



Level 2: Essentials of Sit-On-Top Kayak Touring Skills Assessment

Assessment Overview

The **Level 2 Essentials of Sit-On-Top Kayak Touring (ESOTKT)** kayaker is a competent paddler in mild, protected waters (coastal waters, inland lakes, and gently flowing rivers) with regular access to landing areas. They have the judgment to know when they should not paddle and have a plan for when things do not go as expected. This is an entry-level to the coastal kayaking discipline of the American Canoe Association. Whereas Level 1 kayakers paddle in completely sheltered areas, Level 2 kayakers are honing newfound skills and challenging themselves to venture out and explore sheltered bays, inlets, and rivers.

This ACA Skills Assessment course evaluates a participant's ability to perform the skills listed and demonstrate appropriate knowledge. The assessment course provides the participant with the opportunity to receive documentation of having achieved an L2 level of paddling ability.

Note: The course is designed to be delivered by a L2 ESOTKT Instructor or L2 Essentials of Kayak Touring (EKT) Instructor. L2 ESOTKT Instructors can assess only paddlers using sit-on-top kayaks whereas L2 EKT Instructors may deliver either type of L2 Skills Assessment course.

Course Prerequisites

- Acknowledgment of personal compliance with the [ACA Essential Eligibility Criteria \(EEC\)](#).
- Be a current ACA Member

Course Duration

One Day (8 hours) minimum

Course Location / Accessible Venues

Assessors shall choose a location that offers calm and protected waters with constant access to landing areas. The assessor shall keep the participants within 0.5 nautical miles of shore during the course.

Conditions during the assessment shall be:

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

Course Size

5 Participants: 1 Instructor; with an additional qualified assistant, the ratio can be 10 : 2. The maximum number of participants permitted is 10.

Assessor

A Level 2 Essentials of Kayak Touring Instructor, Level 2 Essentials of Sit-On-Top Kayaking Instructor, or any higher-level Coastal Kayak Instructor is qualified to deliver this course. Sit-on-top kayak Instructors may only provide this course to sit-on-top paddlers.

Assessment:

Preparing for this Assessment: The document "Level 2 Essentials of Kayak Touring Training Guidance" provides guidance on how to train for paddling in Level 2 conditions and helps prepare kayakers for this assessment course.

Assessor's Guide and Field Grids: The Level 2 Essentials of Sit-on-Top Kayak Touring (ESOTKT) Assessor's Guide is the companion document to the Level 2 ESOTKT Skills Assessment document. Assessors shall use the Assessor's Guide for guidance on delivering the course and ensuring compliance with standards for Level 2 ESOTKT paddlers. Assessor Guides include guidance on what constitutes Exceeds, Meets, and Below standard for each skill. Also provided are Single-Paddler and Multi-Paddler Field Grids designed for the assessor's use when delivering this course.

Assessment Competencies and Skills: This Assessment contains Paddler Competencies, Assessed Skills, and Developing Skills.

- **Paddler Competencies** – Each category starts with a description of the overall competency that the paddler shall demonstrate. The assessor uses this as an overarching guideline for all skills for the category.
- **Assessed Skills** – Assessors must observe the paddler's performance of all these strokes, maneuvers, rescues, and skills in the appropriate venue. In addition, the paddler must demonstrate the appropriate level of knowledge for this skill assessment.
- **Developing Skills** – Assessors may observe the paddler's performance of these strokes, maneuvers, rescues, and skills in the appropriate venue. Successful performance of Developing Skills may add to a "pass," but unsuccessful performance shall not count against the paddler. Level 2 Developing Skills are among the Assessed Skills at Level 3.

Level 2 Paddler Core Competencies and Assessed Skills

Core: Strokes

Level 2 Competency: The paddler displays connectivity between the paddle and kayak through safe and effective body movement and a clean catch, power, and recovery of the blade at appropriate positions with correct blade orientation.

Assessed Skills:

- **Forward Paddling:** Moves the kayak 200 yards/meters in a reasonably straight line.
- **Reverse Paddling:** Moves the kayak 50 yards/meters with reasonable control.
- **Stopping:** Stops the kayak from a good speed (2 to 2.5 knots), in forward and reverse.
- **Forward and Reverse Sweep:** Turns the kayak smoothly while moving forward or in reverse without losing momentum.

Core: Maneuvers

Level 2 Competency: The paddler can combine sweeps, forward, reverse, stopping, and stern rudder strokes to maneuver their kayak effectively.

Assessed Skills:

- **Rotate in place 360°:** Spins the kayak in place with minimal forward or reverse movement.
- **Turning on the Move:** Maneuvers the kayak smoothly around obstacles.
- **Draw Sideways:** Moves the kayak sideways 10 feet (3.3 meters).
- **Ruddering (Stern):** Holds the kayak on a straight course or turns toward the paddle side to correct a course.

Developing Skills:

- **Sideslip:** With forward momentum, slips the kayak sideways with a mid-ship static rudder.
- **Bow Rudder:** Turns the kayak to the paddle side with the bow rudder without stopping the kayak.
- **Stern Rudder:** Turns away from the paddle side while using a stern rudder.
- **Linked Maneuvers:** Paddles a course requiring various turning maneuvers safely, effectively, and efficiently.

Core: Support

Level 2 Competency: The paddler can stabilize their kayak, with and without momentum, and prevent capsizing.

Assessed Skills:

- **Low Brace Recovery:** Prevents capsize when off balance.
- **Low Brace Turn:** Makes a turn of at least 90 degrees.

Developing Skills:

- **Turn Control:** Able to vary the radius of their turns.

Core: Rescues and Towing

Level 2 Competency: The paddler can employ one technique for self-rescue and one for assisted rescue and then paddle to shore in Level 2 conditions. They can swim with their kayak to shore and move another person's kayak to shore.

