sculling draw, to move the kayak sideways evenly
- Low brace to avoid capsize
- Rudder (stern) to glide straight and turn to paddle side

### **Principles of Rescue**

- Rescue priorities: people, boat, paddle, gear
- Responsibilities of the group, rescuer, swimmers
- Throw rope applications as rescuer and swimmer
- Basic wading

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

- Calmly exit the boat after a capsize, using proper body position and contact with the craft and paddle
- Paddle recovery
- Strategies for boat recovery
- Self-rescue: swimming with equipment
- Swimmer towing options

- Swimmer re-entry/re-mount techniques
- Strategies and techniques for boat and paddle recovery including bumping, bulldozing, towing, equipment to shore
- Unresponsive paddler rescue

**Demonstrate the ability to teach the following river hydrology features and articulate the associated risks:**

- Currents
- Rocks (upstream and downstream Vs)
- Ledges and low head dams (horizon lines)
- Pins and entrapment
- Strainers/sieves
- Bends
- Undercut rocks or ice
- Dams/flow diversion structures and pipelines

**Demonstrate ability to teach and model these maneuvers in course venue effectively:**

- Front ferries: to a fixed point
- Eddy turns: with boat leans into small eddies
- Peel-outs
- C-turns
- S-turns
- Back ferries
- Sideslips (shifts) - onside & offside
- Spins (onside & offside)
- Bracing (low/high)
- Complex attainments

- Surfing (carving, front, side & back)
- Boofing (eddy lines, drops, and ledges)
- Reverse paddling

**Demonstrate ability to teach these concepts effectively:**

- Paddling environments pertinent to paddlers
  - Water
  - Weather
  - Wind
  - Waves
    - River classifications (Understanding of Class I - VI)
- Principles of Rescue
  - Rescue Priorities: people, boat, paddle, gear
  - Responsibilities of the group, rescuer, swimmers
  - Appropriate use of rescue and safety gear
  - 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 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
- Helmets: types, fit, usage
- 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
    - 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
  - Scouting
  - Portaging and lining
  - Three boat minimum for group trip

**The importance of developing personal judgment and group responsibility increases on more difficult paddling venues:**

- Self Awareness
  - Understanding level of personal anxiety
  - Understanding personal risk assessment style and tolerance
  - Knowing your responsibility to the group
- Self Evaluation
  - What is required to successfully navigate this feature?



- Can I perform the needed moves and requirements?
- What are the consequences if I fail? Am I able to accept these consequences?
- What type(s) of rescue would be required if I fail?
- Group Evaluation
  - Is the size of the group manageable for me as a leader?
  - Do I have the skills to perform needed rescues for this group?
  - Does the group have the skills to perform the needed moves and requirements?
  - Is the group in satisfactory condition to navigate this feature (anxiety, risk tolerance, physical wellness including fitness, nutrition, hydration, fatigue, mental sharpness)?
    - Actual risk versus perceived risk
  - Are members of the group able and willing to support others (without peer pressure)?
  - Are there other subjective considerations that need to be considered - is the group affected by psychological effects such as groupthink, halo effect, familiarity, scarcity, etc.

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

### **Notes:**

*An ACA Level 5: Advanced Whitewater Canoeing Instructor is expected to be able to demonstrate and teach everything on the Level 5: Skills Course and Level 5: Skills Assessment for their level/craft.*

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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](#).