Assessed Skills:

- **Capsize and Wet Exit:** Performs a controlled exit while maintaining contact with kayak and equipment.
- **Assisted Rescues and Deep-Water Re-Entry:** Performs one or more of the following assisted re-entries as rescuer and swimmer: Side-by-Side or Sling.
- **Self-Rescue:** Performs one of the following: Scramble (aka cowboy) or Paddle Float. The paddler may use a sling for either self-rescue.
- **Swim Rescue:** Swims to shore (25 yards/meters) in full paddling gear.
- **Move a kayak that has capsized to shore (approximately 50 feet or 15 meters):** Perform one of the following techniques: Bulldozing, Shove and Chase, or Contact Tow.
- **Swimmer tows:** Performs swimmer rescue via a bow or toggles.

Developing Skills:

- **T-Rescue:** Able to perform a t-rescue (blown hatch)
- **Towing:** Able to use towlines and various towing configurations to move a kayak.

Core: Awareness and Seamanship

Level 2 Competency: The paddler has a heightened awareness of the environment. They adapt plans accordingly and clearly communicate with the group to make necessary changes. They are properly equipped for the conditions and use equipment appropriately to maintain personal and group comfort.

Assessed Skills:

- **Awareness:** Demonstrates awareness of self, group members, and environment.
- **Leave No Trace (LNT):** Interacts appropriately with the ecosystem and wildlife.
- **Kayak:** Has a working knowledge of types of kayaks suitable for paddling in Level 2 conditions.
- **Equipment:** Has a working knowledge of paddling equipment.
- **Cold-Water Shock:** Demonstrates an understanding of cold-water shock and the sudden onset of issues associated with immersion in cold-water.
- **Hypothermia and Hyperthermia:** Demonstrates a working knowledge of the issues associated with hypothermia and hyperthermia, including the prevention, recognition, and basic treatment of both.

Core: Incident Prevention and Management

Level 2 Competency: The paddler demonstrates their preparedness to prevent incidents from occurring. Can manage an incident when it does happen by having the appropriate equipment for the environment and the knowledge to use it. Has prepared and shared an appropriate float plan and knows who to contact, as well as the proper way to do so in the case of an incident that requires outside assistance.

Assessed Skills:

- **Securing Kayak to Rack:** Properly secures their kayak to rack when storing or transporting.
- **Lifting and Carrying:** Lifts and carries their kayak safely and efficiently.
- **Launching and Landing:** Launches and lands at a dock or shore safely.
- **Signaling:** Carries and demonstrates proper use of an audible signaling device.
- **Communication Device:** Has a reliable communication device readily available and knows proper device usage.
- **Float Plan:** Files a complete and accurate float plan with an appropriate point of contact.

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Core: Trip Planning and Navigation

Level 2 Competency: The paddler successfully plans and executes routes in Level 2 conditions and venues, considering basic safety and location-specific issues. Their planning includes consideration of weather forecasts, currents, the makeup of the paddling group, and group members' equipment.

Assessed Skills:

- **Forecasts:** Gathers, understands, and utilizes appropriate weather and marine forecasts.
- **Chart Use:** Demonstrates use of charts, aerial images, weather and marine forecasts, and knowledge of their paddling group when route planning.
- **Trip Planning:** Incorporates wind, waves, and currents into route plan and trip choices.
- **Trip Planning:** Incorporates direction of flow into route plan and trip choices.
- **Route Finding:** Uses appropriate map or chart to know where they are and where they are going.
- **Compass Use:** The paddler demonstrates using handheld and deck-mounted compasses to take bearings.
- **Nautical Rules of the Road:** Understands the Nautical Rules of the Road and demonstrates safe paddling in relation to boat traffic.

Developing Skill: Demonstrates their ability to calculate tide and tidal drift stages and incorporate results into a trip plan.

Level 2 Paddler Venue Specific Competencies and Skills (Developing)

At Level 2, exposure to the environment is a “developing” skill, meaning a higher level than required to pass the assessment. Three sets of “Venue Specific Skills” may be assessed in addition to “Core Skills” so that instructors may provide feedback to students paddling in these environments.

Venue Specific: Currents

The paddler can paddle safely, effectively, and efficiently in Level 2 currents while maintaining control of their kayak.

- **Awareness:** Demonstrates understanding of currents (tidal or river) in Level 2 venues.
- **Reading Water and Boat Control:** Identifies direction of flow and eddies and paddles through currents in control.
- **Hazards:** Identifies hazards and positions themselves to avoid the hazards.
- **Rescues:** Performs a self-rescue, an assisted rescue, and contact towing in current.

Venue Specific: Wind and Waves

The paddler can paddle safely, effectively, and efficiently in Level 2 wind and waves while maintaining control of their kayak.

- **Awareness:** Understands how onshore and offshore winds affect paddling conditions.
- **Tactics:** Applies strategies for paddling at various angles to the direction of the wind.
- **Boat Control:** Can control their direction and maintain stability in wind and waves.
- **Rescues:** Performs a self-rescue, an assisted rescue, and contact towing in wind and waves.

Venue Specific: Rocky Shorelines

The paddler can paddle safely, effectively, and efficiently along rocky shorelines in Level 2 conditions while maintaining control of their kayak. The paddler can identify safe zones and danger zones. They can self-rescue close to rock features, perform assisted rescues, and contact towing where and when appropriate.

- **Awareness:** Identifies hazards and landing areas on a map or chart.
- **Tactics:** Chooses appropriate landings and areas to play in the rocks.
- **Boat Control:** Maneuvers along rocky shorelines safely, effectively, and efficiently.
- **Rescues:** Performs a self-rescue, an assisted rescue, and contact towing close to rock features.

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